MUTUAL HOUSING ALTERNATIVES AND THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD QUESTION:
A CRITICAL HISTORY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR URBAN
TRANSFORMATION IN LIVERPOOL 1960–2015

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

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School of Environment and Development
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<td>CCH</td>
<td>Confederation of Co-operative Housing</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Corporation</td>
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<td>CDP</td>
<td>Community Development Project</td>
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<td>CDS</td>
<td>Co-operative Development Services (Liverpool agency)</td>
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<td>CDT</td>
<td>Community Development Trust</td>
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<td>CFS</td>
<td>Community Finance Solutions</td>
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<td>CHA</td>
<td>Co-operative Housing Agency (within Housing Corporation)</td>
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<td>CHS</td>
<td>Co-operative Housing Services</td>
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<td>CIC</td>
<td>Community Interest Company</td>
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<td>CLCC</td>
<td>Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati</td>
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<td>CLT</td>
<td>Community Land Trust</td>
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<td>CPE</td>
<td>Cultural Political Economy</td>
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<td>CPO</td>
<td>Compulsory Purchase Order</td>
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<td>CPR</td>
<td>Common Property Regime</td>
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<td>DCLG</td>
<td>Department for Communities and Local Government</td>
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<td>DLP</td>
<td>District Labour Party</td>
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<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of the Environment</td>
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<td>ECBHA</td>
<td>Eldonian Community-based Housing Association</td>
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<td>EGL</td>
<td>Eldonian Group Ltd (Business Development Trust)</td>
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<td>GIA</td>
<td>General Improvement Area</td>
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<td>GRA</td>
<td>Granby Residents Association</td>
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<td>GRAD</td>
<td>Granby Residents against Demolition</td>
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<td>HA</td>
<td>Housing Association</td>
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<td>HAA</td>
<td>Housing Action Area</td>
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<td>Homes and Communities Agency</td>
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<td>HDSI</td>
<td>HD Social Investments (aka Steinbeck Studios)</td>
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<td>HMR</td>
<td>Housing Market Renewal</td>
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<td>IAD</td>
<td>Integrated Area Development</td>
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<td>KTP</td>
<td>Knowledge Transfer Partnership</td>
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<td>LHT</td>
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<td>LIFE</td>
<td>Lead-Influence-Follow-Exit (council policy for housing associations)</td>
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<td>LMH</td>
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<td>LSAG</td>
<td>Langrove Street Action Group</td>
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<td>MBC</td>
<td>Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
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<td>MCDA</td>
<td>Maritime Community Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Merseyside Development Corporation</td>
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<td>MHOS</td>
<td>Mutual Home-ownership Society</td>
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<td>MIH</td>
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<td>NAHC</td>
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<td>NCLTN</td>
<td>National CLT Network</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>NDC</td>
<td>New Deal for Communities</td>
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<td>National Federation of Housing Societies</td>
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<td>NHS</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Housing Services</td>
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<td>NSM</td>
<td>New social movement</td>
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<td>NWHS</td>
<td>North West Housing Services</td>
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<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participant action research</td>
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<td>RIBA</td>
<td>Royal Institute of British Architects</td>
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<td>SNAP</td>
<td>Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project</td>
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<td>SRA</td>
<td>Strategic Relational Approach</td>
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<td>TCPA</td>
<td>Town and Country Planning Association</td>
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<td>URBED</td>
<td>Urbanism, Environment and Design (planning consultancy)</td>
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<td>URS</td>
<td>Urban Regeneration Strategy (Militant policy)</td>
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<td>VNC</td>
<td>Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZOO</td>
<td>Zone of Opportunity</td>
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Abstract

Matthew Thompson

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

From the Garden City and cooperative movements to self-help housing and community land trusts (CLTs), radical experiments in collective dweller control aim to protect use values and fix in place increasingly mobile capital for long-term community benefit. This research critically explores how such mutual alternatives might provide the basis for more effective, democratic and self-sustaining urban regeneration, to resolve wicked problems of housing deprivation and inner-city decline, where conventional state and market-led approaches have failed. It examines how specific experiments emerged and developed in Liverpool, a city with a particularly rich history of mutual housing experimentation; in part a reaction to decades of urban decline, deprivation, deteriorating housing conditions, and displacement. The focus is on Liverpool’s 1970s co-op movement and contemporary CLT campaigns. Co-ops and CLTs are conceptualised as common ownership institutions distinct from public and private property; as ‘social innovations’ in land reform aiming to find socially empowering new solutions to old problems. Drawing on Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, the thesis advances a more spatialised and historicised reading of social innovation as ‘spatial projects’ dialectically produced through place-based practices and competing logics.

Liverpool provides an illustrative case study of the social, political and institutional dynamics of how mutual housing experiments emerge, institutionalise, fail, or replicate. Methodologically, this thesis employs a qualitative case study comparison of various campaigns emerging in the Liverpool city-region since 1960. A genealogical approach traces connections between radical moments, drawing on documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. Urban political economy informs the contextualisation of these moments within Liverpool’s changing governance structure of state, market and third sector institutions. The research aims to identify the motivations, catalysts, drivers, barriers, opportunities and constraints shaping the development of mutual housing alternatives in this historical-geographical context, as a means for understanding broader political prospects.

Empirical findings suggest that mutual housing development is a complex, conflictual and highly political socio-spatial process, with often unexpected and contradictory outcomes. Nonetheless, there were clear benefits produced by the co-op movement: socioeconomic and political empowerment of residents; democratically-designed community-owned housing that remains durable, easy to manage, and responsive to local needs; and lasting improvements to urban environments. But this often entailed exclusions at higher scales, and relied on generous state funding, proving politically unsustainable. Liverpool’s CLTs are potentially more democratic and self-sustaining vehicles for neighbourhood regeneration; reimagining and transforming place in extraordinary ways. The findings reveal that the CLT model was originally introduced to Liverpool through state-led projects, scoping out the possibility of incorporating CLTs as succession vehicles for regeneration programmes. These experiments failed partly due to local state fears over loss of control of public assets; partly through lack of resident involvement, suggesting CLTs require democratic mandate and grassroots participation. The most successful campaigns were funded through public arts and private philanthropy, grown from the grassroots by a local ‘creative class’ of artist-activists, potentially enacting arts-led or eco-gentrification, posing questions over public accountability. For mutual housing to resolve urban problems, more systematic development is required, supported by state-funded decentralised professional support networks.
Declaration

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Acknowledgements

In articulating my gratitude to the countless people who have helped bring this thesis finally into the light of day, trying to order their many contributions on this page has seemed more challenging than the struggle to order my ideas into a relatively coherent literature review. So, in no particular order, I would like to thank Abby Gilbert – not just for letting me plagiarise her original version of this opening line to the acknowledgements – but for all her incredible support over the last few years.

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I extend my thanks to the ESRC for funding this research. Lastly, I would like to thank all the participants in this study for their generous input and insight into Liverpool, without which this history could not be written.
Preface: the Route to this Thesis

I’m not from Liverpool, visiting the city only a few times before deciding to study a particular part of its history. So the first obvious question to ask is: how did I get here? My interest in the city’s history of experimentation with mutual housing alternatives stems from my experiences of living in London for several years after my undergraduate degree in philosophy, politics and economics. I wanted to apply this highly theoretical education to practical problems, and was drawn to urban planning as a discipline, having been obsessed with cities, urbanism and architecture for as long as I can remember. So I ended up studying urban planning as a part-time Masters at UCL, working four days a week in the planning department of Tower Hamlets Borough Council to pay the bills and hopefully gain some insight into the development control and policy process. This opened my eyes to the incredible creative destruction going on in East London, especially around Canary Wharf and the soon-to-be Olympic Park. More development was occurring in the borough at the time than anywhere else in London – despite the global financial crisis hitting property hard. Yet the majority of people living in and around these mushrooming towers were generally excluded from the design process and indeed most of the post-development benefits. In my degree I was learning more and more about the history of urban policy in Britain and the phenomenon of gentrification, including the state-led variety that was becoming more and more common across London. Large council estates were being decanted by various borough councils and packaged up for redevelopment into mixed tenure communities by international property developers. This was all in the spirit of the Mixed Communities agenda promoted by the New Labour government of the time.

The theory goes roughly like this: poverty is made worse by spatial isolation from the rest of society and economic opportunities, and is perhaps even partly caused by the concentration of poverty all in one place – known as the ‘neighbourhood effects’ hypothesis. The persuasive part of the argument hinges on a moral intuition that urban segregation, where rich and poor live parallel lives, is generally bad for society, for rich and poor alike; that social mixing between tenures, and thus classes in a loose kind of way, has multiple benefits, which although quite nebulous, have something to do with citizenship, democracy, civic cohesion, social awareness of difference, and not least the justice of equal access to resources and the chance to live in desirable areas of cities. So I knew what mixed communities had the potential to inculcate, but could see going on around me in so many places in London, what it actually entailed. The policy was being used not to mix up already rich areas, but rather, increasingly...
so, to diversify mono-tenure areas of social housing – i.e. inject rich people into areas of poor people, thereby displacing some of the latter and breaking up communities. Whilst much of the Mixed Communities agenda promoted the construction of ‘sustainable’ mixed-tenure developments on ex-industrial brownfield or greenfield land, it was also being used to justify the replacement of inner-city social housing estates with more up-market housing – a kind of enforced colonisation or process of state-led gentrification. The state itself has much to gain from selling off valuable inner-city land parcels to developers, all in the name of regeneration; tenants much to lose. Politics were thus never far from the surface of the policy.

Wanting to test the efficacy of the Mixed Communities agenda on social exclusion and spatial injustice, I set about designing a research project for my Masters dissertation which could disentangle the effects of mixed-tenure design as much as possible from the sensitive political issues surrounding gentrification. I chose to study the effects on cross-class interaction of the designs incorporated into one particular exemplar mixed community, Greenwich Millennium Village, built on ex-industrial land right by the Millennium Dome, and therefore without indigenous residents and free from local opposition. This had won awards as a piece of sustainable urbanism, but I was interested in its ‘pepper-potted’ ‘tenure-blind’ design, one of the finest examples to date. This meant public rented, private rented, and owner-occupied housing were co-located next to each other, scattered randomly within the same block, with indistinguishable frontages and design features – in the hope of lessening the stigma often associated with social housing and encouraging inhabitants to interact daily as friendly neighbours to open up socioeconomic opportunities as well as possibly inspiring aspirational values and new forms of behaviour conducive to empowerment in poorer residents; in a logic often critiqued as ‘responsibilisation’ and ‘individualising’ of fundamentally systemic inequalities. I interviewed many of the occupants and enquired into social life in the Village, with the aim of understanding just how the development design has affected neighbourly interaction. I discovered that not only did the policy not have the desired effect of stimulating positive interaction, but also compounded class conflict. Despite the ‘tenure blind’ design, differences were all the more accentuated in subtle treatment of external fittings. Part of the problem was that the hands of social housing tenants remained tied, with stringent regulations enforced by housing associations on what they could or could not do to their home, which unsurprisingly left many feeling deflated and disempowered to do anything at all.

Moreover, tenants were excluded from many of the community networks and forums which were beginning to emerge on the web and in the onsite community facilities. In the eyes of
others, they felt they lacked the requisite status, power or stake in their neighbourhood to properly participate, and many were actively marginalised by owner-occupiers seeking to disassociate themselves from their poorer neighbours. A chink of light, however, appeared in the area of the Village designed with communal gardens shared between neighbours in the centre of their perimeter block terraces. Here, the children of different tenure groups were free to play together, thereby encouraging interaction between their parents. Residents of these areas did indeed interact, had friends from different tenure groups, and a sense of community was much more apparent. Although I was unable to measure any possible gains in economic empowerment among the parents, their children may well have been presented greater life chances through experiences of interacting with a greater diversity of children from a young age.

These experiences sparked my interest in the idea of dweller control: that when people have a greater sense of ownership over their living environment and rights to improve their dwelling – as we take for granted for owner-occupiers – they are greatly empowered in various ways. It also made me realise that simply moving the disadvantaged next door to the privileged does very little to promote social inclusion – and can, in fact, harm the former’s sense of self, community solidarity and social support networks. Without concomitant improvements in dweller control, such design interventions were at best merely cosmetic reforms, hiding poverty in amongst wealth, and at worst moves towards the further fracturing and dislocation of the working classes initiated by economic restructuring. Having seen the benefits of people interacting shared gardens and management of communal facilities, I became increasingly drawn towards policy solutions for spatially concentrated poverty that not only gave people a real economic stake in their housing and neighbourhood – dweller control through asset ownership – but that also incorporated a collective aspect of cooperation.

Community land trusts were a relatively recent social innovation to emerge in Britain’s cities at around this time, and seemed to offer a genuine route to empowerment – through the promotion of community control of housing – where mixed communities initiatives were failing. I was lucky enough to secure an ESRC-funded PhD studentship in the planning department at the University of Manchester; and after finishing my Masters and moving to the city to begin a new research project, I decided I wanted to look into this alternative in more depth. My initial proposal for the PhD was to investigate the Mixed Communities agenda and the neighbourhood effects hypothesis, but by this point, times were changing, and austerity coupled with the Conservative’s Localism and Big Society agenda were the new games in
town. Large-scale state-led regeneration programmes seemed a thing of the past, and mixed communities were unlikely to be developed on any significant scale in the new climate. Moreover, I wanted to do something more creative with academic critique; something attuned to problem-solving in a more positive way than simply criticising policies for their failings. So looking into the development of mutual alternatives – like Community Land Trusts (CLTs) – was an exciting prospect. In London I had lived for a while not far away from the Elephant and Castle, where a familiar process of state-led redevelopment of a massive ex-council estate was occurring, and watched it slowly be emptied of its tenants. Later in Manchester, through my readings, I became aware of an unsuccessful campaign in the Elephant and Castle initiated by tenant groups at the start of this redevelopment process to explore the possibility of a CLT to resist displacement and retain tenant control. The idea of researching CLTs in London was definitely on the table.

However, the more I looked into it, delving into the history of mutual housing alternatives, I found that Liverpool had an especially rich history of different experiments, not just CLTs, but co-ops too. Moreover, it was one of the only cities outside London experimenting with the CLT model to challenge conventional regeneration processes – home to one of the first urban CLT campaigns in the country, Homebaked, which was well publicised on the web and in the literature. The more I looked the more I realised that there was something very special about Liverpool. It was dealing with very different problems to those facing London: public and private disinvestment, urban decay, depopulation and economic decline, as opposed to the hyper speculation and gentrification of the capital. There seemed something even more urgent about this context than one in which, despite all the social justice issues, people still wanted to live and in fact argued over who could do so.

In Liverpool, the challenge was how to regenerate entire neighbourhoods, left to fall into dereliction by structural forces and political decisions, and resolve poverty at the same time. This was the problem for housing and regeneration alternatives to resolve, and I set myself the challenge of finding out how – and how well – they have done this over Liverpool’s history. But before I could get under the skin of all this, to figure out the real socioeconomic and political potential of these alternatives – it occurred to me that the route to that answer would be first trying to understand why so many different mutual housing experiments had been able to find traction in this of all cities. Why Liverpool? I wanted to know why Liverpool was so unique in this mutual housing history, and so an in-depth critical historical analysis of the development of these different alternatives became my primary focus for the four years or so
of doctoral research. So began my academic and personal obsession with the city that has produced so many innovations in collective housing and regeneration alternatives – and, in turn, with complex questions around just how powerful the social practices, political institutions and cultural traditions particular to a place can possibly be in relation to wider systemic forces; just how dependent on specific place-based histories is the genesis and development of mutual housing alternatives; just how replicable are they to other contexts. These are a few of the questions I attempt to answer in this thesis, which, in a roundabout kind of way, I hope may help us better understand how to resolve longstanding issues of socio-spatial justice.
1. Introduction

Liverpool has long been a city of firsts; an urban laboratory for social, cultural and political innovation; a place where radical things happen. Over the course of its century and a half or so reign as England’s second commercial city and the British Empire’s primary seaport, Liverpool developed a self-confidence and ‘swagger’ that still shines through its culture today (Lane, 1997). During this heyday, the city was a global pioneer in public improvement works and social innovations, home to many global firsts: the world’s first enclosed stone dock in 1715; inter-city railway with Manchester in 1830; the first city to build public housing in 1869; pioneering the development of mass municipal housing, integrated sewerage systems, underground, overhead and overwater metro railways, prefabricated concrete housing, cast iron churches, electric trams, and the longest underwater road tunnel at the time – the list goes on (Sykes et al., 2013).

Underpinning this heritage of innovation is Liverpool’s ‘edginess’. The global trading links connecting Liverpool with far-flung places have been vital conduits for the transmission and cross-pollination of radical new ideas and cultures – leading to a perception of Liverpool as a cosmopolitan ‘edgy city’; as a ‘city on the edge’; a port city on the edge of the British Isles and Europe, at the intersection with other continents, full of ‘edgy people’ experimenting with cutting-edge ideas (Davies, 2008; Higginson and Wailey, 2006). Liverpool is said to have more in common with Atlantic port counterparts – Naples, Marseilles, Istanbul, New York, New Orleans, Kingston – than with other British cities: “the tides carry the rhythm” of these ‘maritime’ cities (Higginson & Wailey, 2006: 14). Movement is essential to Liverpool: expressed in the rhythms of the music that has come to define it – Mersey Beat and the Beatles – and the maritime flows of people and ideas, making it a hotbed of effervescent energy and creativity. Yet at the same time, it is a city with a very distinct identity – of Scouse and Scousers (Boland, 2008) – paradoxically disassociated from other places and turned inward towards its own unique culture as much as it can be said to be connected to others. This historical evolution as a place made up of migrants and intersections of ideas from elsewhere, but which have grown into their own, is tinged with a certain political flavour, distinctly radical, democratic and anti-authoritarian (see figure 1.1 below). It has been a hotbed of radicalism over the decades; experimenting with new forms of revolt and resistance; in turn leading to new forms of social organisation (Belchem and Biggs, 2011). Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that the city has continued to produce radical innovations long after its economic power has faded.
In the last several decades, Liverpool has led the way in housing activism. In the 1970s Liverpool spawned one of the largest, most concentrated and innovative working class housing cooperative movements Britain has ever seen. Most recently, the city has given birth to one of the country’s pioneering urban community land trusts, which has become the first community-led housing and neighbourhood regeneration project ever to win the national art award, the Turner Prize (Foster, 2015; Wainwright, 2015). Yet these are the products of severe urban problems which have also followed Liverpool down the decades; the creative solutions of community groups and local professionals reacting to basic needs being left unmet by the local state and economy. This thesis explores the historical development of these social innovations in Liverpool’s housing, and broader urban, context.
1.1 Liverpool’s Housing Question

Liverpool is a city struggling with two distinct but interrelated socio-spatial problems: the housing question and what I call the neighbourhood question. The first is a persistent housing crisis in which city authorities have struggled to provide enough decent housing for the populace, historically the poorest living in dockside communities (Couch, 2003; Parkinson, 1985). For much of Liverpool’s recent history, a large proportion of the total stock has been owned and managed as municipal housing by the council. This emerged partly as a response to the appalling conditions in the private-rented terraces and tenements built by speculative developers in the 19th century during Liverpool’s pre-eminence as a major global seaport (Sykes et al., 2013). Liverpool’s wealth and power was paid for with severe housing problems: side-effects of the accumulation of capital, in which the bare minimum of surplus capital produced by the exploitation of workers was allocated to the construction and maintenance of their dwellings. Liverpool was Britain’s leading slave port between 1699 and its abolition in 1807, and slaving profits continued to enrich the city at least until the British Empire as a whole abolished slavery in the 1830s – although no slaves actually passed through Liverpool itself (Sykes et al., 2013). Liverpool’s maritime economic base was driven by poor working class Brits as well as large numbers of migrants drawn to Liverpool from across the UK and around the globe, through its far-reaching trade connections. They settled in the waterfront districts in north and south Liverpool that developed behind the working docks, and which became incredibly dense and overcrowded, constituting “a city within a city” the size of Bristol or Newcastle in itself (Lane, 1997). Liverpool was regarded as the most unhealthy English city, with 34% of the city’s population in 1841 living in filthy overcrowded cellars without light, ventilation, sanitation or fresh water; 25% living in back-to-back tenement courthouses housing the growing numbers of dockworkers needed to work the burgeoning port activities (Ospina, 1987: 66).

All this was made worse by the sudden influx of Irish migrants escaping the Potato Famine of 1845-7: Liverpool was the first port of call for refugees, with some 2 million travelling through the city over the following decade (Sykes et al., 2013). Over half were designated by the authorities as ‘paupers’, and tens of thousands stayed, many settling in slum areas in the north end of the inner-city, built behind the docks that provided much of the employment, fuelled further by this massive influx of cheap labour (McBane, 2008). Housing conditions only deteriorated as new purpose-built tenements were thrown up by speculative builders, from which the phrase ‘Jerry-built houses’ is said to have originated (Cowan et al., 1988).
Here, in a passage from *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written in 1844, Friedrich Engels (1892) meticulously records the scale of the squalor:

Liverpool, with all its commerce, wealth, and grandeur yet treats its workers with the same barbarity. A full fifth of the population, more than 45,000 human beings, live in narrow, dark, damp, badly-ventilated cellar dwellings, of which there are 7,862 in the city. Besides these cellar dwellings there are 2,270 courts, small spaces built up on all four sides and having but one entrance, a narrow, covered passage-way, the whole ordinarily very dirty and inhabited exclusively by proletarians.

He also reports the shockingly low life expectancies of the time:

In Liverpool, in 1840, the average longevity of the upper classes, gentry, professional men, etc., was thirty-five years; that of the business men and better-placed handicraftsmen, twenty-two years; and that of the operatives, day-labourers, and serviceable class in general, but fifteen years.

His experience of Liverpool, and other northern industrial cities, inspired Engels (1872: 19) to write the *Housing Question*, in which he argued that “the housing shortage from which the workers and part of the petty bourgeoisie suffer in our modern big cities” is just “one of the numerous smaller, secondary evils which result from the present-day capitalist mode of production.” Liverpool’s housing problems raised huge doubts over the ability of the capitalist private sector to house the working classes in humane or minimally sanitary conditions. In response, the city’s paternalistic ‘bourgeois reformists’, as Engels would have seen them, inaugurated the world’s first Medical Officer of Health (MOH) and Borough Engineer in 1847 so as to begin to ameliorate some of the worst conditions through public improvements scheme such as sewers (Sykes et al., 2013) – but notably among the country’s first municipal housing schemes, which began to be built from 1869 to replace the back-to-back slums (Meegan, 1990). Yet even by 1880, some 70,000 people still lived in courthouses condemned as unfit for human habitation, in dockside districts, which as the new MOH remarked in 1882, were “plagued as the cholera-smitten cities”; and in 1902, another MOH reported that there was not a city in this country, nay in Europe, which could produce anything like the squalor that his officials found in some of Liverpool’s back streets (Lane, 1997: 66).

Through the 20th century, successive Liverpool City Council administrations began to take the housing question more seriously, and embarked on large-scale redevelopment programmes to replace terraced housing with modern tenements. Liverpool led the way in early municipal housing (Municipal Dreams, 2013; Sykes et al., 2013). The first phase of pre-war tenements
included experiments such as one of the first pre-fabricated concrete housing blocks in the world, at Eldon Street in 1905 (see figure 1.2 below). The second period, during the 1920s and ‘30s, saw the Conservative City Council – motivated by a mix of Tory paternalism and electoral tactics – construct monumental art deco ‘garden’ tenement blocks, arranged around a central communal courtyard or garden, and inspired by the municipal socialist schemes of Vienna, such as Karl Marx-Hof, through site visits made by Liverpool’s city architect and housing director to the city (McBane, 2008). Following the post-war birth of the welfare state, the third phase produced three-storey ‘walk-up’ tenements – built in the 1940s and ‘50s in infill sites left over by war damage or pre-war clearance (Mars, 1981).

Public improvement works did not get into their full swing until 1955, when the Labour Party were elected to the council for the first time in the city’s history – unusually late for a northern industrial city with a sizable working class population and socialist labour movement (Belchem and Biggs, 2011; Lane, 1997). Through the late 1950s and 1960s the new Labour administration engaged a full-frontal civic assault on the housing question with a massive programme of comprehensive redevelopment, through their ‘Slum Clearance Programme’ – reflecting trends across post-war Britain for comprehensive renewal (Cocks and Couch, 2012; Cole, 2012; Couch, 2003; Yelling, 1995, 2000). This saw the construction of the fourth and final wave of tenements: 4-5 storey flats and tower blocks (Mars, 1981). Due to myriad interlocking factors – inhumane designs, poor quality construction techniques and building materials, bureaucratic mismanagement – these tenements quickly deteriorated and became increasingly unpopular. Ironically, the old slum terraced housing was simply replaced with new slum conditions.

The comprehensive renewal mentality culminated in the municipal socialist regime of the 1983-5 Labour council, radicalised by the far-left Trotskyist sect Militant, which won the local election largely on the back of promises to improve council housing conditions through a massive housebuilding programme, replacing tenements with semi-detached houses (Frost and North, 2013; Taaffe and Mulhearn, 1988). When Patrick Jenkin, Thatcher’s Secretary of State for Environment, visited Liverpool on Militant’s invitation to convince him of the need for government funding of Liverpool’s budget for the renewal programme, he famously expressed shock at “families living in conditions the like I have never seen before…[they] beggar description” (quoted in Frost & North, 2013: 81). A few years earlier, Lane (1981: 18) had commented that “parts of this city, it is no exaggeration to say, are the European equivalents of the shanty towns of Rio de Janeiro, Lima and Santiago.” Although Militant did much to
ameliorate the worst of these conditions, a century on from Engels’ first outcry, it seemed too little had changed.

Figure 1.2: the tenements of Liverpool. St Martin’s Cottages (top left) was built in Vauxhall in 1869, the first council housing in England, photographed in 1944. (source: Municipal Dreams, 2013). Gerard Gardens (top right), a remarkable example of inter-war tenements, inspired by the municipal socialist schemes of Vienna. Only one of these structures remains today, St Andrew’s Gardens (middle), known as the ‘Bullring’ for obvious reasons, and now used as student accommodation. Tenements being demolished in the 1980s by Militant (bottom), including Gerard Gardens (bottom right) (source: Sinclair, 2014).
Indeed, the top-down bureaucratic nature and large-scale modernist urbanism of municipal housing caused as much suffering as it resolved: creating new forms of cultural and political deprivation, just as material conditions were, initially at least, much improved. The second strategy of this period of ‘slum clearance’ and comprehensive redevelopment was the development and expansion of new towns and outer estates on the metropolitan periphery of Merseyside – in places like Kirkby, Speke, Runcorn and Skelmersdale. Many of the residents removed from their ‘slum’ homes were offered new houses in these peripheral settlements with the promise of work in some of the newly relocated branch plants of multinational companies (Meegan, 1990). However, comprehensive renewal involved the displacement of thousands of people, and the dispersal of traditional tight-knit communities (McBane, 2008; Yelling, 2000). Such huge upheaval was accompanied by alienating living conditions in mass-produced modernist estates often built to low standards and poorly designed (Lane, 1978; Rogers, 2010). Moreover, many of the same problems facing the inner-city redevelopments also began to afflict the housing estates in the new towns; as ridiculed by many critics:

The housing in the new town itself, which wins awards from other architects who wouldn’t dream of living in it either, is clearly designed as storage units in which to keep your labour force when they’re off shift – as clinically efficient as a factory farm (Guardian article 29th April 1977, quoted in Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 61)

For Lane, the new estates were comparable to the devastation wrought by the Second World War Blitz: “blitz is evident here too.” He continues:

While multi-storey blocks are not quite such a prominent feature, the vast open spaces, the absence of localised meeting places and the fact that most of these estates have only been populated by two generations has left them without a collective character, without a history. (Lane, 1978: 339)

The alienation of council tenants continued with ineffective, distant and unresponsive housing management and maintenance by an absentee public landlord, with little resident involvement in decision-making (Ward, 1974). As a result, from the late 1960s, Liverpool’s inner-city residents have engaged in creative dissent – resisting the threat of displacement, demanding better quality housing, and campaigning for alternatives to public ownership that enable a greater degree of personal and collective control over the design, location and quality of their living environments (Towers, 1995). Out of this opposition, alternative forms were invented or reinvigorated, leading to the development of the self-help, cooperative, housing association and community architecture movements in the 1970s (Birchall, 1988; Towers, 1995; Wates & Knevitt, 1987). Into this fray, pioneering action-research projects sought to work in closer
collaboration with communities to improve their neighbourhoods from within – representing a ‘neighbourhood improvement’ approach (Lupton and Fuller, 2009) – including the Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP) in Liverpool (McConaghy, 1972), running in parallel to the Community Development Projects (CDP) across the UK from 1968 (Loney, 1983).

In the late 1970s Liverpool produced one of the most innovative working class movements for cooperative housing in British history, larger than a similar movement in Glasgow, and rivalling in scale and scope a contemporaneous movement in London (Birchall, 1988; Clapham and Kintrea, 1992; Lusk, 1998; Towers, 1995). SNAP experimented with the country’s first rehab co-ops in the early 1970s, which paved the way for the first new-build co-op to be campaigned for, designed, owned and managed by its resident-members, the Weller Streets (McDonald, 1986). Incorporating radical new ideas around dweller control, design democracy and participatory planning techniques associated with SNAP and ‘community architecture’ (Towers, 1995; Wates and Knevitt, 1987), the ‘Weller Way’ model inspired a new wave of new-build co-ops across Liverpool (Lusk, 1998). This radical moment – Liverpool’s ‘cooperative revolution’ (CDS, 1994), or ‘co-op spring’ (Ospina, 1987) – fermented belief in the political potential of the co-op movement to revolutionise public housing in Britain. Although the democratic moment that spawned the movement soon faded – and political changes in urban policy and governance conspired with deeper structural shifts to arrest their further development – it nonetheless left Liverpool a legacy of some 50 co-ops, almost all still functioning today. These provide a vision of how public housing and neighbourhood regeneration could be managed differently in the future.

Fast forward to the 21st century, and a second democratic moment, following the 2008 financial crisis, has inspired a new generation of mutual alternatives to state-led urban and housing policy in Liverpool, this time coalescing around the Community Land Trust (CLT) model. CLTs are another model of mutual housing, similar to co-ops, though distinct in separating the ownership of land from buildings: the former owned by a community trust, managed democratically by resident-members; the latter leased out or rented as affordable housing and other community uses to local residents, including co-op groups (Conaty and Large, 2013; Davis, 2010b).

Liverpool’s co-op and CLT movements each represent a return to the kind of small-scale resident-led cooperative and mutual experiments that Engels vehemently critiqued in the Housing Question; resuscitating an age-old debate over how to deal with the housing crisis produced by capitalist urbanisation. Whether, as Engels (1872: 74) argued, that “the solution
lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself”, owned and managed collectively by the socialist state; or rather, as his anarchist antagonist Proudhon contended, that small-scale mutual initiatives, in which new forms of social organisation are tested out in the here and now through incremental grassroots experimentation, can reform state capitalist structures from within (Kropotkin, 1974; Ward, 1973). With the city’s co-op movement politically challenged and ‘municipalised’ by the municipal-socialist policies of the far left Militant-dominated Labour council (Lusk, 1998), we see the beginnings of in 1980s Liverpool – as Hodkinson (2012) has proclaimed more generally for our contemporary era – the return of the housing question. This thesis attempts to shed light onto this enduring debate from a different angle: through the lens of Liverpool’s political and social history. I explore how mutual and cooperative alternatives to public housing ownership first gained a foothold in Liverpool’s urban governance structures, what effects they have had on the city’s housing sector, and indeed, their contribution to resolving the second related socio-spatial problem: inner-city decline.
1.2 Liverpool’s Neighbourhood Question

Between 1966 and 1977 the heart was torn out of Liverpool…15% of land is either vacant or derelict. The largest amount of open space in any city in Britain. A testimony to the folly of politicians and planners…Clear the slums, build a motorway system to the docks, rehouse people on the estates…The population of the inner city was cut by half in these ‘boom’ years – 800,000 to 500,000…The people of Liverpool have to live with the devastation that remains. (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 57)

The second problem facing Liverpool – the ‘neighbourhood question’ – pivots around how to resolve the complex set of ‘wicked’ problems (Cole, 2012) produced by uneven urban development and spatially concentrated poverty: localised depopulation, deprivation, housing vacancy, dereliction, housing market failure and neighbourhood abandonment. This has been catalysed by the city’s inexorable economic decline.

Liverpool is a city of contradictions; a city of boom and bust. At its height, it was the one of the greatest ports the world has ever seen – the logistical nerve-centre of the British Empire at its apex. Its great wealth is still evident in the legacy of monumental architecture, with more listed buildings than anywhere outside London of all British cities – and UNESCO World Heritage status (Sykes et al., 2013). An impending structural economic collapse in the 20th century was momentarily masked by the Second World War – and the city entered a brief golden age of post-war prosperity and cultural renaissance in the 1960s. This was the era of rock ‘n’ roll and the Beat poets and Liverpool produced its own home-grown talent – the Beatles, Mersey Beat and the Mersey poets – that would fix the city in the minds of people across the globe for decades to come. The counter-cultural poet Allen Ginsberg arrived in Liverpool in 1965, declaring the city to be “at the present moment, the centre of consciousness of the human universe” (Frost & North, 2013: 8); psychoanalyst Carl Jung had likewise visited Liverpool and famously recorded a dream in which he believed that “Liverpool is the pool of life” (Jung, 1961). This was Liverpool’s late ‘Indian Summer’ before winter fell; a time when unemployment was only 5%, residual wealth was still circulating, and the working classes had gained the confidence to challenge the cultural authority of ruling elites:

In the 1960s Liverpool became the working class capital of the UK. No city could have been better equipped to express the brash self-confidence of young working people; the anarchic solidarism of the seafarer was just perfect for the temper of the times. This was also the decade of shopfloor liberation. The yoke of the old autocracy in the trade union movement was being lifted and a belief in the virtues of local self-government and direct
action rippled out into the sleepiest quarters of the labour markets. (Lane, 1986: 11)

In the 1960s, Liverpool gained a reputation for trade union militancy, which social historian Tony Lane (1997) understands as not necessarily representative of the frequency, scale or success of trade union organisation – which actually lagged behind the more disciplined and organised movements of the manufacturing and extraction industries in other northern cities – but rather more of the style of action: spontaneous, volatile and anarchic; gestures inherited from the seafaring lifestyle, the casualised nature of docks work, and the influence of anarcho-syndicalism over more traditional labour movement ideologies. For Lane, these specific forms of labour empowerment influenced the activism that was beginning to emerge in the sphere of social reproduction, over collective consumption issues, notably housing. However, Liverpool’s ‘swagger’ – the sense of collective importance, confidence, independent-mindedness, and self-belief – was not only appropriated by the working classes for cultural expression and political resistance, but also perhaps infected the outlook of the elected representatives and bureaucratic authorities in their ambitious interventions in the built environment, which were to compound Liverpool’s sudden economic decline.

The scale of Liverpool’s achievements is matched only by the rate and depth of its fall from grace. One of the most alarming diagnoses in the midst of this decline is provided by the Merseyside Socialist Research Group, in their 1980 study of ‘Merseyside in Crisis’:

Liverpool, at the heart of the region, has been ravaged. From a thriving merchant city, with more millionaires than any other provincial city, it has become an “unwanted mausoleum”. People are leaving Liverpool at an alarming rate – 12,000 a year. Many see no hope for the future. (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 7)

The seeds of the problem grew in the early 20th century as the British Empire began to dissolve, and Britain’s trading partners shifted from Atlantic-facing colonies to Europe and Asia, thereby leaving Liverpool, in Lane’s (1997: 46) oft-quoted maritime metaphor, “marooned on the wrong side of the country”. This long-term structural shift slowly devastated the maritime economy upon which Liverpool’s wealth and social purpose was built. In the 1920s and 1930s, the new mass-production industries that were beginning to locate in other port cities like London were desperately needed to replace the labour-intensive maritime industries, but largely bypassed the region altogether (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 37). Added to this were the effects of technological change – the rationalisation, eventual containerisation, and general abstraction of port activities – which meant that
Liverpool’s port economy shed its workforce at a rate far outweighing the loss of its economic value. In fact, Patrick Keiller (2013: 41) reminds us, the port is still the UK’s largest, handling more traffic today than at its peak, and that

The dereliction of the Liverpool waterfront is a result not of the port’s disappearance, but of its new insubstantiality. The warehouses that used to line both sides of the river have been superseded by a fragmented, mobile space: goods vehicles moving or parked on the UK's roads – the road system as a publicly-funded warehouse.

Although port traffic is quantitatively back at its peak today – due to Britain’s need for consumer imports – the shipping industry headquarters that, qualitatively, had made Liverpool a world city, such as White Star and Cunard, have long disappeared, and technological abstraction has virtually eliminated its main source of employment in dock-related industries. However, the effects of technological change should not be overemphasised: from the 1960s to the 1980s, Liverpool’s port activity suffered a huge decline through economic restructuring alone, with the 7.5 mile long southern dock system closing entirely in 1971 (Sykes et al., 2013). This set the tone for what would be a devastating decade for Liverpool:

The 1970s have been disastrous years for Merseyside and for Liverpool in particular. 1971 saw a record number of redundancies – 12,750 in all. Since then in the six years up to 1977, a further 66,000 have joined them in the dole queues... Manufacturing companies were particularly keen to rationalise – and they accounted for nearly two-thirds of the total losses between 1975 and 1977 (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 10)

Liverpool desperately needed manufacturing jobs to replace the vanishing maritime industries, yet the multi-national companies that had been attracted to Merseyside were rationalising their labour force or simply leaving the region – which thus gained the dubious accolade: ‘Bermuda Triangle of British capitalism’ (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 9). Between 1979 and 1984, Liverpool lost almost 40,000 jobs, almost half all manufacturing jobs (Frost & North, 2013: 17). Unemployment was the first consequence. This was radically unevenly distributed and felt far more keenly by the inner-city dockside communities, being so dependent on the largely unskilled casual jobs associated with the docks, than any other:

The Liverpool City Planning Dept. reckons that unemployment in Liverpool in the area immediately adjacent to the north docks must be approaching 50 per cent and around 40 per cent in the south docks. Those rates taper off as you go inland through the outer zones of the inner area, down to next to nothing as you go through the middle class suburbs, and up again to about 18 per cent when you have reached the perimeter estates. (Lane, 1978: 338)
The second consequence of the crisis was population loss, as people left in search of work, or were forcibly removed in the slum clearance programmes that had been de-densifying these neighbourhoods for several decades. According to some, these seismic structural economic shifts were compounded by “major self-inflicted public policy mistakes” to create the “perfect storm” for a vicious cycle of decline (Sykes et al., 2013: 307). For these critics (Lane, 1978; Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980; Sykes et al., 2013) it was this burst of civic renewal energy, driven by the local state, which combined with broader economic shifts to precipitate Liverpool’s sudden economic crash in the 1970s. Thousands of working class people were removed from inner-city Liverpool to the outer estates by redevelopment efforts during the post-war period – and by the end of 1970s, according to some estimates, 160,000 people had been displaced to the metropolitan periphery (Sykes et al., 2013). This figure is additional to the thousands of recently unemployed that were emigrating of their own volition to look for employment opportunities elsewhere. In sum, around three quarters of the docklands population were lost, leaving 60% unemployment rates for those left behind (Lane, 1997: 126). The dual effect of economic restructuring and state-led renewal has been described by Lane (1997: 140) as “a sort of latter-day urban equivalent of the Highland clearances of several hundred years ago”.

The slum clearances implemented by Liverpool City Council helped carve the ensuing economic blight more firmly into the city’s fabric. For the most damning critics, it amounted to a tragic repeat of the blitz on the city during World War Two, as figure 1.3 and the following quotes viscerally demonstrate:

Liverpool…has suffered two blitzes in the last 30 years. The first left the whole city ruined but defiant. The second has picked off areas with equally devastating results. The new enemy is faceless…
The peace-time blitz of Liverpool does not simply consist of waste-land where buildings once stood: it consists also of publicly-owned dwellings, none of them more than 50 years old and most a good deal newer, in an advanced state of decay (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980: 67; 338)

Liverpool was left with the largest amount of “open-space” of any city in Britain. The decline of Liverpool is not simply statistical—it is visible. “It looks as if it’s been bombed” is a favourite local expression that does not exaggerate. (Lane, 1978: 337)
Whilst the actions of the local state should not be overemphasised in relation to the brute economic reality – even with this internal metropolitan migration taken into account, the population of the overall Merseyside conurbation nonetheless fell from a peak of 1.8 million to around 1.3 million today (Cocks and Couch, 2012) – their specific effects on particular neighbourhoods were devastating. The weakening of collective consumption capacity and private spending on local goods and services by this loss of working-age population impacted on the income streams for local shops and businesses and contributed to their long-term decline and environmental blight (Sykes et al., 2013). Such shockwaves ricocheted up to the
city-regional scale. Although the council had attempted to extend the city of Liverpool’s boundaries several times during the post-war years, they had been unsuccessful, so the effects of shipping thousands of the active-age workforce out of the city beyond the tax base was to remove a large proportion of the council’s income stream from rates, or council tax, to pay for the services for those left behind (Lane, 1986). Moreover, the “reduction in population was not accompanied by a pro rata reduction in the cost of services and so the gap between costs and rate revenue grew steadily wider” (Lane, 1986: 11) – leaving Liverpool with a black hole in its finances for decades to come. This brought the city ‘to the brink’ of collapse during the ‘lost decade’ of the 1970s, and helped secure Militant’s defeat in fighting central government against budget cuts (Parkinson, 1985). Liverpool has been struggling to address the neighbourhood question – the persistence of spatially concentrated poverty and inner-city urban decline – ever since.

Socially and culturally, this had an incredibly destructive impact. Rising poverty and neglect in particular inner-city neighbourhoods eventually broke through stress tolerance limits, when in 1981 a combination of these forces with feelings of racial persecution and discrimination among the black community in the south end erupted into violence with protests and rioting in Toxteth, known locally as the ‘81 Uprising, and nationally as the Toxteth Riots, mirroring similar outbreaks in Brixton, London (Frost and Phillips, 2011). This helped sour national popular opinion and media perceptions of Liverpool; reaching new lows as the ‘basket case’ of Britain:

They should build a fence around [Liverpool] and charge admission. For sadly, it has become a ‘showcase’ of everything that has gone wrong in Britain’s major cities (Daily Mirror, 11th Oct 1982) (quoted in Lane, 1997)

Having hit rock bottom from such great heights – an ‘outrider’ of economic restructuring processes, being amongst the first cities in the world to experience industrial growth and also dramatic deindustrialisation and decline – Liverpool has in turn become both a pioneer and testbed of various policy experiments and social innovations in local economic regeneration and urban renewal. Indeed, in his account of the city’s battle with government cuts during this difficult period, Michael Parkinson (1985:16) provides a list of those emanating from central government:

Since the 1960s, the city has been the recipient, or victim, of every urban experiment invented, including Tony Crosland’s educational priority areas, Jim Callaghan’s traditional urban programme, Roy Jenkin’s community development projects, the Home Office’s Brunswick neighbourhood
project, Peter Walker’s inner area studies, Peter Shore’s inner city partnerships, Geoffrey Howe’s enterprise zones and Michael Heseltine’s urban development corporations. Two decades of experience of those policies had not substantially improved the city’s problems.

Through the 1990s, Liverpool became particularly adept at attracting regeneration funding from both the national state and the EU, particularly the Objective One Structural Funds ‘Pathways to Integration’ Programme (Meegan and Mitchell, 2001), leading some to characterise the local state as playing the ‘regeneration game’: 

Liverpool’s vivid socio-economic and environmental degradation, alongside its rich cultural capital and architectural legacies (often seen as being at risk), has given momentum to intensive processes of ‘regeneration’, latterly drawing upon large sums of national and European Union monies. Ahead of many other urban localities, processes of regeneration have led to the formation of new semi-permanent governance frameworks, involving multi-level ‘collaborative milieus’ of local, regional and national institutions. ‘Regeneration’ has become the city’s dominant, if seldom quantified or questioned, objective. (Sykes, Brown, Cocks, Shaw, & Couch, 2013: 300)

Yet despite successive area-based initiatives – nearly two generations of regeneration – too little progress has been made with the city’s persistent problem of concentrated poverty:

Liverpool is the most deprived borough in England. Spatially concentrated deprivation is among the most acute in the UK in Liverpool’s central, northern and peripheral residential districts, with some 70% of the city’s 33 electoral wards within the 10% most deprived in England and Wales. (Sykes et al., 2013: 300)

The stubborn persistence in Liverpool of these problems – expressed singularly as the ‘neighbourhood question’ – demonstrates the limitations of conventional state-led programmes, and the need for developing alternative forms of social housing provision and urban regeneration. The failure of state-led programmes to resolve Liverpool’s neighbourhood question is evident in the visible dereliction and vacancy of large areas of the inner-city – little different from the so-called peacetime ‘blitz’ of 1960s (see figure 1.3) – mostly the result of the latest round of large-scale comprehensive redevelopment, the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder programme. In our emerging era of ‘austerity urbanism’ (Peck, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013) precipitated by the post-2008 global economic downturn and drastic cuts to public services, HMR was prematurely cancelled mid-way through its programme, leaving swathes of empty homes and derelict land without the funds for either refurbishment or redevelopment. But austerity cuts two ways: damaging the state’s capacity to invest in declining areas – and cutting funding to existing programmes like HMR – but also opening up
windows of opportunity for mutual alternatives to emerge. In 2011, the same year HMR was pulled – the ‘year of dreaming dangerously’ (Žižek, 2012) – some of the country’s first urban community land trusts (CLTs) were established in Liverpool as legal entities (Moore, 2014). Granby Four Streets CLT and Homebaked CLT are innovative projects conceived out of opposition to HMR, aiming at acquiring and rehabilitating for community use the terraced housing and local assets left vacant and derelict by economic decline and failed state-led renewal. These are the first British experiments to apply the CLT model to the problems of a disinvested urban context, as opposed to their predominant use in tackling rural affordability or urban gentrification and financial speculation (Moore and McKee, 2012).

Taken together, co-ops and CLTs represent alternative mutual models for affordable housing ownership and neighbourhood regeneration which share several characteristics sharply distinguishing them from conventional approaches. First, they employ participatory methods that are spatially piecemeal, temporally incremental, socially inclusive, immersive and experimental; whereas the latter are more top-down, monolithic, abstract, evidence-based, technocratic and bureaucratic (Tonkiss, 2013). Second, they are place-based organisations with geographically-defined memberships aiming at community self-government – owning and managing land, housing and other assets in a democratic, cooperative and participatory way for the use of local people (Moore, 2014). Third, they are non-profit, self-sustaining regeneration vehicles that decommodify land so as to capture the value of assets and recycle surpluses locally for community benefit (DeFilippis, 2004). Moreover, they are initiated by communities and other actors at the local level as means to explicitly challenge conventional state-led approaches and offer alternative solutions to managing urban change. This thesis tells the story of Liverpool’s experimentation with community-led alternatives.
1.3 Research rationale, aim and objectives

Old problems need new solutions – and in developing the Granby Four Streets area, we have worked with a complex mix of partners to pull together a major refurbishment programme. Granby Four Streets is at the forefront of the Urban Community Land Trust movement in the North West – and we are proud to support it. (Ann O’Byrne, Liverpool Council Cabinet Member for Housing, public speech at Granby CLT Launch, 9th October 2014)

As Liverpool’s Council Member for Housing has recently acknowledged, the deficiencies of conventional urban policy to adequately resolve Liverpool’s enduring housing and urban crises demand academic and policy attention be turned towards new and creative solutions. In this way, the co-op and CLT movements can be understood as moments of intensive ‘social innovation’ (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). As in other examples of social innovation, co-ops and CLTs are localised responses to the inability of larger-scale institutions to ensure an adequate quality of life for the citizens concerned (Maccallum et al., 2009; Moulaert et al., 2013). Each developed new ideas, approaches and ways of thinking – or applied old ideas to new contexts – to address persistent socio-spatial problems experienced at a local level: centring on the poor provision and condition of public housing, the (mis)management of neighbourhood services and the need for regeneration of the urban environment. This thesis therefore focuses on understanding how Liverpool’s social innovations in mutual housing first took root as grassroots campaigns, how they gained traction within existing institutional ensembles, and how they may have acted to transform those institutions and the urban environment itself. Fundamentally, I aim to understand how small-scale, localised, cooperative and community-led forms of public housing may be institutionalised within existing governance structures as alternatives to large-scale state organisations, housing associations, and other public-private partnerships.

In what follows, I construct a critical explanation of why these innovative mutual models developed in Liverpool, in this specific form, and in these particular neighbourhoods, and how Liverpool’s politics and culture enabled these experiments to emerge and flourish. Informing this endeavour is a deeper concern with the potential transformative power of small-scale place-based experiments to pursue alternative visions that effect urban change at both the neighbourhood and ‘higher’ spatial scales; proactively countering adverse effects of global economic restructuring, uneven urban development, and spatially concentrated deprivation. By tracing the genesis of factors that shape these projects, I aim to understand how they have been influenced, channelled or constrained to various degrees by the path
dependencies of broader structures, on the one hand, and on the other, the contingencies of culture and specificities of place, or what might be called 'place-dependencies'. The overall research aim and research objectives of the thesis are defined in figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: Thesis aim and research objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis Aim</th>
<th>To critically examine the emergence of urban community land trusts in Liverpool as a means of promoting affordable housing and neighbourhood renewal, in the local historical context of mutual housing experimentation since the 1960s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective One</td>
<td>To investigate the role of mutual housing in addressing neighbourhood decline, through the conceptual lens of social innovation and Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Two</td>
<td>To develop an in-depth understanding of how diverse actors, organisations, politico-institutional processes, socio-economic conditions, and cultural contexts have interacted in Liverpool to catalyse and shape the development of mutual housing alternatives since the 1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Three</td>
<td>To critically examine how different alternatives to conventional public sector housing provision developed and institutionalised over time, including their role in transforming Liverpool’s urban spaces and governance structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Four</td>
<td>To investigate the influence of place on Liverpool’s recent history of mutual housing experimentation, and the challenges posed for replication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 Structure of the thesis

Having introduced the research, the main body of the thesis is divided into six chapters, historical and theoretical background; research design and methods; three empirical chapters each exploring an historical period and the case-studies of this research; and a concluding discussion chapter.

In Chapter Two, I present a review of the relevant literature, and build the case for analysing the development of Liverpool’s mutual housing alternatives through the theoretical lens of social innovation, reconceptualised in terms of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). The first half – sections 1 and 2 – of the chapter can be read as a history of the housing and neighbourhood questions as they relate to Liverpool, in which I weave together a narrative covering both the policy and academic responses to problems thrown up by capitalist urbanisation dynamics. In the first section, I introduce mutual housing alternatives as forms of collective action and social innovation, before sketching a history of alternatives through successive ‘cycles of contention’. Through this historical narrative, I explore Engel’s Housing Question in more depth, explaining how it has evolved since the early days of industrialisation and the first cycle of contention through the 20th century into a more complex problem encompassing cultural and political forms of deprivation in addition to material exploitation. Here, I introduce the thought of Henri Lefebvre, Colin Ward and John FC Turner as the primary conceptual reference points for understanding the new housing question.

In the second section, I continue this history, showing how the neighbourhood question has asserted itself as the primary problem in the latter half of the 20th century. I begin by exploring how the mutual alternatives arising out of the collective action of the second cycle of contention in the post-war period produced relatively progressive regeneration programmes, working with communities to improve neighbourhoods from within, which I define as the ‘neighbourhood improvement’ approach. I then show how this has been slowly usurped by increasingly neoliberal policies, culminating in the ‘neighbourhood transformation’ approach, marked by the Mixed Communities agenda and housing market restructuring, which I demonstrate to compound rather than resolve housing and urban problems. I finish the history by showing how resistance to these trends has led to another third cycle of collective action and the re-emergence of social innovation as an area of academic interest – before outlining its relevance as a conceptual framework for this thesis.

In the third section, I argue that mutual housing alternatives and the neighbourhood improvement approach have greater potential to resolve socio-spatial deprivation than
conventional policies centred on the neighbourhood transformation approach. By way of a preliminary answer to Research Objective One, more fully addressed in the Conclusion, I reinterpret the social innovation framework as it has been applied to the study of ‘disintegrating neighbourhoods’ – the question of can neighbourhoods save the city? (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010) – to ask instead: can mutual housing save the neighbourhood? In order to be in a position to answer it, I analyse in more depth the specific features and values which constitute mutual housing as distinct a form of property ownership. Here, I trace the conceptual distinctions between the commons, as counterpoised to enclosure, and what critical property theorists call the ‘ownership model’ – encompassing both private and public forms of ownership (Blomley, 2004b; Singer, 2000a). I then explain how mutual housing models express and fulfil certain use values and housing rights which other forms of property struggle to do, and relate them to certain rights discourses, particularly Lefebvre’s Right to the City. I demonstrate how each particular mutual housing model, focusing on co-ops and CLTs, may possibly act to meet housing needs and protect rights in ways which may contribute to resolving socio-spatial deprivation. This also provides a brief history of the mutual models as they have emerged in Britain, with particular reference to Liverpool throughout.

In the third section, I consider the challenges of institutionalising mutual alternatives in the context of the dominant system of private property relations, before discussing the crucial role of the state. I argue that mutual housing alternatives struggle to gain traction within the ownership model, and must resort to unconventional and insurgent methods; yet their successful development, via the acquisition of land and public assets, ultimately relies upon the crucial support of the state and professional expertise.

Finally, in the fourth section, I situate this within theories of urban change and construct a more spatialised conceptualisation of social innovation through engagement with Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) theory of the production of space. First, in reference to Liverpool’s unique history, I consider the role of path-dependencies and specific ‘place effects’ – the influence of geographical and historical context – in the development of the Liverpool case studies, providing the conceptual apparatus for addressing Research Objective Four. Assessing the power of mutual alternatives to resolve the neighbourhood question requires an understanding of the dynamics of neighbourhood change. Against orthodox theories, I argue for a socio-spatial approach to place-making, in which mutual housing initiatives are conceptualised as ‘spatial projects’ (Madden, 2014). Drawing on the work of Lefebvre (1991,
I construct a theoretical foundation for understanding socio-spatial innovation as a complex, conflictual and contested process of experimentation with new ideas to resolve persistent sociospatial problems through urban transformation at the local scale.

Chapter Three presents the methodological considerations in designing and carrying out the research. I explain the rationale behind choosing Liverpool as the main focus, and the case study selection process, before introducing the case studies in more depth. The research process is then explained in detail, from design through to writing up findings. I take a qualitative historical-comparative approach to understanding divergent trajectories of specific mutual housing projects, before concluding with reflections on the historiographical and ethical issues involved in writing social history.

The central concern of the thesis is to critically investigate in empirical depth the socioeconomic, political and historical reasons for the development of mutual housing alternatives – Research Objective Two – and how far these experiments have been able to transform both institutional structures and neighbourhood trajectories, as Objective Three. For this, I employ a genealogical approach to delve into the historical and geographical connections between distinct experiments, events, movements, organisations and actors. The genealogy is presented in my empirical findings, which are structured into three chapters, each charting a different period in Liverpool’s mutual housing history.

Chapter Four addresses the period 1960–1983, tracing the evolution of housing co-ops, from their early origins in SNAP and rehab policy, to the burgeoning new-build co-op movement initiated by the Weller Streets. Chapter Five takes off directly from Chapter Four – beginning in 1983 with the election of Militant – to consider their ideological conflict with the co-ops, in particular the Eldonians. This chapter concludes with an explanation of why so little mutual housing experimentation occurred during the 1990s, following the 1988 Housing Act. In Chapter Six, I explore the recent resurgence of mutual housing, with the emerging CLT movement, from the early 21st century to the present; positioning this in the historical context of SNAP and Liverpool’s regeneration policies.

Finally, Chapter Seven brings all these findings together for a critical discussion of the history of mutual housing development in Liverpool. Here, I critically compare each movement and period to construct a general history, relating my findings back to original conceptual concerns by addressing each research objective in turn. I argue that the dynamics of
Liverpool's CLT campaigns can only be properly understood in relation to the history of co-op development preceding it; presenting particular challenges for replication elsewhere.
2. Theoretical and historical background

2.1 The New Housing Question

We are still struggling to answer Engel’s (1872) Housing Question – posed in response to processes of capitalist urbanisation originated by initial acts of enclosure. These forced people from collective means of sustaining and housing themselves, and into speculatively-built mass terraced housing in burgeoning industrial cities to individually sell their labour for a living (Ward, 1985). Colin Ward (1990: 101) argues that for 90% of human history people have housed themselves, only denied this freedom and direct relation to the activity of dwelling once industrial capitalism began forcing people off the land and into mass manufactured houses in burgeoning industrial cities like Liverpool, “because by that time the space, the materials and the means of subsistence all belonged to someone else”. The persistent housing crisis of industrial capitalism – rising costs, declining quality, shortages, squalid conditions, exploitation and alienation – was, for a period in the mid-twentieth century, largely ameliorated by the construction of a comprehensive welfare system (Harloe, 1995; Kemeny, 1982). Yet state-led attempts at de-commodification, whilst making great gains in protecting a large section of society from housing scarcity and squalor, created a unique set of problems for tenants, who suffered a loss of autonomy, alienation and the threat of displacement through top-down urban renewal and bureaucratic management (Ward, 1985). Moreover, the gains made by municipal management of housing have been successively eroded by processes of privatisation and marketisation in the ‘new urban enclosures’ (Hodkinson, 2012a) – regressive trends prompting Hodkinson (2012b) to recently proclaim the ‘return of the housing question’. The first part of this chapter sketches a history of how we got here, exploring the various state and citizen-led attempts to resolve the housing and neighbourhood questions – with especial relevance for Liverpool – and how these changes have been reflected in critical urban theory.

The housing and neighbourhood questions originate in processes of capitalist urbanisation, initiated through acts of enclosure of the commons (Linebaugh, 2009; Ward, 1985). Enclosure, dispossession and commodification of common land created the capitalist preconditions of mass wage labour as the ‘midwife’ of the capitalist city (De Angelis, 2006; Hodkinson, 2012a). As a reaction seeking to address these problems of expropriation, displacement, and exploitation, underpinning capitalist enclosure and industrial urbanisation,
various new models of social organisation – ‘social innovations’ – have been experimented with by different groups in society (Martinelli, 2010). There are three fundamental types of property relations – labour, land, and capital, and recently a fourth, knowledge (Meehan, 2014) – and concomitant with capitalist property institutions’ commodification of these domains have been attempts at de-commodification through new institutions, including: worker cooperatives; housing cooperatives, mutual housing societies and community land trusts; and credit unions and building societies (DeFilippis, 2004). Such institutions are described by DeFilippis (1999; 2004) as collective re-appropriation of the ownership of means of production, reproduction, and exchange. A related perspective explicitly situates these institutional innovations in the history of enclosure, as re-appropriations of the commons (Conaty and Large, 2013; De Angelis, 2006; Hodkinson, 2012a; Linebaugh, 2014). The commons describes the domain of social activity and circuits of value remaining or fought free from the capitalist logic of exchange relations and private ownership (De Angelis, 2006). It also describes directly participatory and localised relations of cooperation, mutual aid, and democratic decision-making, rather than hierarchical and representative political structures associated with the state (Cumbers, 2015; Linebaugh, 2009). Some alternative land and housing ownership models come close to articulating the commons in institutional form; notably Garden Cities, mutual housing societies, cooperatives and land trusts (Hodkinson, 2012b). We might call these ‘mutual housing models’ by virtue of the mutualistic relations between members, especially the holding of land and assets in common, and their heritage in the long political tradition of mutualism (Rodgers, 1999; Rowlands, 2011).

Early mutual experiments were reactions to the exploitation of early industrial capitalism; part of what Tarrow (1994) and Tilly (1978) call the ‘first modern cycle of contention’. This began with the workers’ socialist movements in the sphere of production around 1848 – the year that Marx and Engel’s Communist Manifesto was published, which helped inspire factory-based revolts across Europe (Martinelli, 2010). From there, the movement split into various anarchist, communist and social-democratic strands, and eventually became absorbed and institutionalised into state-capitalist ensembles through the successful incorporation of worker demands into better working conditions, and the formation of formal political parties and trade unions which represented and organised action on behalf of the working classes (Martinelli, 2010). This split and eventual co-optation of revolutionary elements can be traced back to a rift in socialist thought between the revolutionary or scientific socialism of Marx and his followers, and the utopianism of anarchists such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, whose ideology the former derided as naïve, thereby giving ‘utopia’ a bad name (Buber, 1958).
In the sphere of social reproduction, meanwhile, various movements sought to resolve the housing, and broader social question – which can be broken down into four strands, including utopian socialism (Buber, 1958; Martinelli, 2010; Martinelli et al., 2003). First, the utopian socialists such as Fourier, Proudhon, Saint-Simon and Robert Owen devised visions of future utopias and experimented with socialist communes and communities, notably Owen’s New Lanark. Second, a related strand of liberal-bourgeois philanthropy and reformism describes the earliest reformist efforts of the emerging middle classes to ameliorate the worst excesses of capitalism through paternalistic and moralising experiments in social improvement generally seeking to develop ‘model’ communities, which through cross-pollination with utopian socialism, informed Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities and the early town planning movement. This was the era of embryonic housing associations: philanthropic organisations, model dwelling companies and charitable trusts, such as Peabody, known as ‘5 per cent philanthropy’ orgs, in which social investors took a low return but profit nonetheless (Malpass, 2000).

Second, church-initiated charity, more common in Catholic southern Europe than the UK, but nonetheless visible later in the galvanisation of the cooperative housing movement in the 1970s by church-initiated housing associations and charities, such as Shelter (Malpass, 2000). Third, the most influential strand of mutualism and cooperativism, which unlike the liberal-bourgeois and church-based initiatives, was self-initiated and self-organised by people themselves, not via paternalistic philanthropy. Mutualism continued the medieval mutualist tradition of guilds, brotherhoods and civic associations, enriched with the utopian philosophies informing the ‘model’ communities of the early 19th century to create mutualism, and later fusing this with the socialist philosophies emerging in the workers’ anarchist and communist movements to produce worker’s cooperatives and the cooperative movement in housing and other everyday spheres (Martinelli, 2010). Cooperativism had a big political impact in late 19th century Britain, building into a significant mode of provision across the three property domains, based on the consumer co-op model of the Rochdale Pioneers, founded in 1844 – the beginnings of the modern cooperative movement (Birchall, 1988, 1991; Ward, 1983; Woodin et al., 2010). Although the co-op movement had a big political impact, cooperatives were overshadowed and marginalised by monopoly capital and state provision of social necessities such as housing, with the rise of state capitalism through the 20th century (Martinelli, 2010). Only after state control of social welfare was discredited in the crisis of Fordism, did cooperativism and mutualism regain political and institutional traction with the emergence of the post-Fordist third sector.
Despite the gradual resolution of much of early industrial housing squalor through state-led reforms and what Engels derided as ‘bourgeois socialism’, he was unbending in insisting that

As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself” (Engels 1872: 73-4).

This is because, like Marx, Engels saw “the housing shortage from which the workers and part of the petty bourgeoisie suffer in our modern big cities” as just “one of the numerous smaller, secondary evils which result from the present-day capitalist mode of production” (Engels, 1872: 19). Thus Engels condemns Proudhon and his followers as ‘bourgeois reformists’ and ‘practical socialists’ working in vain to improve the lot of the working classes through self-help experiments; contending that Proudhon’s equation of the tenant-landlord relation with the labour-capital relation – which Engels paraphrases, “As the wage worker in relation to the capitalist, so is the tenant in relation to the house owner” – “is totally untrue” (Engels 1872: 21).

A similar debate had been raging in France, where the concept of ‘social innovation’ was first coined in the early 19th century as a derogatory label criticising early utopian-socialist experiments envisioned by the likes of Fourier or Saint-Simon in France for ignoring the structural constraints of capitalist dynamics (Godin, 2012) – with parallels perhaps in Britain with Robert Owen’s utopianism. With such assertions the debate commenced between radical-revolutionary and utopian-reformist solutions to the housing question; hindering social theory and political action by digging a seemingly insurmountable chasm between structural processes and experimental action, or structure and agency.

Engels, however, could not predict that these ‘reformist’ resistances would win so many gains from capital for the working classes, through incorporation into state reforms. Production and reproduction – the factory and the home; the public sphere and the neighbourhood – had been sharply delineated by Engels, such that the housing question was merely a secondary contradiction to the primary conflict of exploitation in the labour-capital relation; or, as David Harvey has put it, a “displaced” form of class struggle (quoted in Andy Merrifield, 2014: 104). Accordingly, it was only through the sphere of production, through trade unionism and direct action in the workplace, that labour could challenge the power of capital, and in turn, ever hope to resolve the housing question. With the birth of the welfare state, however, and the
rising relative importance of collective consumption in urban everyday life and the economy more broadly, this division began to dissolve.

Through the post-war period, however, the Fordist settlement began to break down, and new forms of contentious collective action emerged to contest the alienation of repressive state bureaucracy and monopoly capitalism. Great advances in the Fordist era – both in material affluence and economic opportunities for the middle and working classes, and in the relatively progressive political settlements of social-democratic governments granting new welfare and education opportunities than ever before (Martinelli, 2010) – led to the multiplication of ‘secondary fronts’ of resistance to capital, in the various movements from the 1960s onwards, from ecology, to feminism, to anarchism to anti-colonialism. This represented the proliferation of ‘subjects of emancipation’ away from capitalocentric or class-based notions of social identity; and the fragmentation and decentralisation of statist power and the abandonment of statocentric conceptions of power (Keucheyan, 2013). In shifting political focus away from the ‘primary contradiction’ of capitalism, the labour-capital relation in the sphere of production, and towards these ‘secondary’ fronts in the realm of social reproduction, the organising concept of struggle and critical analysis, exploitation, was displaced by a new organising concept, alienation, acting as a “‘coagulant’ making it possible to think the unity of these various struggles” (Keucheyan 2013: 37).

Marx first saw how the “capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realisation of their labour” (Marx, 1990: 874-5) – who are thus separated from each other and the fruits of their labour, and “now ruled by abstractions, whereas earlier they depended on one another” (Marx, 1973: 164). But with bureaucratic state management of housing and other basic needs, new forms of deprivation were becoming apparent, located in cultural and political domains. Heterodox Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (2002), like others of the New Left, criticised Marx for limiting his analysis to the economic sphere and the commodity form; for not seeing its effects in the political and cultural spheres of bureaucratic state power and the quantification, calculability and managed spectacle creeping into everyday life (Wilson, 2013a, 2013b).

At around the same time, in the 1960s and ‘70s, anarchist thinkers such as John FC Turner (1977) and Colin Ward (1973, 1974, 1983, 1985, 1989, 1990, 2002), in many ways the descendants of Proudhon, began to revisit the notion of housing – highlighting the double ontological status of dwelling as both a material object and lived process (Turner, 1972). Central to this perspective is the anarchist insight that the means are just as important as the
ends; that dwelling is the process and social activity of living as well as the physical building itself. Answering Marx and Engels’ critique of utopianism as a naïve faith in some unrealisable future ‘utopia’ – literally ‘no place’ or ‘nowhere’ – anarchism foregrounds the utopian possibility of societal change as immanent within existing social capabilities; refocusing utopianism from idealist future-gazing towards a present pregnant with as-yet-unrealised possibilities (Coleman, 2013; Honeywell, 2007; Ward, 1973; White, 2007). The immediacy and proximity of ends and means in political action is expressed in the core ‘principle of prefiguration’, cultivating social relations which prefigure in present practices those aspects aimed for in future (Honeywell, 2007); encapsulated by Chatterton (2010) as ‘demanding the urban impossible’. One of the most influential anarchist thinkers Martin Buber (1958: 46) quotes another’s, Landauer’s, view of the capitalist state as not simply an external apparatus that can be destroyed by revolution but rather “a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently”.

Embedded deeply in this tradition, Colin Ward (1973, 1974, 1983, 1985) celebrates a distinctively ‘pragmatic’ anarchism. For Ward (1973: 11) self-help experiments in cooperative living based on quotidian practices of mutual aid are “like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste.” If carefully cultivated and given the space to grow such seeds might eventually transform these structures incrementally from within through proactive social change. Presaging Holloway’s (2010) ‘cracks in capitalism’, Ward (1983: 20) sees mutual alternatives existing in the “interstices of the dominant power structure”; in the hidden history of working-class traditions of self-help and commoning, such as garden allotments, which Ward (2002) uncovers in the domain of housing. Alternative practices already exist in society, within the very same social spaces as those partially colonised by capitalism, which in fact survives only because of the subterranean forces of mutual aid and voluntary association (Honeywell, 2007). White (2007) characterises Ward’s as a ‘respectable’ brand of anarchy: the modest dignity deriving from personal autonomy and creative self-assertion. Ward’s pragmatism rejects some totalising abstraction of an anarchist society produced in purity as an autonomous zone – just as De Angelis (2006) rejects a totalising commons – and affirms a hybrid view that social spaces can be more or less anarchist, the aim being to make them free-er (White, 2011).

According to this perspective, housing delivered through impersonal state bureaucracies – and indeed private-sector ‘absentee landlords’ – alienates dwellers from their immediate living
environments; failing to instil any real sense of ownership or pride and removing incentives to care and maintain property. Crucially, this severs the psychologically health-giving and spiritually fulfilling direct connection with the home, so important for a sense of personal meaning, empowerment and self-identity (Turner, 1977). Ward identified a tendency towards bureaucratic alienation in public landlordism, which treats tenants like ‘inert objects’ rather than active subjects. For Ward, this ‘municipal serfdom’ was responsible for the swift physical dilapidation of council housing estates, which in turn contributed to the rationale for their residualisation and replacement with marketised social housing. Ward was strongly influenced by Turner’s (1972, 1977, 1978) framework for ‘user autonomy’ in self-help housing, frequently quoting what he calls Turner’s First Law of Housing:

> When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contributions in the design, construction, or management of their housing, both this process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have neither control over nor responsibility for key decisions in the housing process, on the other hand, dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to personal fulfilment and a burden on the economy (Turner & Fichter, 1973: 241).

Turner’s (1977, 1978) system of ‘resourcefulness’ posited as an alternative to ‘productivity’, the large-scale, capital-intensive, and efficient, yet wasteful, misallocative and unresponsive top-down system of mass housing under state-capitalism. Turner advocated more imaginative, practical, locally-attuned and needs-based use of resources for self-housing, through labour-intensive craft-based production, utilising local skills and knowledge. This was to be enabled by state and professional infrastructures, but driven by spontaneous grassroots energy of people housing themselves through cooperative labour and directly related to the final product. These ideas were to find their expression in Liverpool’s 1970s housing cooperative movement: Ward’s manifesto for dweller control – strongly informed by Turner – influenced the development of the country’s first new build co-op to be designed, owned and managed by its working class residents, the Weller Streets, which in turn inspired other local groups to campaign to design their own co-ops (Ward and Goodway, 2003) – explored in detail in Chapter Four.

Just as Engels critiqued Proudhon, Turner (1977, 1978) was likewise critiqued by Marxist structuralists, notably Burgess (1978, 1985), for misunderstanding the commodity nature of housing; for underestimating the deep penetration of capital into housing systems, as in all everyday life; and for committing a kind of technological determinism in believing that small-scale user-led models can flourish independently of the logic of capital. Contrary to Marxist
critics, resourcefulness does not entail the abandonment of technologically sophisticated and beneficial systems of capitalist production and organisation – as a kind of romantic fetishism of pre-capitalist rural artisanal culture – but rather advocates the ‘appropriate’ use of tools and technologies to fit the scale and needs of the problem, with a subsidiarity principle favouring localised forms for a convivial and fulfilling connection with the user. It is anti-technocracy – not anti-technology. Turner (1978) responded by highlighting the failure of the structuralists, going back to Engels, to usefully distinguish between ends and means in resolving the housing question; drawing our attention to the use value of housing, experienced as a verb as well as a noun – an active lived process of doing, as well as a static material resource or commodity to be exchanged.

The dialectical-relational view of dwelling developed by anarchists like Turner and Ward is actually shared by diverse philosophical positions; supported right across the political spectrum (Heidegger, 1978; King, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991; Savage, 2010). For Heidegger, dwelling is the very embodiment of what makes us human: “to be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell”, such that “Man’s relation to locales, and through locales to space, inhere in his dwelling. The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling” (Heidegger, 1978: 349; 362). In this exploration of the notion of dwelling, Heidegger asks “what is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?” – highlighting the housing shortage afflicting early 20th century Germany – yet rejoinders that “the proper plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses” (ibid: 363). Heidegger (1971) affirms that dwelling is an essential activity for humans: necessarily including the narrower sense of ‘building’ – the dual activities of cultivation of the land and construction of dwellings – but also a fuller, more expansive sense of dwelling through the richness of lived experience, in the way in which humans dwell poetically in place.

Inverting Heidegger’s ‘conservative romanticism’ into a ‘revolutionary romanticism’, Lefebvre (1991) posits dwelling as a fundamentally creative and meaningful activity – ‘inhabitance’ – which he contrasts with the increasingly alienated and abstracted form of ‘habitat’ brought about through the transition to late modernity, marked by the onslaught of what he terms ‘abstract space’ (Butler, 2005; Wilson, 2013a). This is Lefebvre’s unifying concept for the dual problem of capitalist exploitation and state-bureaucratic alienation – as the contemporary stage in evolution of the historical production of space, and which through its hegemony, acts to control and dominate lived space (Wilson, 2013a). By a dual process of division and homogenisation – or ‘difference-through-sameness’ – abstract space works to divorce people
from the land, enclosed through legal and spatial boundaries and divided into exchangeable units for capital accumulation; and in so doing, alienates people from place and imposes a quantitative homogenous equivalence on space that violently erases diverse subjective experience, the temporal production of place, historicity, and qualitatively rich collective cultures (Stanek, 2008).

In post-war attempts to resolve the housing question, Lefebvre (1991: 314) identifies a discursive shift from ‘residence’ to ‘housing’, replacing a more active, personal process with a functional abstraction:

It was at this juncture that the idea of housing began to take on definition, along with its corollaries: minimal living-space, as quantified in terms of modular units and speed of access; likewise minimal facilities and a programmed environment. What was actually being defined here…was the lowest possible threshold of tolerability. Later, in the present century, slums began to disappear.

As the modernist state began to eliminate the worst conditions brought about by capitalist urbanisation, through the construction of council estates, new towns and the subsidisation of suburban housing, this was however paid for through the imposition of standardised units measured according to the ‘bare minimum’ of acceptable standards, both in terms of material tolerability and the “lowest possible threshold of sociability” – the point beyond which survival would be impossible because all social life would have disappeared” (Lefebvre, 1991: 314).

Clearly for many people, having lived in squalid conditions of old terraced and tenement ‘slums’ for much of their lives, modernist council estates were a dramatic improvement in material standards. But the point here is that they also entailed a diminution in other social and existential aspects of living – which became increasingly apparent as time wore on – as well as involving forced movements of council tenants from inner-city slums to peripheral modernist estates and new towns. For Lefebvre – as for Turner and Ward – the housing question was not simply that working class housing was marked by material deprivation as a secondary consequence of worker exploitation, but that it also revealed a deeper dilapidation in the social activity of dwelling, arising from the alienation of urban modernity.
2.1.1 Social innovation and collective action

In the eyes of the New Left and the new urban social movements of the 1960s, the solution to the housing question could thus not be delivered by the state, at least not in its centralised form. New solutions were required that drew on the creative capacities of communities to produce social innovation. In the wake of May ’68, the concept of social innovation was thus rehabilitated by French social researchers rediscovering the role of everyday life, local communities, and small-scale social invention in the search for creative solutions to social exclusion and for urban transformation (Chambon et al., 1982). Shortly after in Anglo-American academe, in his inaugural address as President of the American Sociological Association in 1981, William Whyte called for the re-orientation of sociology to the study of ‘social inventions’ created to solve social problems – criticising the ‘standard situation’ in social sciences as diagnosing problems and constructing solutions in standardised ways that seek general application across a large number of cases, thereby distracting from the specific and highly contextual features of non-standard creative solutions (Whyte, 1982).

Although lacking the political character of the French notion, more rooted in radical social movements, Whyte’s call for a reorientation of social science towards invention parallels the French debate in remarkable ways. Just as Chambon et al (1982) emphasise the autonomy of social innovation from the state in its origination, so too does Whyte distinguish ‘invention’ from ‘intervention’, where the former describes new creations emanating autonomously from within a community or organisation, whereas the latter an introduced element from outside, often the state. Both also emphasise the essentially social character of social innovation, in aiming towards the satisfaction of previously unmet human needs (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010); geared towards the public interest or social equity, thus distinguishing it from commercial or technological innovation, which has organisational efficiency and technical progress as its ends (Drewe et al., 2008).

This hegemonic discourse marginalises broader notions of innovation: creative problem-solving, artistic or intellectual novelty (Blake, 2010). In capitalocentric conceptions, innovation has come to be conflated with invention. The social innovation literature, however, distinguishes invention – the discovery or creation of a new thing or idea – from innovation, the practical application of invention to new contexts (Jessop et al., 2013). Place-based social innovations remain largely unrecognised by dominant discourse (Blake and Hanson, 2005). Whilst capitalist notions of innovation are place-less, overlooking the local context of innovation in favour of a technological view of products to be introduced anywhere in the global market, the social innovation perspective emphasises contextualised, spatialized and
embedded processes of innovating new ideas to address specific local problems (Blake, 2010). Social innovation re-appropriates notions of invention, innovation, creativity and newness for the progressive left; mirroring recent efforts to re-imagine discourses of enterprise and entrepreneurialism for collective action and radical self-organisation, challenging the neoliberal narrative of the heroic individualistic entrepreneur, relocating enterprise in radical activism, trade union organisation, anarcho-syndicalism and cooperativism (Southern, 2014b). In locating social innovation explicitly outside the state in politically-oriented experiments for social change initiated by groups in civil society – albeit requiring state support once mobilised – these various strands firmly situate the field in the domain of collective action and social movements (Martinelli, 2010). Thus the ‘second modern cycle of contention’ thus saw a return to self-help and grassroots community initiatives – giving birth to new urban social movements (see figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: The second modern cycle of contention, categorised into various strands in the spheres of production and reproduction by the collective action literature (source: Martinelli, 2010)

**Second cycle of contention:**

1) ‘Anarchist counter-model’ (Tarrow, 1994): niche, alternative-lifestyle, creative, demonstrative, prefigurative experiments associated with anarchist and libertarian traditions, e.g. squatting, communes, intentional communities

2) ‘Social democratic solution’ (Tarrow, 1994) organised mass movements of marches, demos, sit-ins, rallies, associated with student, youth, civil rights, environmentalist, feminist and peace movements – bringing together New Left intellectuals, students and workers into alliance

3) ‘Community-based organisation’ (Tarrow, 1994): the most important for this study; exhibit a “strict orientation to defend, solve the problems of, and/or provide benefits to, the community” (Martinelli 2010: 33). Drawing on the bourgeois reformism of early 19th century and especially mutual and cooperative movements; most closely associated with community campaigns against urban renewal and for alternatives to council-housing, notably the British cooperative movement of the 1970s (Birchall, 1988, 1991; Clapham & Kintrea, 1992; Towers, 1995). This strand is emphasised as most significant by Manuel Castells (1977, 1983) in his conception of ‘urban social movements’ – neighbourhood-based collective action combining struggles around collective consumption issues, like housing, with local cultural identity and political self-management. The latter was expressed in France, notably by Lefebvre (2009), as *autogestion* – literally ‘self-management’ – describing emerging instances of radical grassroots control over both the production and social reproduction process, and the institutions which regulate everyday life.

Mutual housing alternatives are positioned in an ambivalent relationship with the system; the product of collective action, organised as social movements, challenging state-capitalist
property institutions (Martinelli, 2010). Literature on social movements is vast (Castells, 1983; Davis, 1990; Gamson, 1975; Lowe, 1986; Martin, 2001; Mayer, 2009a; North, 1999, 2005; Pickvance, 2003; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978; Touraine, 1981; Uitermark et al., 2012), but converges around a common definition – “contentious collective action” (Tarrow, 1994); “forms of sustained collective action or challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, against or interacting with, authorities, opponents or elites” (Martinelli, 2010). The state is crucial in mediating outcomes for collective action through variously supportive, permissive or repressive apparatuses (Martinelli, 2010; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978).

Observing the increasing frequency of urban struggles over collective consumption issues, such as housing, Manuel Castells sought to update the housing question as *The Urban Question*, highlighting the power of the urban as a site of resistance and political change:

> But this does not mean that urban struggles are necessarily relegated to the world of administrative reformism. Quite the reverse; their decisive importance in certain political conjunctures has been determined, for a structurally secondary issue can be a conjuncturally principal one. (Castells, 1977: 377)

Whilst production operated at a regional and increasingly global scale, with decreasing control at a local level, the public goods, services and collective consumption activities that constituted social reproduction were, according to Castells, governed and accessed at the urban scale – with the urban becoming the key site of intervention in everyday life: first by the state, through public service provision, urban planning, redevelopment and political organisation; and second, by citizens in the form of community groups and civil society organisations aiming to challenge or lobby for greater state interventions, or campaign for alternatives. Moreover, Castells noted the cross-class alliances between middle-class professionals and working class activists out of which were forming these new urban social movements contesting state mismanagement of collective consumption:

> ‘Urban’ social contradictions…are of a ‘pluri-class’ nature, in the sense that the cleavages they effect do not correspond to the structural opposition between the two fundamental classes, but rather distribute the classes and factions in a relation whose opposing terms vary widely according to the conjuncture. It is deduced from this that ‘urban politics’ is an essential element in the formation of class alliances, in particular in relation to the petty bourgeoisie. (Castells, 1977: 432-3)

The history of housing activism in Liverpool reflects these trends. Local state intervention, mismanagement of housing and failure to improve appalling conditions were to galvanise large
numbers of tenants into collective action around housing issues – tenant organisations initially leading rent strikes, and later campaigning for an alternative to council ownership, maintenance and design of housing in the form of housing cooperatives. These urban struggles over housing saw the blurring of boundaries – between production and reproduction; state and civil society; and middle-class professionals and working class communities – with the co-op movement campaigns driven by groups of tenants, yet funded by national and local state agencies and initiated by idealistic housing activists and professionals living locally.
2.2 The life and death of neighbourhood improvement in Liverpool

Liverpool was one of three main centres in the British housing cooperative movement of the 1970s – the others being Glasgow and London (Birchall, 1991; Clapham and Kintrea, 1992). They emerged from two directions: as resistance to the displacements of top-down municipal urban renewal by grassroots community-based organisations; and as an alternative policy solution for managing deteriorating housing stock through a nascent professional housing association sector (Birchall, 1988; Towers, 1995). In their analysis of the British housing co-op movement, Clapham and Kintrea (1992: 107) suggest that

Co-operative developments in Glasgow and Liverpool…have emerged from a realisation by some councillors, housing professionals and residents that traditionally-organised public housing has not been successful in providing a model for housing for rent for people of low and moderate incomes.

Community movements allied with new church-based charitable housing associations, seeking alternatives to the large-scale demolition of municipal urban renewal, and drew inspiration from 19th century cooperativism and Octavia Hill’s pioneering work rehabilitating properties whilst the large philanthropic trusts were building anew (Malpass, 2000). Out of this opposition to the alienation and displacement wrought by modernist urban renewal, alternative forms were invented or reinvigorated, leading to the development of the self-help and co-operative housing, housing association and community architecture movements in the 1960s (Towers, 1995). These movements drew on a long tradition in Britain of self-help, self-build or do-it-yourself housing, by commoners, cotters, squatters, plotlanders, homesteaders and community rehabilitation of inner-city terraces (Moore and Mullins, 2013; Mullins, 2010; Mullins et al., 2011; Ward, 2002). The last is how contemporary self-help housing is defined: involving “local people bringing back into use empty properties, and organising whatever repairs are necessary to make them habitable” (Mullins, 2010: 3). The institutional precursors to community self-help were ‘building societies’ that sprung up in the 19th century as temporary organisations for working class families to collectively pool resources to build homes (Birchall, 1988; Ward, 1974). Another influence came from the global South, particularly Latin America, where ‘barefoot architect’, John FC Turner first witnessed ‘user autonomy’ in practice in the self-organised construction of informal settlements (Wates, 1985). The influence of Turner’s ideas in British inner-cities in the 1970s was palpable – not least in Liverpool. This was the era of ‘grassroots professionals’, ‘architecture without architects’ (Turner, 1977), and became known as ‘community architecture’ (Wates and Knevitt, 1987): representing a shift from institutionalised, professionalised, modernist, technical forms of
housing development towards vernacular and quotidian styles designed by users themselves through new participatory design processes.

Just as the likes of Colin Ward (1973) were critiquing top-down modernist urban renewal in the UK, so too were influential voices across the Atlantic helping reshape planning discourse in a more participatory and democratic direction – most famously Jane Jacobs’s (1961) classic treatise, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, but also notably Paul Davidoff’s (1965) advocacy planning, Robert Goodman’s (1972) *After the Planners* and community development worker Sherry Arnstein’s ‘ladder of citizen participation’, which has since become one of the most influential concepts of participation in Anglophone planning practice (Huxley, 2013). Indeed, often quoted in Ward’s work, Arnstein’s ladder of participation categorises eight ‘rungs’ of participation in planning and regeneration initiatives, ranging from the lowest level, Manipulation – through Therapy, Informing, Consultation, Placation, Participation, Delegated Power – to the highest, Citizen Control.

In the late 1960s the government finally responded to this growing climate of opposition to large-scale technocratic urban renewal by turning the policy agenda towards community involvement and rehabilitation alternatives. In this vein, participation was introduced as a central concern in UK planning discourse – for the first time since town and country planning was inaugurated as a discipline in the early 20th century – with the publication of the Skeffington Report in 1969 (Huxley, 2013). Yet the Skeffington Report is generally understood as supporting merely a managed form of ‘consultation’ – “only up to rungs three or four of the ladder” (Ward, 1973: 84) – a far cry from full ‘citizen control’. Nonetheless, the report recommended the establishment of community forums for discussion between councils and community groups, which helped shape the urban policy agenda towards greater community involvement.

At around the same time, the 1969 Housing Act established the concept of general improvement areas (GIAs) for the rehabilitation of neighbourhoods otherwise earmarked for demolition; offering improvement grants to homeowners, private landlords and housing associations in areas of run-down housing. Combined with community resistance to post-war urban renewal projects, and the introduction of participation in planning with the Skeffington Report, this helped pave the way for new participatory approaches to regeneration – in particular, the pioneering action-research projects, Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP) 1969-72 in Granby, Liverpool (McConaghy, 1972), and the 12 Community Development Projects (CDP) across the UK, including Vauxhall in north Liverpool from
1969-78 (Loney, 1983). These sought to work in closer collaboration with communities – through innovative participatory methods – to improve their neighbourhoods from within, representing a ‘neighbourhood improvement’ approach (Lupton and Fuller, 2009).

The National Community Development Project – the government’s first foray into community-based action-research – launched with the intention of understanding more about the causes of poverty whilst at the same time helping resolve it through social action, “as a means of creating more responsive local services and of encouraging self-help” (Loney 1983: 3). The CDP in Vauxhall, for instance, provided a liaison office for community education and other resources (Frost and North, 2013). However, as community workers and academic researchers began working with local people and became embedded in communities, they developed a critical analysis of the complex systemic problems at the root of poverty; criticising the programme, and others like it, for doing little to combat entrenched structural problems, as they explain in their 1977 report *Gilding the Ghetto*:

The poverty initiatives then have clearly not made any great inroads on inner-Liverpool’s real material problems. All they have done is to restate, usually in academic terms, what the people who live there have known for a long time. If you live on Merseyside you have a better than average chance of being made redundant, being on the dole for a long time, living in slum conditions, being evicted, and forced to wait over six months for hospital treatment. Your children are more likely to die in infancy, or when, after getting no nursery schooling, they finally get to school, of being in larger classes in worse buildings, only to emerge finally onto the dole. Over 10,000 people leave Liverpool each year as a way of avoiding these problems. Those who are left can debate them in the neighbourhood councils and area management experiments left behind by the ‘poverty projects’. (CDP, 1977: 20)

Their suggestions to government – of radical restructuring of industrial policy, public housing management, education, health and welfare – fell on deaf ears; and it soon became apparent that central government departments were less interested in necessary structural reforms than in communities’ capabilities to pull themselves up out of poverty through localised self-help. But without redistribution for real stakes in economic assets, the participatory approaches embodied in the ‘neighbourhood improvement’ approach were not enough alone to combat socio-spatial problems rooted in structural inequalities. Interestingly, as a measure of their radicalisation and rejection of the government’s agenda, those professionals involved in the Vauxhall CDP helped tenants organise various resistances to welfare cuts and council housing rent rises, leading up to the 1972 Rent Strike in Liverpool, and other forms of housing activism (CDP, 1977). An enduring legacy of the Vauxhall CDP is the countless community
trusts and social enterprises focused on the social regeneration of specific neighbourhoods in north Liverpool (Meegan and Mitchell, 2001).

One of the key innovations emerging out of this period of local experimentation was the Eldonian Community Trust, a successful example of how a Community Development Trust (CDT) can regenerate declining inner-city areas suffering from extreme dereliction and unemployment (McBane, 2008; Roberts, 2008). The key difference with the social enterprises and initiatives emanating from the CDP is that the Eldonians gained collective ownership of assets, including housing, maintaining community control of local services to this day. As we will see in Chapter Five, the Eldonians have radically transformed a large area of north Liverpool from a state of dereliction into a thriving community with a promising future – despite problematic prevailing trends.

CDTs originated in 1960s campaigns against inner-city urban renewal – paralleling the housing cooperative movement (Bailey, 2012), and not dissimilar to the more established Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in the US, which are ‘coordinating agents’ for a whole range of community-owned activities, not just housing (Bruyn and Mechan, 1987; Imbroscio, 1997). CDTs aim to acquire land and assets as means of protection from demolition, speculation or public disinvestment, and for more sustainable and participatory community-led property development (Colenutt, 2011). Early exemplars of grassroots struggles which successfully campaigned for the transfer of public land and assets into community ownership include Coin Street Community Builders, established in 1984 to manage land for cooperative housing and community facilities on London’s south bank (Baeten, 2000; Warburton and Wilcox, 1988); and in Liverpool, the Eldonian Community Trust, still the country’s largest community-owned housing trust and enterprise (McBane, 2008; Roberts, 2008).

Just as the movements of the first cycle were gradually incorporated into the system, and co-opted by the state, so too were the various movements of the second cycle. The dangers of co-optation by institutionalisation are evident in the ‘death by partnership’ afflicting Coin Street Community Builders, increasingly seen as betraying its original community planning ideals through insertion into consensus-seeking partnership-based post-political governance networks (Baeten, 2000, 2001). This is all the more striking given that Coin Street is so often celebrated for its bottom-up origins in resident-led activism, being one of the founding members of the national umbrella group for CDTs, the Development Trust Association, now Locality (Bailey, 2012). In Chapter Five, we will see how the Eldonians recently risk suffering a similar fate.
2.2.1 Neighbourhood transformation and the New Urban Question

In a broader sense, this process of incorporation saw community-based projects and resistances become increasingly professionalised and institutionalised into active state-led area-based initiatives aimed at activating ‘social capital’ to address the growing problem of ‘social exclusion’ and the re-emergence of material deprivation in the 1980s and 1990s (DeFilippis, 2001; Mayer, 2009b). Such a process saw the distinctive ‘improvement approach’ to regeneration of inner-city housing soon begin to lose its connections with the urban social movements from which it sprang. Since the 1980s, with the imposition of first ‘roll-back’ and then ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002), we have seen a distinct shift away from the improvement approach towards a ‘neighbourhood transformation’ approach – aiming to radically transform targeted neighbourhoods and partly replace communities rather than attempt to retain their identity through any kind of community participation or control (Lupton and Tunstall, 2008).

Through this transition, British urban and housing policy has shifted from the more holistic outlook of the ‘improvement approach’ – which, as we have seen in the case of the CDPs, constructed relatively radical class-based structural explanations of neighbourhood decline – increasingly towards narrowly problem-focused regeneration policy, such as physical and technical issues of estate management and upgrading (Robertson et al., 2010). With the emerging problem of physical deprivation and vacant properties in council estates and inner-city neighbourhoods, the area-based initiatives to emerge after CDPs and SNAP centred on ‘housing-led regeneration’ aiming to improve the quality and physical condition of the housing itself as a means to improve the image of the estate; gaining greater traction after problems of low demand on ‘difficult-to-let’ estates were first recognised in the mid-1970s (Cole and Goodchild, 2001; Kintrea, 2007). This trend is perhaps best exemplified by the rise to prominence of Alice Coleman’s (1985) work on design determinism used to inform Thatcher’s policies on estate redesign, designing-out-crime and tenant responsibilisation (Jacobs and Lees, 2013).

As neoliberalisation deepened, ‘housing-led regeneration’ was increasingly superseded by new market-led approaches, culminating in the policy of large-scale stock transfer from local authorities to housing associations (Kintrea, 2007). The dismantling of council housing was put into play by a political process of ‘residualisation’ from a mass model of municipal housing towards a ‘residual’ model of social housing (Harloe, 1995; Malpass and Victory, 2010). Two forms of privatisation – selling council houses to their tenants under the Right to Buy
programme and the de-municipalisation of council housing through large-scale voluntary stock transfers to increasingly commercialised housing associations – have together contributed to residualisation (Ginsburg, 2005; Watt, 2009). This political process worked in a mutually-destructive relationship with structural changes in the labour market: together creating the very problem of socio-spatial inequality that recent ‘neighbourhood transformation’ approaches have tried to solve, but in turn, only compounded.

Residualisation combined in problematic ways with other trends: the flexibilisation and precarisation of the labour market, and the fracturing of working class solidarity and mutual support structures (Wacquant, 2007); the ‘roll back’ neoliberalisation of urban policy (Peck and Tickell, 2002), with the shift from ‘managerialism’ to ‘entrepreneurialism’ (Harvey, 1989), in which public-private partnerships and growth coalitions pump-primed private investment with public funds (Cox, 1993; DeFilippis, 1999; MacLeod, 2011); translating into cuts in general welfare provision and social programmes in deprived neighbourhoods, leaving only the most unpopular housing for the poorest tenants (Goodchild and Cole, 2001; Kintrea, 2007). All these processes combined to contribute to a deeply uneven geography of deprivation: worsening poverty increasingly concentrated in ‘sink estates’, inner-city ‘ghettos’ and ‘problem areas’ suffering from ‘territorial stigma’ (Wacquant, 2007); whilst policy responses began targeting deprived neighbourhoods and the problem of ‘social exclusion’ (Meegan & Mitchell, 2001; Nussbaumer & Moulaert, 2004; Whitehead, 2003).

Declining inner-city and peripheral neighbourhoods in post-industrial cities across the global North have been increasingly targeted as the privileged sites – or ‘spatial foci’ – for territorial development strategies of various stripes (Moulaert, 2010; Whitehead, 2003). Different forms of sustainable regeneration and community economic development (CED) have emerged, ranging from more localist, grassroots initiatives to more top-down state-led programmes, such as City Challenge and New Deal for Communities (NDC) (Colenutt, 2011; Haughton, 1998, 1999; Roberts, 2008; Somerville and McElwee, 2011). ‘Community’ has been mobilised as a catch-all concept in the so-called ‘death of the social’ and ‘birth of the community’ “as a new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence” (Rose, 1996: 88); with reconfiguration of public housing estate management around neoliberal governmentalities and the ‘responsibilisation’ of tenants (Flint, 2003; Manzi, 2010).

At the same time, grassroots groups have sought greater democratic control in CED and sustainable regeneration through community enterprise (Somerville and McElwee, 2011), generally taking the form of Community Development Trusts (CDTs) like the Eldonians
(Bailey, 2012). There are thus two tendencies within CED: towards state-led area-based initiatives that encourage participation in regeneration strategies, in ways which nonetheless keep communities relatively powerless as formal ‘partners’ without economic or political capital (Bailey, 2012; Lawless, 2011); and alternatively, towards enabling endogenous community enterprises gain greater power over the socioeconomic fates of their localities through transfer of key assets for community-led property development (Colenutt, 2011) and integrated area development (IAD) (Nussbaumer and Moularert, 2004). These latter approaches have the potential to resolve persistent socio-spatial deprivation where the former are limited.

By the late 1990s, the emerging phenomena of low demand ‘problem areas’, housing vacancy, failing housing markets and neighbourhood abandonment – captured in the ‘Slow Death of Great Cities’ (Power and Mumford, 1999) – was becoming a major problem for Liverpool (Cocks and Couch, 2012). Since the post-war clearances and economic decline together depopulated so much of the inner-city, Liverpool has suffered a problematic oversupply of Victorian terraced housing (Nevin, 2010); attracting much academic attention as a ‘shrinking city’ with an especially acute housing vacancy problem (Cocks and Couch, 2012; Couch and Cocks, 2013; Nevin, 2010), as part of a globally occurring trend of urban shrinkage (Beyer et al., 2006; Hollander and Németh, 2011). A more radical approach was required.

Liverpool city council became centrally involved in designing and lobbying for government funding of Housing Market Renewal (HMR), having commissioned the original research into housing market failure that would become the evidence base for intervention across the UK (Nevin et al., 1999). HMR Pathfinders became a £2.3 billion programme rolled out across de-industrialised inner-city areas in nine English cities from 2003 to 2011 (Leather and Nevin, 2013). In seeking to renew the market for housing – and not just the houses themselves – HMR departed from previous modes of regeneration, identifying the problem facing ‘difficult-to-let’ neighbourhoods with voids of boarded-up houses as one of ‘failing’ markets (Cole, 2012; Webb, 2010). HMR was thus an ambitious attempt to rejuvenate the state’s role in regeneration and renewal, mimicking the comprehensive redevelopment of the 1960s, but with market-oriented objectives (Flint, 2012b). However, in zeroing in on the single issue of housing through comprehensive redevelopment, HMR repeated many of the same mistakes as the post-war slum clearances. HMR is in many ways the culmination of the new ‘neighbourhood transformation’ approach to urban renewal (Lupton and Tunstall, 2008) –
radically transforming targeted neighbourhoods and partly replacing communities rather than cultivating community control.

HMR reflects international trends in urban policy: influenced by the earlier HOPE VI programme in the US, which spearheaded the rationale for tenure diversification and desegregation (Goetz, 2010), and mirrored by multiple similar policies around the world, in France, Denmark, Sweden, Australia, Singapore, and notably the Netherlands (Bolt and Van Kempen, 2011; Darcy, 2010; Uitermark, 2003). This reflects growing academic and policy interest in the ‘neighbourhood effects’ hypothesis, which attempts to isolate causal factors of spatially concentrated poverty within the neighbourhood space itself – and the people living there – rather than the broader economic, political and cultural forces flowing through and producing urban space (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Buck, 2001; Van Ham et al., 2011). The influence on urban policy of the neighbourhood effects hypothesis is palpable in the growing international alignment in urban regeneration policies across Western neoliberal societies: coalescing around shared concerns with low demand and poor housing conditions in shrinking cities; the residualisation and failure of public housing; neighbourhood effects of mono-tenure concentrations of social housing; and a shift towards market restructuring and ‘mixed communities’ renewal programmes that aim to mix tenures through demolition, displacement and rebuild (Flint, 2012a). This sees a return to state-led demolition and rebuild programmes in mono-tenure areas of social housing in which the neighbourhood effects of spatially concentrated poverty – unemployment coupled with poor quality housing, amenities, public services, and environment – are to be tackled through tenure diversification and social mixing, known as the Mixed Communities agenda (Bridge et al., 2012; Lupton and Fuller, 2009; Lupton and Tunstall, 2008).

As the latest, and perhaps most extreme, variant of the Mixed Communities agenda, HMR has been critiqued as a form of state-led gentrification: erasing working class lived space and radically transforming place in the image of a target middle class population, attracted through an improved ‘residential offer’ (Allen and Crookes, 2009; Allen, 2008; Cameron, 2006; Minton, 2012). HMR has faced sustained critique as a policy that conceives of the ‘city-as-property’ rather than the ‘city-as-inhabited’ (Pinnegar, 2012); for adopting a narrowly economistic, market-based, and abstract measure of ‘neighbourhood viability’ (Webb, 2010, 2011) as an aspirational ‘space of positions’ in which middle-class consumers vie for position on the housing ladder, thereby marginalising alternative ways of valuing housing as shelter or belonging (Allen, 2008); and for excluding residents from the decision-making and problem-
definition process, with no resident representation on the governing board of stakeholders (Cole, 2012).

Moreover, in spending public funds to transfer land to private developers and quasi-privatised housing associations to profit from the sale of new homes, HMR can be framed as a policy which enacts ‘accumulation-by-dispossession’ (Macleod and Johnstone, 2012); part of the ‘new urban enclosures’ (Hodkinson, 2012a). Writing in The New Urban Question, Andy Merrifield updates critical urbanism by pointing to the recent trend towards what he calls Neo-Haussmannisation:

The biggest drawback of Castells’ old urban question is his passive rendering of the urban, that the urban is a spatial unit of reproduction rather than a space which capital productively plunders: capital now actively dispossesses collective consumption budgets and upvalues land by valorising urban space as a commodity, as a pure financial asset, exploiting it as well as displacing people. (Merrifield, 2014: xxi)

Liverpool’s HMR Pathfinder is a good example of a ‘grant regime’ – a public-private partnership between councils, housing associations, property developers, and local infrastructure suppliers, competing and lobbying for state funding of large-scale redevelopment in order to protect territories and constituencies from decline, safeguard assets from depreciation, and potentially make surpluses from new funding streams for redevelopment (Cocks and Couch, 2012). Owing to increased commercial pressures on housing associations following the 1988 Housing Act, increasingly tied to the value of their stock as the source of borrowed liquidity for managing and maintaining it (Ginsburg, 2005; Malpass, 2000), housing associations have strong financial interests in the radical overhaul or replacement of their low-value inner-city terraced stock (Webb, 2011). Some argue (Allen, 2008; Macleod and Johnstone, 2012) that HMR grant regimes dispossess poor residents from their homes – through compulsory purchase orders – with compensation or rehousing offered by the Pathfinder partnership, which then revalues the land so that partners may pocket the difference in value from the ‘rent gap’ (Smith, 1989).

Thus urban policy – in Liverpool at least – has become implicated in processes that fuel rather than resolve the housing and neighbourhood questions. In many ways HMR has reproduced the same processes of housing deprivation – economic exploitation, cultural alienation and political exclusion – that motivated resistance to post-war municipal urban renewal, and the development of more participatory alternatives in the democratic moment of the 1970s. And just like the post-war period of state-led urban renewal, HMR provoked widespread
controversy and opposition from community groups living within its demolition boundaries (Minton, 2012). Some of these resistances would find their way to becoming campaigns for alternative forms of housing management and neighbourhood regeneration – just as co-ops in the 1970s had originally evolved out of anti-displacement campaigns. Several anti-demolition resistances evolved into more proactive campaigns for community land trusts (CLTs) to rehabilitate the terraced streets through community ownership, including: a failed campaign to acquire empty homes in Little Klondyke, Bootle, just north of Liverpool city-centre; Granby Four Streets CLT (Thompson, 2015); and Homebaked CLT in Anfield, Liverpool, a successful arts-led regeneration project for a CLT-owned cooperative bakery and affordable housing funded by Liverpool Biennial (Moore, 2014).

These campaigns for community-owned affordable housing have really found traction following the 2008 financial crisis and the emergence of our era of ‘austerity urbanism’ (Peck, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013) – in which state funding of almost all regeneration programmes has been pulled, including HMR in 2011. The resulting urban policy vacuum has left many inner-city neighbourhoods in a state of decay whilst paradoxically at the same time provided a window of opportunity for community groups to experiment with alternative forms of housing and urban renewal – particularly in shrinking cities like Liverpool. This sudden upsurge of grassroots housing activism, after several decades of co-optation and professionalisation of community development, reflects an emerging ‘third cycle of contention’ in reaction to deepening privatisation, commodification and marketisation of public services and urban policy – as opposed to the New Left’s resistance to state bureaucracy (Martinelli, 2010).

2.2.2 Towards a solution: the return of social innovation

In this context, with the emerging third cycle of contention, the concept of social innovation has once again come to the fore, resuscitated by critical researchers in an attempt to re-appropriate the concept of innovation from its long association with neoliberal values. Of the four main fields in which social innovation has gained currency – management science and economics; arts and creativity; political science and public administration; and local territorial development (Jessop et al., 2013; Moulaert, 2010) – it is the latter that has gained the most recent attention, with neighbourhoods as an increasingly salient site for social innovation (Drewe et al., 2008; Maccallum et al., 2009; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). As an emerging academic field, neighbourhood-based social innovation was largely sparked by Frank Moulaert’s (2000) studies into potential planning solutions to worsening deprivation in what he calls ‘disintegrating areas’: post-industrial places in advanced stages of socioeconomic
disintegration and therefore in need of re-integration through innovative planning approaches – corresponding to what I call the neighbourhood question. This led to the conceptual development of Integrated Area Development (IAD) as an alternative to the ‘orthodox’ neoliberal development approach, centring around enterprise zones and land deregulation, large-scale planning projects and housing restructuring, and city marketing, branding and boosterism (Nussbaumer and Moulaert, 2004). IAD initiated a series of EU-funded research projects from 1989 to 2011, in response to growing concerns around inner-city urban decline in deindustrialising European cities (Martinelli et al., 2003). The most significant and extensive of these was SINGOCOM, or Social INnovation GOvernance and COMmunity building, running from 2001 until 2006, and producing an ALternative MOdel of Local INnovation (ALMOLIN) (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010).

ALMOLIN conceptualises social innovation dynamics as beginning with the deprivation of human needs, differentiated in three domains: economic or ‘material’ basic needs, such as housing and employment; cultural or ‘existential’ needs of self-expression and creativity; and ‘political’ needs of participatory citizenship and self-government (Gonzalez et al., 2010; Moulaert et al., 2005). These various forms of deprivation – exploitation from material; alienation from existential; social exclusion from political – spark reactions amongst affected groups which, under the right conditions, may self-organise and mobilise for change. Thus social innovation is defined as social change that achieves conditions of empowerment in three domains, illustrated in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Three domains of social innovation. Source: (Moulaert et al. 2005: 1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content/ product</th>
<th>Satisfaction of human needs that are not currently satisfied, either because they are ‘not yet’ or ‘no longer’ perceived as important by either the market or the state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Changes in social relations, especially with regard to governance, that enable the above satisfaction, but also increase the level of participation of all but especially deprived groups in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Increasing the socio-political capability and access to resources needed to enhance rights to satisfaction of human needs and participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ALMOLIN explicitly seeks to provide answers to the question: can neighbourhoods save the city? (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). Why focus on neighbourhoods? Moulaert (2009, 2010)
suggests two factors. First, social innovation increasingly occurs at the neighbourhood scale, because economic restructuring and urban decline are most *tangible* in neighbourhoods: “social relations, governance dynamics and agents ‘responsible for’ the decline are more easily identifiable in urban neighbourhoods than in lower density areas or at higher spatial scales” (Moulaert, 2009: 16). Second, the *spatial concentration* of exclusion factors in these places simultaneously creates a downward spiral of neglect and hopelessness; “proximity feeds depression, fatalism, localised *déjà-vu*” and state agencies and investors gradually withdraw, as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, but which simultaneously acts as a catalyst and opportunity for alternatives to develop. Whilst the question *can neighbourhoods save the city?* is the driving concern of ALMOLIN (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010), my concern here is more modest: *can mutual housing save the neighbourhood?*
2.3 Can mutual housing save the neighbourhood?

Before exploring precisely how mutual housing models and alternative regeneration approaches can help resolve the housing and neighbourhood questions, it is useful to understand how orthodox approaches have largely failed to do so. The Mixed Communities agenda – and the neighbourhood transformation approach more broadly – is widely understood as misapprehending the nature of the issue: for attempting to solve problems which often have structural roots outside the targeted neighbourhoods (Cheshire, 2009; Colomb, 2011; Darcy, 2010; Lupton and Fuller, 2009). Indeed, Lupton and Tunstall (2008) accuse Mixed Communities of ‘spatialising’ and ‘individualising’ systemic problems: presenting disadvantaged people themselves, and the spaces they co-inhabit, as the source of their deprivation, thus distracting our attention from the structural causes of poverty. It is not that concentrations of the poorest tenants cause the perpetuation of poverty, but rather that wider structural processes and political decisions concerning housing have combined to amass those in greatest need all in close proximity. The fallacy of the neighbourhood effect rationale is to impute the spatial manifestation of social inequalities as the principal factor in producing the inequalities themselves. Area effects are thus a euphemism for ‘poor people’ effects. The irony is that whilst the Mixed Communities agenda attempts to break the inferred vicious cycle of area effects by dispersing poverty, these very measures are part of an overall policy framework that has only exacerbated labour market inequalities through such moves as dismantling the institution of good quality public housing.

Engels’ insights have proven powerfully prophetic of the ultimate futility of this kind of neoliberal urban policy – but which equally applies to post-war comprehensive redevelopment:

In reality the bourgeoisie has only one method of solving the housing question after its fashion—that is to say, of solving it in such a way that the solution continually reproduces the question anew. This method is called “Haussmann”… By “Haussmann” I mean the practice which has now become general of making breaches in the working class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in those which are centrally situated, quite apart from whether this is done from considerations of public health and for beautifying the town, or owing to the demand for big centrally situated business premises, or owing to traffic requirements, such as the laying down of railways, streets, etc. No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is everywhere the same: the scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise from the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else and often in the immediate neighbourhood. (Engels, 1872: 71)
This remarkable critique of the logic of urban renewal anticipates the arguments against the ‘transformation’ approach in the 21st century. In the US, this has been critiqued as the ‘Dispersal Consensus’, part of a new ‘mobility paradigm’ in neoliberal urban policy, which has a “heavy reliance on moving people through metropolitan space as a means of addressing urban social problems” rather than improving the lives of the poor directly (Imbroscio 2012: 2). In evaluating the impact of the Mixed Communities agenda to resolve social exclusion and spatially concentrated poverty via dispersal methods, DeFilippis and Fraser (2010: 16) critique such policies for their failure to directly address the problem – their tendency to simply move it around – suggesting that the “answers are elusively simple yet procedurally difficult”, inhering in institutional innovations that “smooth power differentials between groups” by providing a minimal economic stake and tenure security for low income residents. Their suggestions are redistribution of ownership through shared equity schemes that give people a sense of ownership and some basic economic security.

This is a solution supported by diverse critical scholars (Angotti, 2007; Blomley, 2008; Brenner et al., 2011; Bruyn and Meehan, 1987; Cumbers, 2012; DeFilippis and North, 2004; Engelsman et al., 2015; Harvey, 2012; Hodkinson, 2012a, 2012b; Imbroscio, 1997; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010; Rowlands, 2011), but especially those seeking to assert the value of mutual ownership, such as co-op advocate David Rodgers (1999: 17) who suggests that

The key ingredient in tackling social exclusion in poor neighbourhoods is to adopt policies which seek to transfer control of social housing and social housing budgets to the communities themselves.

However, without rights over the control of land and housing, individuals have little incentive to participate in decisions affecting it: “devolution of responsibility and stewardship without entitlement is a contradiction” (Bryden & Geisler, 2007: 26). Not only do property rights provide a modicum of economic security, they place decisions affecting land – and benefits stemming from those decisions – firmly in the hands of residents (Bryden and Geisler, 2007).

Such research suggests that not only is the ‘neighbourhood transformation’ approach fundamentally limited in its capacity to ameliorate poverty or regenerate neighbourhoods in any genuine sense, but that even a key aspect of the ‘improvement’ approach – greater procedural participation – is not enough by itself to do so: Participation needs to be accompanied by, or lead to, substantive redistribution of land and assets to be controlled by the communities in question themselves; or else it remains a token gesture. We have already seen this in the case of the CDPs, whose community professionals came into conflict with
government objectives, accusing the latter of tokenistic intentions towards resolving spatially-concentrated poverty, in promoting participation in regeneration without the concomitant redistribution of economic power essential for real empowerment (CDP, 1977). This is why they titled their report *Gilding the Ghetto* – revealed by the authors to derive from a government conference in 1969 organised to discuss the CDP and other regeneration programmes in light of American experiences, in which the Chief Inspector of the Children’s Department of the Home Office is reported to have said that

> In both the British and American plans there appeared to be an element of looking for a new method of social control – what one might call an anti-value, rather than a value. ‘Gilding the ghetto’ or buying time, was clearly a component in the planning of both CDP and Model Cities [the US Poverty Programme] (CDP, 1977: 46)

Top-down social control was thus acknowledged as an aim of the programme from the outset – leaving bottom-up community control a mere empty gesture. Indeed, in more contemporary examples of where participation has been encouraged by the state and professionals for their own instrumental ends, such as in the case of council housing in Scotland, tenants have frequently rejected what they see as a conflation of tenant participation with tenant management, as part of the responsibilisation agenda (McKee, 2008). This leads to the ‘paradox of tenant empowerment’ (McKee and Cooper, 2008): whereby liberatory strategies become a mere extension of government – a technology of government, or governmentality – as opposed to a force of freedom; suggesting that real benefits tend to come through demands being made from below, not strategies from above; that participation is only ever a beneficial or even realiseable end when it is a means to something more, to real economic empowerment through control of assets.

### 2.3.1 The paradox of common property under the ownership model

Part of the problem with conventional approaches is that they work within – and do nothing to challenge or reform – the dominant framework of property relations which favour the elites. One of the greatest advocates for common ownership was Henry George (1879), who claimed – contra Engels – that land, not capital, was the root of the greatest antagonism in modern society. Appropriation of land by economic elites was the primary cause of urban injustice, inequality and poverty; by diverting land away from the production of benefits for the common good into the unproductive generation of profits from rents (Engelsman et al., 2015). George (1879: 194) therefore argued that
To extirpate poverty, to make wages what justice commands they should be, the full earnings of the laborer, we must therefore substitute for the individual ownership of land a common ownership...the unequal ownership of land necessitates the unequal distribution of wealth.

What has been called the ‘tyranny of property’ operates to produce a cumulative concentration of wealth and power in the hands of elites, who exercise their advantage in political and economic power to accumulate property for its financial benefits, thereby further excluding the poor from land and asset ownership and the associated social benefits (Midheme and Moulaert, 2013). Unproductive ownership of land not only excludes the poor from productive use, but also creates the motivation for financial speculation, contributing to inflationary bubbles and deflationary collapses in value, with severe impacts on tenants, made precariously vulnerable instability.

Driving the ‘tyranny of property’ is a system of private property rights – what property theorists, following Singer (2000a, 2000b), call the ‘ownership model’ – which invests absolute control over clearly delineated spaces in single identifiable owners, whose formal legal title bestows entitlement (Singer, 2000b). The ‘ownership model’ is the legal foundation of capitalism; private property the ideological bedrock of (neo)liberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Smith, 2002). Liberalism is rooted in notions of separation and abstraction; what Walzer (1984) calls the ‘art of separation’. Likewise, the ownership model promotes the legal separation of people, between owners/non-owners; and spatial separation of land, between property parcels (Blomley, 2004b). This drive towards division stops short at the ‘individual’; the apparently ‘indivisible’ foundational unit of experience and subjectivity reified as the structuring principle of ‘possessive individualism’ (Gilbert, 2013). By marking territory with visible spatial boundaries, property becomes a “spatialized thing” abstracted from its context, devoid of social relations; this ideological cloaking helping make land appear appropiable, transferrable and alienable from its social context (Blomley, 2004b). The ‘right to transfer’ and the ‘right to speculate’ in order to profit from property appear naturalised conditions of land itself (Singer, 2000b). The powerful protection of exchange rights by the state – a tool of abstract space – allows enclosure of urban space into an alienable object, and extraction of socially-produced surplus value for exchange on global markets (Lefebvre, 1991).

In seeking to ‘unsettle’ the certainties of the ‘ownership model’, Blomley (2004b) reveals one of its greatest strengths: that it acts to ‘settle’ the complexities, ambiguities, disputes and conflicts in property claims into an ordered, coherent ‘settlement’. By covering over the multiple claims and complicated interrelatedness of property relations with a neat
categorisation centring on ordering dualisms – owners/non-owners, public/private – it attempts to contain conflicts of interest that necessarily mark all ownership claims; avoiding messy confrontations and social strife (Singer, 2009b). Rose (1998: 141) points to close etymological ties between ‘property’, ‘proprietorship’ and ‘propriety’: property makes invisible those claims that are not deemed ‘proper’ or legitimate by legal authority; obfuscating common claims to land (Blomley, 2008). Enforcing this divided settlement is the language of property rights: a powerful political vocabulary that determines social inclusion (Bromley, 1992). A property right is an enforceable claim to use/benefit from property; enforced by state sovereignty (Bromley, 1992). The state is the ultimate arbiter of property rights, legislating and enforcing what counts as a legitimate claim within its territory. Crucially, it is only through their translation into state-recognised rights that property relations gain their necessary legitimacy. This highlights an important distinction between a mere rights claim – a moral appeal awaiting legal sanction – and a right itself, which is a legitimate claim enforced by the state.

Although the state is essential for regulating and enforcing the ownership model, it also owns and manages land through public ownership. Yet such public services as housing are in retreat from neoliberalism, eroded by the ‘new urban enclosures’ (Hodkinson, 2012a). State ownership has come under sustained assault from neoliberal protagonists, such as Hayek, discrediting centralised and bureaucratic state systems as unwieldy, inefficient, unresponsive to needs, wasteful and, crucially, damaging to enterprise, creativity, innovation, and free flows of knowledge (Cumbers, 2012). The collapse of actually-existing socialism in Soviet states and the global hegemony of neoliberal capitalism has heralded the ‘end of history’, ‘There Is No Alternative’, and our contemporary condition of post-politics or post-democracy (Haughton et al., 2013; Rancière, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2011). Part of the recent resurgence of commons discourse lies in its great potential to reinvigorate public ownership/management of the economy in the wake of successive neoliberal crises, and radically reform democratic institutions as an antidote to post-political ‘governance-beyond-the-state’ (Cumbers, 2012, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2005). Mutual housing alternatives share such potential, as institutional articulations of the commons, and innovations in public ownership (Conaty and Large, 2013; Hodkinson, 2012b).

Hardt and Negri (2001, 2004, 2009) present the commons as an ideal-type transcending the individualism/meta-individualism of private/public domains towards a new paradigm of subjectivity and political organisation. Whilst the ownership model assumes division between people and resources, the commons rethinks social labour and material resources as mutually
co-constituted through practices of ‘commoning’ (Linebaugh, 2009). Private property rights reflect what Gilbert (2013) calls the ‘Leviathan logic’ dominating (neo)liberal political thought since Hobbes. Authority is invested in transcendent sovereign, with which individual rights-bearers have passive vertical relationships, only indirectly related to each other. The ‘common right’, in contrast, represents a break with Leviathan logic; marked by (inter)active, democratic, co-operative social relations. Peter Linebaugh (2014: 13-15) emphasizes the local, customary, participatory, and embedded character of ‘commoning’ and the “independence of the commons from government or state authority”. Members are directly related in a horizontal structure with rights legitimised autonomously through the very acts of their mutual negotiation: a relational claim to shared space justified immanently, not heteronomously in a synchronic abstract deed of entitlement (Bromley, 1992). Commoning refutes the very idea of a ‘predetermined’ right passively owed to individuals; insisting on active co-operative negotiation of rights between members as the self-legitimating authority for democratic self-governance. It is not surprising then that the ‘commons’ is so often overlooked, marginalised, and misunderstood as a form of ownership (Rose, 1994).

So as to find a clearer view of the rich diversity of social relations that produce property – masked by the monolithic monopoly of the ownership model – it is useful to deconstruct the seemingly cohesive concept of property as a multitudinous ‘bundle of rights’ (Christman, 1994; Singer, 2000b) or a ‘bundle of interests’ (Davis, 1990). Under this ‘social relations’ view, various individuals and groups have different relations to a particular space or resource, and therefore different interests in how it is used. These rights or interests can be broken down broadly into two distinct types: use value and exchange value. The conflict between use and exchange values has become a foundational idea in critical urban theory. For instance, Mollenkopf (1983) recognises an additional ‘underlying tension’ to capitalist urbanisation: social interaction and community formation focused on use values as an antagonistic logic to capital. At the scale of the city, Logan and Molotch (1987) make the use-exchange dialectic their theoretical lynchpin of their analysis of the ‘growth machine’; whilst at the neighbourhood scale, Davis (1990) mobilises it to describe conflicting ‘accommodative’ and ‘accumulative interests’ in residential property; and by Christman (1994) as ‘control’ and ‘income’ rights. These conceptualisations emphasise the dividing conflict between use and exchange value, which suggests that urban space production is essentially a contest between two key interest groups: those appropriating land for profit or instrumental ends and those using land for everyday social needs.
These broad categories in turn can be decoded into more precise components that are combined to create different ‘bundles’. Davis (1990) usefully identifies three specific interests for use and exchange categories: security, amenity and autonomy as ‘accommodative’ interests; equity, liquidity and legacy as ‘accumulative’ interests (see figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Accommodative use values of domestic property (source: Davis, 1990).

1) **Amenity**
   The general quality and condition of housing: its ability to satisfy needs and deliver the benefits of shelter. This is threatened by affordability crises arising from speculation, decreasing material standards from exploitation of tenants by slum landlords, devaluation of property through public disinvestment or capital flight, and neglect from absentee landlords.

2) **Security (of tenure)**
   Property being safe and secure – both physical safety and access. Deprivation of access, or ‘security of tenure’, translates into what Hartman (1984) coins the ‘right to stay put’: a call for a legal right afforded to tenants and other dwellers without the security of tenure enjoyed by homeowners, as a protection against displacement pressures, either from market-led gentrification or state-led urban renewal policies. Allied to this is the ‘right to return’ following displacement, recently developed by such campaign movements as Take Back the Land in the US (Merrifield, 2013).

3) **Autonomy**
   Closely linked with security of tenure, which Davis (1990: 53) breaks down into ‘control’ – “one’s ability to use, shape and develop his or her personal living space independently of the dictates of another” – and ‘individuation’ – “the contribution that domestic property makes to personal privacy, power and identity”:
   
   a) **Control**

   b) **Individuation**
      Ability to act on and craft one’s own living environment is what Davis (1990) calls ‘individuation’. Similar to anarchist perspective influenced by Paul Goodman’s ideas on the ‘organism/environment field’: direct engagement between self and immediate environment for personal growth and meaningful dwelling (Honeywell, 2007).

However, the power of the ownership model is such that these multiple moral use rights are not fully recognised by the state – and are trumped by exchange or accumulative rights. This model empowers private owners with the ‘right to speculate’ in order to profit on any
property through the legal acts of exchange, a right derived from both ‘equity’ and ‘liquidity’ interests identified by Davis (1990) as the key accumulative interests. The liquidity interest by definition entails also the ‘right to transfer’ or sell – something so bound up in our common conception of property that the very “idea of property rights”, explains Singer (2000b: 4),

> Often creates a perception that there should be a strong presumption that the right in question is alienable in the market-place, and conversely, that non-alienable do not count as property rights.

The final accumulative interest – ‘legacy’ – might be expressed as a ‘right to inherit’ or a ‘right to bequeath’ free from the control or taxation imposed by the state (Davis, 1990); again resting on the ownership model’s fundamental principle of investing absolute control over property in a single owner.

These accumulative rights rest on the assumption that the fruits of property can be extracted from its social context, thereby dissimulating its inherently relational and locational nature. Yet property describes a set of relationships between people in terms of the things they can access – not simply an isolated relation between a single owner and a thing as the ownership model implies. Indeed, one person’s ownership in something necessarily entails others’ exclusion from it. Moreover, the aspects which make property at all valuable or worth owning are mostly socially produced, through a complex web of relations that stretch out through the neighbourhood and beyond. Property’s inherent relationality – and locationality – is perhaps best illustrated by a how ‘equity’ is produced. This supreme exchange value is partly created by the labour and investment – the “sweat and wealth” – of the individual owner or occupant (Davis, 1990: 45). Yet the larger part derives from the workings of the surrounding society, what Davis (2010) calls the ‘social increment’, which is created through socially-generated equity from the general economic development of the urban region; public investment in local services, facilities and infrastructure; public subsidies to property owners, such as tax breaks and low interest rates; and the relative scarcity of land and a favourable location. Contending the common legal definition of equity as the ‘owner’s interest’ – which under the ownership model is said to belong solely to the titleholder – Davis (1990) demonstrates that equity is a ‘relational advantage’ dependent on the actions and transactions of multiple other actors, and tied to the fortunes of the specific locality within which it is embedded through a complex set of social relations that stretch out to the global scale.

Such a perspective resonates with Lefebvre’s insight that “(social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre, 1991: 26) – produced as much by inhabitants in their labour and daily practices as
by capital; and the city as an *oeuvre* – an ongoing, unfinished, living collective work of art, as opposed to an abstract product to be bought and sold (Lefebvre, 1995: 172-3). City as *oeuvre* approximates to an urban commons: a complex social ecology valued for collective use value over and above private exchange value; a collective work of art created by the daily rituals and practices of its inhabitants – and therefore justly governed by them.

This is the moral political argument motivating Lefebvre’s *Right to the City* – which, like the commons for anti-capitalist resistance, has become an almost ubiquitous signifier in critical urban theory and activism, with a vast literature (Attoh, 2011; Brenner et al., 2011; Harvey, 2008, 2012; Kuymulu, 2013; Lefebvre, 1995, 2003; Marcuse, 2009; Mayer, 2009b; Merrifield, 2011; Purcell, 2002, 2003, 2013). Lefebvre’s essay ‘The Right to the City’ was published in 1968, the same year as the revolutionary events in Paris and Europe kick-started the second cycle of contention, becoming influential in successive movements, not least the contemporary Right to the City Alliance and associated Take Back the Land movement in the US (Merrifield, 2013b).

Lefebvre (1995: 195; 168) first posited the right to the city in response to the alienation of late modernity, particularly in reaction to the violent displacement of communities entailed by state-led urban renewal, as “the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organisation”. But his vision became than that: “a transformed and renewed ‘right to urban life’ – a radical re-conception of citizenship, in which the tragic disconnection between city-dweller and citizen is reconciled (Merrifield, 2011). Mark Purcell (2002, 2003) delineates two fundamental components of the right to the city: the right to appropriate urban space for its use value; and the right to participate centrally in political decision-making that produces space. A third can be added – the right to *difference* – “the right not to be classified forcibly into categories which have been determined by the necessarily homogenizing powers” (quoted in Gilbert and Dikeç 2013). This is the right to free self-expression, artistic creativity, self-actualisation, spontaneous play, festivity, and collective encounter.

Like the common, the right to the city would appear to be merely a political ideal-type toward which pragmatic attempts to protect collective use rights to property can only ever aspire. Indeed, much debate has centred on what kind of right the right to the city could amount to within existing legal discourse – and whether it is capable of being expressed as a legal right at all (Attoh, 2011; Kuymulu, 2013; Merrifield, 2013b). Attoh (2011) highlights the tension between *legalistic* rights – establishing entitlements to property or political privilege – and *moral*
rights, which better describes the right to the city and the commons, as utopian ideals to struggle for, rather than abstract contracts to be invoked. Here, it is useful to recall Waldron’s (1993) widely-held distinction between different ‘generations’ of rights:

1) Traditional privileges of citizenship, such as voting, free speech, free trial
2) Socioeconomic entitlements, such as healthcare, housing, welfare and fair working conditions;
3) Collective rights, attached to specific communities, peoples, and ethnic groups, associated with cultural identity and place-based self-determination.

Rights-claims thus range from more abstract, universal and political first generational claims, through more material, territorialised collective consumption issues, to more particularist, specifically-territorialised cultural third generational claims. First generation rights-claims are most associated with the category of mass political movements and civil rights in the second cycle of contention (Martinelli, 2010). The second generation is the domain of urban social movements. Third generation rights are unique – “the solidarity rights of communities and whole people rather than individuals” (Waldron, 1993: 5) – and can conflict with individual first and second generation rights, though also enhance through synergy. This is the domain of the third category of community-based initiatives in the second cycle of contention (Martinelli, 2010). Attoh (2011) locates the right to the city in the third generation, as concerned with the protection of ‘communal goods’, which Waldron (1993: 358) defines as “fraternity, solidarity, co-operative production, conviviality, language, culture and tradition”; almost amounting to a check-list of the commons.

Despite the radical antagonism to rights, the common and the right to the city can thus be used as a political ideal or utopian imaginary towards which everyday struggles over the home and neighbourhood can be oriented and motivated. Whilst acknowledging the conceptual separation between moral and legal rights, we can begin to see how the right to the city and the commons can be articulated in more practical terms as use values and rights in property relations. For instance, the various use values and corresponding moral rights in domestic property are reflected in Lefebvre’s right to the city: the right to stay put and to return are more precise pragmatic articulations of Lefebvre’s more expansive ideal-type, originally conceived in reaction to the forced displacement of the working classes and new immigrants from French inner-cities to planned peripheral housing estates and new towns (Gilbert & Dikeç 2013: 255).

Although the right to the city is not explicitly cited as an influence in the social innovation literature, there are clear parallels with ALMOLIN’s tripartite schema. It can be understood as a theoretical ideal-type of transformative urban change towards which specific examples of
neighbourhood-based social innovation can aspire. We can bring this together with literature on housing deprivation and accommodative rights to produce a heuristic schema (see figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Framework illustrating links between social innovation, housing rights and the right to the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deprivation dynamics</th>
<th>ALMOLIN social innovation</th>
<th>Housing deprivation and property rights</th>
<th>Lefebvre’s right to the city vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deprivation of human needs</td>
<td>Practical goals for success</td>
<td>Specific problems</td>
<td>Use values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic exploitation</td>
<td>Material (housing, jobs, health etc.)</td>
<td>Satisfaction of basic needs previously unmet</td>
<td>Absentee and slum landlordism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/spatial exclusion</td>
<td>Political (self-government, citizenship etc.)</td>
<td>Reordering of power relations and governance</td>
<td>Displacement threats: public disinvestment, capital flight, speculation, gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural alienation</td>
<td>Existential (self-expression, creativity etc.)</td>
<td>Empowerment of cultural capabilities</td>
<td>Bureaucratic public landlordism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see how ability to exercise these use rights varies dramatically across social class and economic opportunity. Writing about ‘elective belonging’ – the capacity of middle-class homeowners to claim “moral rights over place through their capacity to move to, and put down roots in, a specific place which was not just functionally important to them but which also mattered symbolically” – Savage (2010: 116) highlights the importance of socio-spatial mobility for well-being and meaningful place attachment. Savage (2010: 124) locates housing deprivation not simply in material deficiency but also lack of control or autonomy: “the ability to have a ‘place of one’s own’ becomes almost a precondition for social existence.” Home is the minimum foundation for recuperation, ontological security, developing capabilities, planning for the future, and imagining change. The disadvantaged are marked by their ‘rootedness’ or ‘fixedness’ to place – not through some romantic notion of working-class
belonging and community traditions – but due to a lack of mobility. Critically engaging with ‘elective belonging’, Paton (2013: 11; 3) acknowledges that “the degree to which someone has control over where they live is a valuable distinction and indicator of class position”; positing ‘elective fixity’ – “the choice and control over one’s ability to stay fixed within their neighbourhood” – as an alternative formulation for disempowered residents facing locational threats of displacement and disinvestment. Similarly, Ward (1985: 41) claims the task of progressive housing action is to find models which allow fulfilment of three freedoms – the right to stay put, to move at will, and control one’s own home – additional components of ‘dweller control’.

Mutual housing models, such as co-ops and CLTs, can be seen as imperfect institutional representations of a ‘housing commons’ (Hodkinson, 2012b) – vehicles for the realisation of unmet accommodative use rights. For instance, the socio-material dialectic of the commons is embodied in CLTs: the social practices that constitute the organisation and the physical land and assets to be commonly owned (Bunce, 2015). They seek to reconnect inhabitants with the means of social reproduction (Turner, 1977); institutionalising some form of cooperative tenure, or ‘third estate’, in which member tenants cooperatively own land and housing as collective landlords, transcending the landlord-tenant/freehold-leasehold binary that permeates British property law (Rodgers, 1999). However, actually existing commons necessarily entail exclusion as ‘limited common property’: “property held as a commons among the members of a group, but exclusively vis-à-vis the outside world” (Rose, 1998: 132). Mutual models will only ever be impure pragmatic articulations in legal form of an ideal-type commons, synthesising different aspects of public, private and common ownership (Geisler and Daneker, 2000).

The question remains how particular mutual housing models fare in their attempts to provide and safeguard collective use values within the practical confines of the ownership model. In other words: which mechanisms built into mutual housing models may act to produce socioeconomic and political empowerment for individuals and communities, and also urban transformation at the neighbourhood scale?

2.3.2 How mutual models address socio-spatial problems

Mutual models are designed to address these housing needs, variously incorporating mechanisms for the protection of corresponding rights. In this section, I discuss how this is addressed by each mutual model in turn, by way of a brief historical overview of the evolution of models down the decades. Various models have been innovated in the last few centuries,
usually arising through periods of intensive collective action in the main cycles of contention, in response to basic needs left unmet by the state and market. However, whilst providing a useful analytical heuristic, the typologies of collective action assume social innovation only occurs through cycles of tumultuous social unrest, sparked by critical turning points and characterised by conflict (Martinelli, 2010). First, this overemphasises the radical autonomy of grassroots campaigns, and underplays the important role of the state and professional organisations in the process of social innovation – an issue I will address later in this chapter. Second, it overlooks a hidden, relatively continuous history of social innovation occurring between these cycles.

In housing history, there is a tendency to periodise and essentialise periods of socially innovative activity (Harloe, 1995), just as social movement analyses identify waves or cycles of action. Malpass (2000) highlights discontinuity in the written history of housing associations in England, citing research on mid-nineteenth century philanthropic organisations and contemporary development of large modern associations, but with scant attention to the in-between evolution. Owing to dominance of ‘mass model’ public housing in the mid-twentieth century, it is too often assumed that social innovation in housing experiments outside the state became unnecessary or negligible, and that the rise of council housing is partly attributable to the failure of philanthropic trusts, written out of housing histories after around 1890 (Malpass, 2000). However, a great deal of experimentation occurred between this point and the apparently sudden re-emergence of housing cooperatives in the 1960s. Until 1919, local authorities displayed reluctance whilst trusts continued to build and innovate. Three model villages were developed, continuing the tradition started by Robert Owen: Lever’s Port Sunlight in 1888, Cadbury’s Bourneville in 1895, and Rowntree’s New Earswick in 1901. These philanthropic capitalists were all involved in helping develop Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City vision, with the first established at Letchworth in 1903.

Such undocumented (dis)continuity led Birchall (1991) to reconstruct the ‘hidden history’ of housing cooperatives, just as Malpass (2000) does for housing associations more generally. First, from 1901, ‘tenant co-partnerships’ flourished until the inter-war period when they were overshadowed by council housing (Birchall, 1995). Co-partnerships were a form of cooperative tenure that recycled surpluses from rents back into benefits for tenants. Howard’s (1898) original Garden City vision emphasised the importance of cooperative land ownership over the more famous town-country spatial form, with a practical emphasis on creating a sustainable financial model. Co-partnerships became the means by which the Garden City vision was realised, providing the tenure form for successor garden suburbs, including
Wavertree in Liverpool established in 1910 (Birchall, 1995). By 1914 Britain had over 40 co-partnerships, managing 7000 homes, competing with local authority ownership of 20,000 (ibid). Tenant control was common at first, but as the need to attract investment led to outside supporters sitting on committees, this direct democratic aspect became diluted, and co-partnerships began blending with housing associations, known as ‘public utility companies’ (Malpass, 2000). Their gradual institutionalisation led to the formation of the National Federation of Housing Societies (NFHS) in 1936. A similar story of co-optation occurred with garden suburbs. After Howard built the second garden city at Welwyn in 1920, his ideas were incorporated into inter-war suburban housing estates with all but design principles lost, although the post-war state reincarnated some form of collective ownership in the corporations governing new towns (Ellis and Henderson, 2014).

Second, ‘co-ownership societies’ began in 1961, representing a further co-optation of cooperative principles by the state. The Conservative government identified unmet housing needs in good quality, low cost private-rented housing and homeownership, and sought to fill the growing supply gap between owner-occupation and council housing, as well as cut back state provision, through expanding the cost-rental sector, including co-ownership societies. The 1961 Housing Act included state funding for the sector; administered by the NFHS (Birchall, 1991). Co-ownership societies were registered as cooperatives under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, but were marketed more as a stepping stone towards full homeownership through residents buying greater equity stakes in collective property (Birchall, 1988). The 1964 Act established the Housing Corporation as the national regulatory and funding body for housing associations; the beginnings of the large third sector of housing associations we know today. Despite ultimately proving financially, and socially, unviable as a model, these failed experiments in co-ownership laid the political and institutional foundations for the next wave of cooperative housing: common ownership co-ops, notably emerging in London and Liverpool (Birchall, 1991). These were truer to the original cooperative principles enshrined by the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844, and reinvigorated in 1966 (figure 2.5 below).
As we will see in Chapter Four, from the initial foundation provided by SNAP and the early rehab co-op movement in Liverpool, the common ownership co-op movement expanded into new-build co-ops, supported by a further piece legislation. The 1974 Housing Act, passed by the newly-elected Labour government, created an unprecedentedly generous funding regime for housing associations and co-ops, with Housing Association Grants (HAG) providing up to 100% of capital costs as well as subsidies for ongoing maintenance and a system of ‘fair rents’ according to need. Through the influence of key cooperative proponents within the Labour Party, co-ops were included in this regime of ‘fair rents’; becoming affordable to those on low incomes for the first time in the UK (Birchall, 1991). This set common ownership co-ops – otherwise known as ‘fair rent’, ‘par value’ or ‘non-equity’ – apart from co-ownership societies. In the latter, members buy individual equity shares and receive benefits in proportion; whilst fair rent co-ops hold the entire equity collectively with members buying only a nominal share, i.e. £1 (Birchall, 1988). Members are equal partners in managing their homes collectively; more truly cooperative than co-ownership but requiring equity funding from the state.

The new-build housing co-ops in Liverpool co-evolved with so-called community architecture to innovate an unprecedentedly participatory design and development process (CDS, 1994; McDonald, 1986). The historical development and socio-political effects of these movements is main subject of Chapter Four, so for present purposes I will simply highlight the theory behind how their mutual combination may achieve socio-spatial transformation, summarised in figure 2.6.
A principal proponent of community architecture was Rod Hackney, bringing political significance through his presidency of RIBA (Wates and Knevitt, 1987). Providing inspiration was Hackney’s revival of community self-build for the rehabilitation of a dilapidated terraced street in Macclesfield in the early 1970s (Towers, 1995). Residents’ successful campaign to save their homes persuaded the council to declare it a GIA, enabling government grants to be used for self-build rehabilitation; a process of physical regeneration and socioeconomic empowerment through acquiring new skills and capabilities. Hackney’s self-build formula for regenerating run-down housing and empowering residents, derived from his successful experiment in Macclesfield, is summarised in figure 2.7 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban transformation</th>
<th>Socioeconomic/political empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood environments work better when inhabitants are involved in its creation, by:</td>
<td>Not only are higher quality physical environments produced, but the process of getting there has countless benefits, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Designs being more sensitive and responsive to resident needs and desires</td>
<td>1) Socioeconomic empowerment through teaching skills and capabilities, which often leads to new employment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) avoiding misallocation of resources or design mistakes</td>
<td>2) Political empowerment through campaign process, often leading to greater political participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) instilling an individual and collective sense of ownership over the process for responsibility and pride in the outcomes, responsibility for housing, helping deter vandalism, crime and neglect,</td>
<td>3) Tackling socioeconomic needs through empowerment and lower long-term maintenance costs for residents to pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) inside knowledge to enable more effective long-term management and maintenance</td>
<td>4) Building better communities, in developing community confidence, and sense of ownership;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) and giving people a political voice in local decision-making through collective self-government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Towers (1995) acknowledges the formula is far more difficult to follow in inner-city contexts, where land values are higher, buildings of a larger scale, social networks more diverse, and governance processes, administrative procedures, and external relationships more complex. Nonetheless, it provides a practical template for how inner-city regeneration can be done differently, in more participatory, responsive, self-sustaining, and socioeconomically effective ways than conventional area-based initiatives. Moreover, it is very relevant for those declining areas of deindustrialised cities, where land values are in fact low, most residents have left in search of better conditions leaving behind only the most committed, and local authorities are desperate for solutions to persistent problems of dereliction, vacancy, and abandonment. Indeed, these ideas have since been influential in cities like Liverpool and Stoke-on-Trent, where council-led ‘Homes for £1’ schemes have reincarnated ‘homesteading’ as a cheap piecemeal solution to the growing empty homes problem (Crookes and Greenhalgh, 2013); inspiring the more radical ‘community homesteading’ approach of Granby CLT (Thompson, 2015), which I explore in Chapter Six.

Whilst Hackney’s formula leads to individual home-ownership, the CLT model provides more thorough protection of neighbourhoods through collective ownership of local assets, combined with individual leaseholds for personal economic security, and stewardship of place for more democratic, publicly-accountable governance. CLTs stand in a long line of trusts, which have a more direct relationship to land, and its enclosure, than housing per se. The second missing link in the hidden history of housing innovation is the concept of the ‘commons’ and its institutional incarnation as land trusts, innovated in response to enclosure. Acts of enclosure date back to the Roman Empire’s juridical concept of ownership to support conquest and slavery; forming the basis for feudalism after which the commons were eradicated in the rise of industrial capitalism (Woodin et al., 2010). Pre-dating the first modern cycle of contention

Figure 2.7: Hackney’s formula for rehabilitating deprived neighbourhoods, breaking the spiral of decline; and empowering residents, breaking the poverty cycle. (Source: Towers, 1995: 83):

1) Residents cooperate to buy dilapidated houses, made possible by low values;
2) Providing assets to borrow loans and secure grants against;
3) Learn and develop skills in self-build with professional help, such as a resident architect;
4) Using free labour, supported by state benefits, to improve homes;
5) For technical tasks, local tradesman and specialists employed to recycle value locally;
6) Following refurbishment, residents own a home worth far more and gain experience, skills and self-confidence for future employment opportunities.
are countless forms of resistance to enclosure as well as various attempts to (re)claim common land rights for the dispossessed. Cooperatives are a later form but have proven vulnerable to co-optation. A more direct form of defence is through the institutionalisation of trusts, which seek to remove land from the market entirely (Conaty and Large, 2013).

The first prototypical trusts emerged from anti-enclosure revolts in the early modern period, most famously the Levellers and the Diggers, whose great advocate Gerard Winstanley made the powerful declaration to the ‘Lords of the Land’ that;

The earth was not made purposely for you, to be Lords of it, and we your Slaves, Servants and Beggars; but it was made to be a common Livelihood to all, without respect to persons. And that your buying and selling of Land, and the Fruits of it, one to another, is *The cursed thing*, and was brought in by War… (Winstanley, 2011).

The Diggers’ occupation of St George’s Hill in Surrey from 1649 suffered violent attacks by the landlord and proved short-lived, but their ideas lived on, influencing critical figures in later land trusts, such as Henry George, John Ruskin, William Morris and Ebenezer Howard (Ellis and Henderson, 2014). In 1871, Ruskin founded the Guild of St George, a non-profit association holding land in trust, pioneering the ‘trusteeship company’; securing ‘enduring community benefit’ rather than profit (Conaty, 2007). In the UK, the most ambitious articulation of this was Howard’s Garden Cities. In the USA, this influenced the development of the contemporary community land trust (CLT) movement, later imported (back) to Britain (Aird, 2010; Moore and McKee, 2012). British CLT advocates see early experiments by Winstanley, Ruskin and Howard as embryonic forms of modern CLTs (Conaty and Large, 2013; Conaty, 2007; Dayson and Paterson, 2011).

The first American influence on the CLT movement was Henry George’s (1879) moral critique of undeserved profits accruing from unproductive landlordism and speculative development (Davis, 2010b). For George (1879) land exists independently of labour, as the original source of wealth and autonomy, as opposed to the ownership of means of production, for this must be located on land anyway. Ralph Borsodi, one of the founders of the American CLT movement, concurred in his distinction between property commonly understood, as deriving from human labour, and what he calls ‘trusterty’: things existing by other means, i.e. nature (Meehan, 2014). Land should therefore not be owned but only ‘entrusted’, as in a parent’s relationship to their child; bringing to fruition the concept of ‘trusteeship’ or ‘stewardship’. The latter is a concept distinct from ‘ownership’ – be it public, private or common – in which civil title to land is never absolute, but rather held in ‘trust’ for
future users, with duties of care and social responsibility is its core (Geisler and Daneker, 2000).

Borsodi attempted to implement trusterty in experiments with prototypical land trusts, notably the ‘homestead model’ which separated the ownership of land from buildings, effectively putting a floor under tenants as a micro-scale welfare state; defining the first two CLT pillars as cooperative ownership and individual leaseholds (Meehan, 2014). It was only through the involvement of Robert Swann – a conscientious WWII objector influenced by Ghandi and the Civil Rights movement – that the CLT model gained its distinctive third pillar. Swan observed some of Borsodi’s cooperative homestead communities and critiqued their inward-looking closure as ‘enclaves’, with no means to reach out beyond the membership to society. He introduced a governance mechanism that would ensure openness to the locality and wider publics, and provide the basis for social mobilisation. The CLT tri-partite governance structure – with equal parts resident-members, community representatives, and expert stakeholders – is the result of this innovation (Davis, 2010b). CLTs are unique among mutual housing models for engaging with, and recycling surpluses for, the wider community, not just member-residents.

A further aspect of the CLT model developed through the practical application of Swann’s introduction of stewardship (Davis, 2010a). These early rural CLTs in the late 1970s were influenced by their founders’ Catholic theology and were established as vehicles to empower politically and economically excluded low-income people, with an in-built ‘preferential option for the poor’; part of “building a community of the dispossessed” (Davis, 2010a: 20). The CLT movement moved from Borsodi’s concept of trusterty towards Gandhi’s trusteeship.

The first urban CLT, the Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati (CLCC), built on this, developing from grassroots organising by church-based community organisations, helped by key activists and infrastructures of the national CLT movement, to adapt the CLT model as a vehicle for community empowerment and urban regeneration in impoverished inner-city neighbourhoods (Davis, 1990). Earlier experiments following Borsodi had not imposed long-term contractual controls over the resale of buildings on leased land, but CLCC had to contend with unstable urban property markets and the threat of gentrification, thus introducing resale limits into the CLT constitution; institutionalising the principle of permanent affordability. These innovations opened opportunities to use CLTs to address inner-city issues of decline, disinvestment, gentrification, and speculation: the next wave in the 1980s included the world’s largest CLT today, the city-wide municipal housing programme in Burlington, Vermont (DeFilippis, 2004; Soifer, 1990); and in the 1990s, notable grassroots
inner-city community campaigns, Cooper Square in New York (Angotti, 2007), and Dudley Street in Boston (Medoff and Sklar, 1994). Taken together, these three pillars of the CLT model have been formulated by the main theoretician of the contemporary American CLT movement, John Emmeus Davis (2010a), summarised in figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8: The three pillars of the CLT model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Place-based community-owned organisation with a geographically-defined membership, open to anyone living or working within its boundaries.</td>
<td>• Common ownership of land held by non-profit collective organisation, managing land on behalf of community, present and future;</td>
<td>• Land held in trust for all present and future possible user, as trustee or steward, but with ‘preferential option for the poor’: moral obligation to develop assets for primary benefit of disadvantaged individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Governed by a board, with rotating members, the majority of which democratically elected by membership, the remainder co-opted as expert stakeholders.</td>
<td>• Permanent removal of land from market, never resold by non-profit org, recycling all surpluses back into community.</td>
<td>• Public investment in developing the value of the land and helping the CLT acquire it, as well as the ‘unearned increment’ of socially-produced appreciating value, also held in trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tripartite balance of interests on the governing board, split equally between representatives of leaseholders as direct beneficiaries; non-leaseholder residents living in area, or wider community; other stakeholders and the public interest.</td>
<td>• Separation of ownership from tenure: structural improvements, such as buildings, owned separately by a variety of possible leaseholders, from individuals to co-ops, for productive use as housing, food growing, commercial enterprise or social activity; with long ground leases to protect individual property interests, but with resale price limits to maintain perpetual affordability for community benefit.</td>
<td>• Trust of individual members in the community to steward their homes, in the principles of trusterty, and between members in engaging in collective democratic project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The latter pillar in figure 2.8 is crucially important in securing the others; it is critical in ensuring the ‘buy-in’ of new member-residents, who must be convinced of the value of sacrificing some accumulative interests to enhance accommodative interests, and those of the community’s poorest members (Engelsman et al., 2015). Leaseholders must forfeit their share of any increase in land value so as to maintain benefits of permanent affordability and security of tenure; they must see land as use value rather than exchange. These tensions in the ‘dialectic of value’ (Stein, 2015) hinge on the new opportunities granted low income people to occupy their own home and own equity in a CLT scheme, bringing with it temptations to realise
equity which may override collective commitments. Temptation is greater, with fewer incentives, for wealthier homeowners to join and effectively part-subsidise the security of those less fortunate. By removing land from the market, CLTs also remove people from the market, making it more difficult for members to re-join the property ladder if they wish to live elsewhere. This is especially problematic in places with rapid appreciation of values – precisely where CLTs are most effective – creating ‘lock-in’ of residents, prevented from cashing in their share of rising equity required to buy in the rising market. However, this would seem to be more of a problem in over-heated areas of hyper-speculation than seriously depressed contexts, where property markets are less likely to inflate out of reach – where CLTs provide a useful floor to further depreciation from which to begin the difficult task of regeneration.

Nonetheless, through this unique combination of institutional covenants, CLTs have practical potential to address pernicious effects of markets both too ‘hot’ – affordability crises, absentee landlordism, speculative development, and gentrification – and too ‘cold’: capital flight, spirals of decline, poverty, inequality, deprivation, dereliction, abandonment (Bunce, 2015; Davis, 2010b; DeFilippis, 2004; Engelsman et al., 2015; Thompson, 2015). And also potential to resolve problems of state management: alienation of public landlordism and displacement pressures from municipal urban renewal schemes. They offer a potentially powerful antidote to problems of capital flight, public disinvestment and neighbourhood decline. Whilst CLTs have mostly been developed for the provision and local collective control of affordable housing – with growing international application in the UK, Canada, Australia, Belgium, and Kenya, amongst others (Moore and McKee, 2012) – there are real prospects to use the CLT model for neighbourhood regeneration.

CLTs were first imported to Britain from the US in the 1990s by land reform advocates seeking to resolve issues of rural housing affordability (Aird, 2010). A government consultation on CLTs (DCLG, 2008) and funding of a National CLT Demonstration Programme from 2006-2008 was run by Salford University’s Community Finance Solutions (CFS) and piloted 14 CLT projects (Aird, 2009; Dayson & Paterson, 2011). This led to the formation in 2010 of the National CLT Network, an umbrella organisation that connects and supports member CLTs (NCLTN, 2016). Following lobbying from CFS and other advocates, CLTs were given legal definition in the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act (see figure 2.9).
Statutory definition has enabled campaigns to seriously explore community asset transfer with public bodies. Other than those in Liverpool, the first notable grassroots urban CLT campaigns in the UK include several in London: the pioneering East London CLT established in 2007 by campaign organisation London Citizens (Bunce, 2015); an unsuccessful tenant-led CLT campaign for community ownership of an ex-council estate in Elephant and Castle (DeFilippis and North, 2004); as well more emerging recently, such as Brixton Green (NCLTN, 2016).

Prospects for community asset acquisition have strengthened in the last few decades, led by Scottish, in turn influencing English, legislative reforms (Bryden and Geisler, 2007; Moore and McKee, 2012). Scotland has been in desperate need of land reform for centuries, with rural communities, particularly in the Highlands, still owned by large estates and partly governed by archaic feudal regulations, leading to problems of absentee landlordism. In 2000, the Scottish Feudal Law originating from the 11th century was repealed; in 2003, the Land Reform Act was passed, granting a community right of ‘first refusal’ on the sale of estates (Bryden and Geisler, 2007). This ‘Community Right to Buy’ has influenced policy initiatives in England (Bailey, 2012). Since 2003 local authorities and public bodies such as the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) have been permitted to transfer surplus assets to community organisations at affordable sub-market rates (Crowe et al., 2011). In 2007, the government-commissioned ‘Quirk Review’ (Quirk, 2007) led to the establishment of a £30 million Community Assets

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**Figure 2.9: CLT legal definition, in Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Part 2, Chapter 1, Clause 79 (source: Dayson & Paterson, 2011):**

A Community Land Trust is a corporate body which:

1) is established for the express purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental interests of a local community by acquiring and managing land and other assets in order:
   a) to provide a benefit to the local community;
   b) to ensure that the assets are not sold or developed except in a manner which the trust’s members think benefits the local community

2) is established under arrangements which are expressly designed to ensure that:
   a) any profits from its activities will be used to benefit the local community (otherwise than by being paid directly to members);
   b) individuals who live or work in the specified area have the opportunity to become members of the trust (whether or not others can also become members);
   c) the members of a trust control it.
Fund and the Asset Transfer Unit (ANU), an advice and support body within Locality, the national organisation for CDTs (Bailey, 2012).

The 2011 Localism Act introduced various community rights and, crucially, a Community Right to Buy, or rather a ‘community right to bid’ on ‘assets of community value’ (Locality, 2011). Despite being given time to organise and raise funds for a bid, in most cases community organisations must still compete on the open market to acquire land sold by a public agency (DCLG, 2012). Sharing similar limitations, the complementary Community Right to Build grants communities the right to bring forward development proposals without the need for planning permission so long as it meets a minimum criteria of design and local infrastructure requirements and demonstrates the support of at least 50% of voters in a local community referendum (DCLG, 2012). Rights to nominate, bid and build on land amount to merely formal legal rights which, in the context of ‘compulsory competitive tendering’ policies favouring ‘best value’ bids in council sales of public land (Hodkinson, 2011), forces smaller community-led bids to compete with private companies, imposing severe entry barriers and constraining practical prospects for community asset acquisition (Moore and McKee, 2014). These legislative reforms fail to consider the need to target resources at the most deprived communities, who stand to gain most from community asset acquisition but are limited in time, resources, skills and knowledge to compete against other organisations (Moore and McKee, 2014). This highlights the need for regional intermediary organisations and a national infrastructure to advise, connect and support small-scale initiatives through complicated bureaucratic, legal and development processes (Moore and Mullins, 2013).

More recently, the state has become increasingly involved in community asset acquisition as a government policy (Aiken et al., 2011; Moore and McKee, 2014). Former regeneration partnerships, such as NDC, have sought out means to transition into some form of CDT or CLT as a ‘legacy vehicle’ (Bailey, 2012). Ex-NDC Partnership, Shoreditch Trust, researched extensively the possibility of establishing a Community Equity Trust, a permutation on CLT principles, aiming to secure long-term housing affordability and ‘self-financing regeneration’ (Saulter et al., 2008). In Liverpool, the former NDC Partnership in Kensington likewise toyed with the idea of a CLT as legacy vehicle, which I explore in Chapter Six. CLTs have been suggested as alternative forms of delivering HMR objectives by some of the architects involved in designing HMR masterplans (URBED, 2004); and housing association partners in the Merseyside Pathfinder have been instrumental in researching the American CLT model as a potential sustainable solution to renewal of vacant terraced housing in Anfield (Engelsman and Southern, 2010).
2.4 Challenges of institutionalisation

All efforts to institutionalise mutual housing models must contend with a legal landscape polarised between public/private realms, geared towards private homeownership. Divergent strategies mark the struggle for recognition of common property rights. First, the struggle operates at the national policy scale of campaigning for new legislation. The British housing cooperative movement has been lobbying for legal tenure reform, which currently recognises only two distinct types of tenure: freehold versus leasehold, landlord versus tenant. Rodgers (1999) argues for a ‘third estate’ to complement the two original estates we have inherited from medieval feudalism; to provide the legal basis for a form of mutual property relation – a common property right – to empower tenants from what amounts to a state of feudal dependency. Legislating the ‘third estate’ would provide legal protection required to maintain housing cooperatives over time with the turnover of members. Currently the law treats members of co-ops as essentially ‘tenants’ or as part-owners as in limited equity co-ops, which gives individuals either too much or too little power over their share. Ironically, leaseholder empowerment legislation passed to protect tenants from their vulnerable position with respect to ruthless landlords – notably the 1967 Leasehold Reform Act – now threatens the operation of many mutual models by empowering members to buy out their share of the scheme; preventing the collective organisation from imposing limits on individual control of equity (Conaty and Large, 2013; Crowe et al., 2011). Each new mutual model can be seen as the latest historical iteration in institutional innovations designed to negotiate greater legal protection of the housing commons against enclosure.

Second, housing commons must be actively ‘claimed’ and created by inhabitants through informal, improvised and insurgent collective action (Blomley, 2004b; Ward, 1973). All common claims are insurgencies in some sense, beginning with dissatisfaction over existing property relations inspiring counterclaims to redress the balance. By virtue of the self-securing nature of property rights – defence of convention, bias towards existing titleholders, favouring private/public forms over common – counterclaims must employ unconventional tactics that work around the law to actively ‘claim’ the space through physical occupation. Colin Ward (1973) recognises the difficulties in campaigning for mutual housing alternatives, as potential threats to private property rights, in his empirical observations of four phases common to direct action in housing (figure 2.10).
Formal campaigns for state-recognised common property institutions often begin with extra-legal occupations, protests, squatting and other forms of direct action. A framework understanding the dynamics of locality-based collective action is provided by American CLT advocate, Davis (1990), derived from his empirical study of CLCC, the first inner-city urban CLT (see figure 2.11 below). Dynamic stages in collective consciousness and organisation formation describe the empirical conditions for purely celebratory neighbourhood groups to shift into contentious collective action, and finally into the domain of social innovation, a transition from purely defensive action towards constructive institution-building of alternatives.

Figure 2.10 Ward’s four phases of popular direct action in housing in a non-revolutionary situation (source: Ward, 1973: 89-90).

1) **Initiative**: “the individual action or decision that begins the campaign, the spark that starts the blaze”

2) **Consolidation**: “when the movement spreads sufficiently to constitute a threat to property rights and becomes big enough to avoid being snuffed out by the authorities”

3) **Success**: “when the authorities have to concede to the movement what it has won”

4) **Official action**: “usually undertaken unwillingly to placate the popular demand, or to incorporate it in the status quo”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective action domain</th>
<th>Stage in collective consciousness</th>
<th>Empirical conditions for consciousness formation</th>
<th>Group organisation formation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbour/community associations: Improvement/promotion of existing environment</td>
<td>Interest group identity</td>
<td>Neighbourly relations and informal everyday contact creates loose affiliation between residents</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rudimentary awareness of shared property interests and differences with other groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban social movement: Contentious collective action</td>
<td>Conflict consciousness</td>
<td>1) destabilising event or crisis creates threat of disintegration and ‘awakens’ latent shared interests, motivating action</td>
<td>Conflict housing group:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recognising inherently conflictual/oppositional relations with other property groups; defending interests against threats</td>
<td>2) conflicts of interest with other groups forces people to defend theirs, or contrast with similar group creates ‘catching up’ motivation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3) exposure to ideologies of property and place that consolidate group identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Innovation: Transformative experiments in alternative models</td>
<td>Radical consciousness</td>
<td>1) upward mobility of least advantaged groups on tenure ladder no longer possible or credible; also applies to spatial mobility, the lack of opportunity to exercise ‘elective belonging’ (Savage, 2010) – e.g. disinvestment/decline creating local liquidity trap</td>
<td>Radical housing group:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realisation that existing property relations inadequate to satisfy needs; proactive, creative construction of new relations/institutions rather than defensive protection of old.</td>
<td>2) counter-ideology to explain/justify reorganisation in relations (i.e. commons, right to the city)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3) radical solution only recognised if actual conflict between interest groups persisting for some time, after: 1) exhaustion of all other strategic options 2) one combatant realises radical transformation will undermine opponent; 3) state and capital elites accept restructuring as a means to buy social peace.</td>
<td>1) new set of tenurial and functional relations itself (i.e. CLT, co-op); or</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2) force state to fundamentally change rules governing use and ownership of domestic property (i.e. rent control).</td>
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Whilst Davis’ (1990) framework may accurately describe inner-city working class communities in 1980s America, it is less useful in depicting contemporary neighbourhoods in advanced states of disintegration. A principal difficulty is that disintegration applies to land, buildings and economic circuits, but also to social capital, community capacities for collective action (Moulaert, 2010). The fragmentation, precarisation, and deproletarianisation of working-class communities through post-Fordist restructuring has dramatically weakened their social ties and organisational strengths (Wacquant, 2007). Moulaert (2009: 16) highlights the ambiguous and contradictory nature of disintegrating areas: “both hearths of doom…and ambits of hope”; long working class histories of dissolution and outmigration juxtaposed with opportunities for inflows of diverse newcomers, and the creation of experimental spaces of possibility amidst emptiness and dereliction (Moulaert, 2010).

These two trajectories – historical decline and future possibility – suggest two aspects of social innovation: one geared towards traditional problem-solving centred on working class resistance for the satisfaction of material needs; the other towards more culture-led, forward-looking experimentation driven by ideological visions of new arrivals (Moulaert, 2010). This broadly reflects the bifurcation in social movements between ‘old’ urban social movements, associated with collective consumption (Castells, 1977, 1983), and ‘new social movements’ associated with post-material questions of cultural identity (Melucci, 1989; Touraine, 1981); described by Fraser (1995) as the ‘redistribution-recognition dilemma’. However, this distinction is “pointless” in the study of ‘third cycle’ movements emerging out of disintegrating neighbourhoods, due to re-emergence of ‘old’ material deprivation under neoliberalism, complexly interwoven with ‘new’ cultural concerns (Martinelli, 2010).

Contemporary mutual housing alternatives are therefore likely to begin through proactive re-appropriation of neglected space, initiated by a new class of creatives, artists, activists and cultural producers, disillusioned by neoliberal urbanism and “struggling for the right to the (creative) city” (Novy and Colomb, 2013). These counter-cultural and ideologically-motivated groups are associated with a current trend in urban studies and activism for micro-spatial urbanisms, variously described as ‘insurgent’, ‘guerrilla’, ‘do-it-yourself’, ‘grassroots’, ‘everyday’ (Adams and Hardman, 2013; Groth and Corijn, 2005; Hou, 2010; Iveson, 2013). They take physical form as squatting, occupations, community gardens, guerrilla gardening, social centres, street art, music venues, informal markets, food banks, skate parks, pop-up bars; capitalising on opportunities produced by ‘austerity urbanism’ (Peck, 2012) – state/market
withdrawal of investment in the ‘post-crash city’ (Tonkiss, 2013) – yet can equally exist under conditions long-term urban decline (Moulaert, 2000).

Such spaces are implied urban commons (Eizenberg, 2012a) and microcosmic claims to the right to the city (Iveson, 2013). In some instances, they are politically conscious attempts by to ‘crack capitalism’ by tending to alternative practices growing in the ‘cracks’ – “the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different type of doing” (Holloway, 2010b: 21). These ‘cracks in capitalism’ – or contradictions in abstract space – take on spatial form, materialising as marginal spaces, edgelands, brownfield sites, unoccupied buildings, vacant streets and disinvested neighbourhoods created by uneven economic development. For Tonkiss (2013: 317), these are the “spatial expression of interstitial urbanism”. Interstices – ‘in-between-ness’ – has three senses: spatially, occupying the margins, infill sites and edges; temporally, the interim and transitory nature of these spaces; and politically, an alternative common space ‘between the boundaries’ of the public/private dualism in the ownership model (Thompson, 2015). In blurring both spatial and legal boundaries, interstitial experiments are informal and unrecognised: essentially ‘imagined proprietorship’ (Blomley, 2004a), or ‘un-real estate’ (Rose, 1994). This highlights the essentially continuous, active aspect of ownership as a process of human ‘doing’ (Rose, 1994); a stark refutation of the ownership model and its insistence that only two moments of action matter: acquisition and transfer (Blomley, 2004b).

However, do-it-yourself interstitial urbanisms are problematic in two ways. First, they tend to colonise previously working-class inner-city areas to produce social spaces catering exclusively for the ‘creative class’ (Novy and Colomb, 2013). Artists have long been considered pioneers of gentrification processes in historic working-class neighbourhoods (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005). To realise social innovation, bridges need to be built for an inclusive and integrated approach to both alienation and deprivation (Gonzalez et al., 2010; Moulaert, 2010). The challenge is set by Peter Marcuse’s (2009) call to connect the two excluded groups of post-Fordist urbanism – the directly deprived or dispossessed with the discounted or disillusioned – into a unified right to the city alliance. Artistic visioning of alternative futures works as a necessary complement to the struggle for satisfaction of basic material needs, but the question remains whether the spatial co-incidence of these two groups and perspectives acts as a source of creative encounter or class conflict.

Second, by thriving on invisibility to the system, do-it-yourself interstitial urbanisms are often too ephemeral, disconnected, and localised to properly challenge deeper structural issues to
effect lasting urban transformation (Iveson, 2013). To do this requires engagement with property rights. The long-term success of insurgent attempts to (re)appropriate urban space for control over the means of social reproduction depends on the capacity to exercise collective autonomous control over land and resources (DeFilippis, 2004). Imagined and insurgent common claims to urban space are only the first requisite stage in the realisation of successful socio-spatial innovation in disintegrating neighbourhoods – crucially requiring state sanction and support.

2.4.1 Engaging with the state

Engaging with the state is anathema to many commons advocates. Hardt and Negri (2009: ix) dialectically counter-pose the commons to private/public property: cutting “diagonally across these false alternatives”, the commons is to communism, what the public is to state socialism and the private is to capitalism. For these reasons, ‘rights talk’ is criticised by the alter-globalisation movement as fundamentally incompatible with the commons (Bakker, 2007). Commons theorists contend that solutions to enclosure cannot be found through the state, or state-like structures, however democratic they may be (Cumbers, 2015). The autonomist-Marxist approach to the commons rests on a rather naïve view of autonomy without the state (Cumbers, 2015). There is a self-defeating paranoia of any attempts to move beyond highly localised, grassroots and horizontal forms of organising towards joining up micro-commons through vertically-coordinated structures for fear of becoming state-like (Hardt & Negri 2009; Holloway 2010a, 2010b). Interestingly, there are many parallels between neoliberalism and the commons in their treatment of public ownership. But without some form of institutional support structure in place, how can the ‘cracks’ ever be joined together into a movement, or indeed grow in such an inhospitable climate? The disavowal of the state by commons advocates presents serious contradictions for the challenge of institutionalising forms of common property.

Relative success of alternatives to public/private ownership appears to depend on their ability to construct a relatively autonomous socioeconomic ‘circuit of values’, and access economic resources they can control autonomously (Lee, 2010; North, 2007); “organised around the goal of ‘reclaiming’ that capital by limiting its potential mobility by anchoring it within localities” (DeFilippis, 1999: 983). Tangentially, this suggests that re-appropriating just one sphere of the social economy – housing alone for instance – is not enough to build a sustainable alternative; reflected in the literature as a holistic or integrated approach to social economy development (Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005).
However, there is a dangerous tendency in the literature to treat alternatives as independent spaces of emancipation from capital, overlooking global chains of dependence on exploitation elsewhere (Jonas, 2010; Lee, 2010). All alternatives, no matter how ‘autonomous’, are inextricably related to the ‘outside’: state-capitalist dynamics. Local autonomy is always a relation of power, which DeFilippis (1999: 980) defines as the “ever-contested and never complete ability of those within the locality to control the institutions and relationships that define and produce the locality”. Just as autonomy is not a property possessed by one agent in isolation from others, so too the state is not a cohesive entity ‘out there’, but rather a set of relations structuring the governance of society (DeFilippis, 1999). This relational view of power builds on historical-materialist thinking to conceptualise the state as an ‘institutional ensemble’ (Poulantzas, 2000) – a ‘strategic field’ (Jessop, 1990) – and state power as a codification process of competing groups attempting to inscribe their interests into state policy.

Local autonomy in the 21st century can mean very different things. Under the Big Society and New Localism agenda, communities are increasingly ‘empowered’ to look after themselves, with charity, volunteerism and entrepreneurial subjectivities promoted to replace state intervention (North, 2011; Williams et al., 2014). In this new climate, resilience – self-reliance and bounce-back-ability – has supplanted sustainability as the grand signifier. As part of a growing counter-movement for ‘progressive’ over ‘austerity localism’ (Featherstone et al., 2012), MacKinnon and Derickson (2013) critique resilience discourse as “profoundly conservative” and highly compatible with neoliberalism in ‘responsibilising’ residents to help themselves out of emergencies and become more resilient to structural threats. Resilience thinking encourages an inward-looking focus on immediate local survival, emphasising internal capacities for self-help to the detriment of connections with others; and risks falling into the ‘local trap’ of uncritical localism for inter-local competitive uneven development (Purcell, 2006). There is always the danger that place-based projects slip into being place-bound ‘militant particularisms’: inward-looking exclusive, parochial, isolationist, and unable to connect with broader movements at greater scales through trans-local solidarity (Harvey, 1995). Ironically, resilience is a discourse celebrated by many grassroots movements explicitly opposing neoliberal logics (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). Such counterintuitive compatibility and resonance with neoliberalism and austerity localism is a problematic contradiction and ever-present danger for community-led mutual housing campaigns.
Indeed, mutual models may be seen as part of a broader trend towards ‘neo-communitarianism’ (Jessop, 2002) in which communities and the voluntary sector are mobilised as a growing part of the ‘shadow state’ (Wolch, 1990). As unwanted governance responsibilities for delivering public services are offloaded, deprived communities risk “collapse when laden with excessive political expectations”, falling through the ‘trapdoor of community’ (Herbert, 2008: 853). Community self-government is a double-edged sword: imposing burdensome responsibilities, pressures and strains onto already under-resourced and disadvantaged just as it acts to socially and politically empower, as in the case of community-owned gardens in New York (Eizenberg, 2012b). However, by focusing on resourcefulness rather than resilience, campaigns may avoid such pitfalls.

Recently the concept of ‘resourcefulness’ has been resurrected as an alternative to the increasingly pervasive discourse of ‘resilience’ in the context of ‘austerity localism’ (Featherstone et al., 2012; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). Resourcefulness seeks radical transformation through capacity-building rather than mere ‘bounce-back-ability’ (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). But this contemporary formulation – apparently unconnected to Turner’s (1977) original notion – overemphasises the ability of grassroots communities to radically transform social spaces, and underplays the essential role of dedicated third sector infrastructures and sources of expertise required to foster local skills, knowledge and capacities. By revisiting Turner’s earlier concept, we may find a balanced approach to understanding the potential – and limits – to autonomous radical self-help.

Indeed, research on the self-help housing and CLT movements recognises the ability to help oneself ‘from within’ is paradoxically dependent on ‘help from without’ (Moore and Mullins, 2013). The contradictions of institutionalisation, becoming ‘state-like’, are reflected in the tensions between ‘scaling up’ and ‘going viral’ as alternate forms of replication. But to go viral, community-based projects require infrastructure at a higher scale to support their development and replication. Many recent self-help housing initiatives to rehabilitate empty homes for community use have relied on the Coalition government’s empty homes grants and campaign support from the Empty Homes Agency (Mullins, 2010). Mutual housing experiments are mobilised with the help of ‘intermediaries’ (Moore and Mullins, 2013) or ‘secondary’ co-op development agencies (Clapham and Kintrea, 1987), whose professional staff steer community groups through complex bureaucratic, financial and legal procedures involved in setting up co-ops and CLTs.
Indeed, Birchall’s (1988) horticultural analogy, derived from empirical findings, of how co-ops take root and grow emphasises the importance of professional, legal and financial support of the promoters on the ground (see figure 2.12).

![Figure 2.12: Conditions for co-op development, distinguishing between seeds, soil, cultivation and climate required for growth (source: Birchall, 1988)](https://example.com/figure212.png)

| 1) | housing needs left unmet; |
| 2) | cooperative models that work in practice that can be utilised; |
| 3) | promoters, or cultivators, those charismatic leaders and organisations; |
| 4) | favourable legal and financial environment, providing the right resources; |
| 5) | favourable psychological, ideological and political climate. |

Likewise, the social innovation literature highlights essential ‘mobilising structures’: formation of organisational structures capable of driving change, and mobilisation of resource, both tangible like funding, and intangible like commitment (Martinelli, 2010). Resources come from endogenous sources, driven by direct beneficiaries – ‘beneficiary constituents’ – and exogenous sources, people not directly benefiting but who may have ideological or professional interests: ‘conscience constituents’. We therefore require a more nuanced view of the state – and professionals – as an enabler and essential source of legal and financial support, as well as barrier to be challenged.
2.5 Dynamics of socio-spatial transformation

Before we can empirically address how mutual housing experiments have contributed to resolving Liverpool's neighbourhood question, we must first build a conceptual framework that can model the impact of mutual housing alternatives on space, and the way in which they become embedded in place. There is a fundamental tension permeating the concept of institutionalisation: between the seemingly inevitable transition to hierarchical, formalised and institutionalised forms, and the spontaneity, insurgency, creativity, and radicalism that drives them to challenge existing structures and innovate new practices and institutions (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). But this is a fruitful tension: successful innovations do not necessarily mean full incorporation, but rather may provide inspiration and space for alternative ideas to survive and reproduce through replication. Seemingly unsuccessful projects can leave ‘seeds’ and ‘sediments’ behind in place that may germinate and grow in future under the right conditions (González and Healey, 2005). The issues of path-dependency and place-dependency are therefore fundamental to understanding the opportunities and constraints that shape trajectories of neighbourhood-based social experiments (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010).

Place-dependency is determined partly by socioeconomic and institutional path-dependencies operating at the local level, but is always amenable to territorial specificity and contingency. Casual practices, micro-agencies, random events, and coincidental interactions combine in specific places, through interventions by creative individuals and charismatic leaders, and by existing place-based organisations and partnership arrangements, drawing on local traditions of particular ideologies, cultures, and resource matrices unique to that place (Gonzalez et al., 2010). These include the seeds and sediments of earlier experiments and the incubation of alternative practices in local norms, behaviours and memories. We might talk of ‘place memory’ being important in providing a source of change in the context of path-dependent institutions. The incursion of place-specific contingencies into the process of path-dependency allows us to see how ‘windows of opportunity’ and momentary ruptures in institutional ensembles may be exploited by local groups.

We might see the influence of such ‘place effects’ in Liverpool’s unique history. Tony Lane (1997) and John Belchem (2011) trace the influence of anarcho-syndicalism in the city’s
development back to the arrival of Spanish seafarers associated with Spain’s anarchist movement; and the pre-WWI Liverpudlian seamen who deserted ships in America, and became members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) movement, returning to communicate these ideas to trade unions and other land-based industries. Anarchist fervour ignited the industrial militancy of 1911, in which a widespread ‘strike wave’ brought the city ‘near to revolution’, as newspapers reported at the time (Belchem, 2011). Some 70,000 workers from across a wide range of industries were involved in direct action, led by key syndicalist activists (O’Brien, 2011). Prior to this, socialist politics had been held back by the violent influence of sectarianism on Liverpool communities, divided by religion more than class (Lane, 1997). The 1911 Strike has since been mythologised as a foundational moment in the creation of Liverpool’s distinctive working class radicalism (O’Brien, 2011).

The radicalisation of Liverpool workers and residents alike is rooted in the anarchist rejection of orthodox electoral politics and organised trade unionism, for more insurgent, libertarian and creative forms of class conflict through direct action. Anarchist resistance to the regularisation and time-disciplining of working practices, for more spontaneous, casual and self-expressive work rhythms were expressive of the casualised and informal nature of work on the docks (Higginson and Wailey, 2006). Lane (1997) highlights the striking resonance between the spontaneous direct action of anarcho-syndicalism; the casualised, self-organised nature of seafaring and docks work; and certain stereotypical character traits of Liverpudlians, as cocky, independent-minded, anti-authoritarian, and ready for revelry (Boland, 2008). Southern (2014) argues that this anarcho-syndicalist character of workplace action in Liverpool led to hostility not just to capitalism but to the hierarchical, top-down organisation of the traditional labour movement. More creative and anarchic forms of protest laid the foundations for a certain firebrand kind of enterprise and entrepreneurialism, rooted in activism.

This has fascinating implications for understanding Liverpool’s distinctiveness in social innovation for mutual housing. Lane (1997: 116; 135) claims anarcho-syndicalism had a subtly pervasive impact on Liverpool culture and urban politics: first seeping into land-based industries via anarchic seafarers regularly moving between different occupations, who “in their wake left traces of their experience and habits of mind”; eventually infusing into broader community-based action over council-housing as the “democratic moment, born and then nurtured in the workplace, took wing and outflew its origins”.

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However, in tracing contemporary phenomena back to distinctive place-based histories, we must be careful not to essentialise place (Massey, 2004, 2005). Liverpool is not a neatly bounded entity with a coherent essential identity, but is rather relationally constructed out of socio-material assemblages of ideas, people, commodities and flows from countless sources and influences – borrowed, mobilised and reassembled from elsewhere through complex processes of policy mobilities and mutations (McCann and Ward, 2011, 2012a; Peck, 2011). A key part of this thesis is to trace the movement and mutation of ideas and policies that have constructed mutual housing experiments in Liverpool. As we will see, these experiments have often been mobilised by diverse external ‘conscience constituents’, whose creative interaction with beneficiary constituents is an important aspect of how Liverpool’s co-op and CLT movements developed.

The relative importance of local particularities or ‘place effects’ set against broader global structural forces in determining socioeconomic outcomes has been revisited in various academic debates down the decades, notably the ‘locality debate’ of the 1980s, which has particular resonance for Liverpool. Doreen Massey’s (1984) *Spatial Division of Labour* was pivotal in highlighting the deeply uneven regional geography of urban restructuring, and also the variation in local responses to this differentiated restructuring; inspiring the localities studies of the 1980s. The ESRC research programme – Changing Urban and Regional Systems (CURS), running from of 1985-7 and whose empirical findings were published in two books (Cooke, 1989a; Harloe et al., 1990) – sought to distinguish the importance of local spatial variation in the production of socioeconomic processes and reproduction of social relations, through seven British case-studies, of which Liverpool was one. Caught, as it was, so tightly in the vortex of economic restructuring – out of which spun a number of creative solutions – Liverpool found itself at the centre of the locality debate. Richard Meegan’s (1990) study of Merseyside emphasized the resistance and policy innovations made in response to the swift destruction of the city’s raison d’être.

Key localist responses included the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC), one of the first two pioneering urban development corporations in the UK (Meegan, 1999), which along with the Special Task Force, was established by the Minister for Merseyside, Michael Heseltine, appointed in the wake of the Toxteth Riots, or 1981 Uprising, to pump-prime private investment into Liverpool through infrastructural improvements, tax breaks and flexible planning regulations designed to promote enterprise (Meegan, 1999). At the scale of the local state, in 1983 the local electorate responded by voting in a far-left municipal socialist
administration led by a Trotskyist sect within the Labour Party, who pursued a massive debt-fuelled programme of council house-building, environmental improvement and public services expansion – called the Urban Regeneration Strategy (URS) – in an era when Thatcher was slashing local authority powers and budgets nationally (Frost and North, 2013; Taaffe and Mulhearn, 1988; Wainwright, 1987). Militant clashed fiercely with Thatcher’s government – ultimately proved unable to contend with stronger political and economic forces – whilst also coming to blows with the growing co-op movement, an alternative localist response to the housing crisis and global economic restructuring. Implementing a harsh programme of municipalisation in which all uncompleted co-ops were taken into municipal ownership, Militant made more enemies amongst its constituents, including the Eldonians, who were galvanised by opposition to their co-op to bypass the council and seek central government support for a more ambitious project (McBane, 2008; Roberts, 2008). This epic political battle is the subject of Chapter Five.

Liverpool’s unusual history has much to offer the locality debate by way of insights. The debate revolved around the question of how far conditions unique to a particular locality, or at least uniquely manifesting at the local level, are able to shape the social relations and economic processes structuring that locality; and how “necessary social relations become not merely in but also of a particular place” (Cox 1998: 20). In contrast to structural Marxism, then dominating academic geography, localities scholars posited that structural processes and external policies acting on particular localities interact in highly specific and novel ways according to the local historical and cultural context, but in a deeply dialectical relationship with extra-local structures (Clarke, 2013; Cooke, 1989a, 1989b; Duncan & Savage, 1989; Jones & Woods, 2012; Massey, 1991).

Critics on the Marxist Left accused the studies of ‘spatial fetishism’, for instigating a problematic ‘empirical turn’ that wrongly endowed place or locale with causal powers, thus distracting from the root structural forces of capital operating at a much higher geographical scale than the local, which merely manifested socioeconomic outcomes (Harvey, 1987; Smith, 1987). Yet these studies emphasise the proactive capacity of localities to shape their fates in the face of intense forces of global restructuring; arguing that structural processes have to manifest and be grounded somewhere, and that conversely, global forces are in turn altered, if only minutely, by changes occurring at the local level, initiated by local political resistance or creative experimentation. Just as in the housing question, in which Proudhon’s anarchist descendants saw hope in the power of small-scale self-help cooperative housing to effect larger systemic change, if only slowly and incrementally through gradual expansion – the
localities scholars foregrounded the snowballing power of proactive localism to change the course of economic restructuring on specific places.

Even if local responses do not immediately impact upon the economic fortunes of a place, the very fact that they happened may alter the course of history, nudging local economic development in new directions. This idea is captured in the concept of path-dependency: large consequences resulting from small, contingent events; history punctuated by ‘turning points’ or crisis moments, which produce windows of opportunity as ‘choice points’, in which path-breaking actions may be taken; but which are difficult to reverse, owing to institutional entrenchments of initial choice (Mahoney, 2000; Malpass, 2011; Pierson, 2000). Although more appropriate as a theory of change at the scale of institutional structures rather than policies or places (Streeck and Thelen, 2005), it has nonetheless been used to understand housing policy pathways (Harloe, 1995; Malpass, 2011) and neighbourhood change (Cole, 2013; Robertson et al., 2010). The social innovation literature conceptualises path-dependency as a spectrum from highly path-dependent to most path-shaping (Gonzalez et al., 2010):

1) ‘lock-in’ – no immediate opportunity for change
2) ‘path-paving’ – fostering continued tradition of change
3) ‘path-breaking’ – abrupt transformation

‘Critical junctures’, ‘turning points’ or ‘triggering events’ become the objects of study – setting off, breaking or shaping paths, in specific spatial contexts whose conditions for transformation may change radically over time, and remain highly-dependent on place-specific qualities, i.e. place-dependencies. The historical events leading up to neighbourhood blight may well be described as path-dependent, in that each step towards vacancy and dereliction becomes self-reinforcing, as reputation declines and increasingly people attempt to leave, and inward investment decreasingly likely, until a ‘tipping point’ sets off an inevitable downward spiral of decline. But at each point, political choices were made. Conditions of disintegration and abandonment make sudden moments of transformation not just possible, but actively demanded, as perhaps the only way out of decline.

Path-dependency takes its most extreme form, perhaps, in orthodox narratives of urban change, which conceptualise decline as a ‘natural’ consequence of ‘urban life-cycles’ (Berg et al., 1987) – standardised patterns of urbanisation, driven by demographic and technological change – leaving little space for agency. ‘Neighbourhood life-cycle’ theory likewise explains housing vacancy as a naturalised stage in its ‘life-cycle’ (Couch and Cocks, 2013). Such forces are framed as if they are ‘natural’ and deterministic components of an urban ecosystem rather
than socio-spatial processes amenable to contestation and transformation through interventionist decision-making and action. Policymakers’ crude application of these theories can have adverse effects on cities, as Metzger (2000) and Aalbers (2014a, 2014b) convincingly show in the damage done to American inner-cities throughout the 20th century, by such policies as mortgage ‘redlining’, but especially ‘planned shrinkage’, which is usefully defined as:

Selectively abandoning old neighbourhoods in unpopular areas of a city, while continuing to build new ones…selectively allowing mass transit, old streets, sewer lines and other elements of a city’s infrastructure to continue to decay, while building highways to encourage more of the cars that choke cities and creating new neighbourhoods or “new towns” that require new infrastructures and the disruption of existing networks (Gratz, 1989: 156).

We can see a similar process of ‘managed decline’ in Liverpool. Although the post-war municipal policies of mass depopulation of inner-city neighbourhoods and rehousing to new towns and outer estates, and subsequent long-term neglect of those neighbourhoods exhibit these traits – these were doubtful the intentions of city planners, more likely mistakes (Lane, 1997; Sykes et al., 2013). However, at national government level, as Andy Beckett (2015) has recently revealed, ‘managed decline’ was consciously considered as a policy option in response to the Toxteth Riots:

The option of managed decline [of Liverpool] is one which we should not forget altogether. We must not expend all our limited resources in trying to make water flow uphill. (Private letter to Thatcher from chancellor Geoffrey Howe in July 1981)

As it happened, Geoffrey Howe lost the argument in Cabinet, and Liverpool received considerable state funding, initiated by Michael Heseltine as a direct response aiming to ameliorate the worst conditions which sparked the Toxteth Riots. Heseltine proposed a series of ‘special initiatives’ to tackle what was now perceived in Cabinet as the “Liverpool problem” – leading Heseltine to be appointed ‘Minister for Merseyside’ (Parkinson, 1985; Beckett, 2015). Likewise, the Militant-led Labour council’s URS and forceful challenge to the level of central government funding of Liverpool’s budget were powerful political interventions in structural urban decline (Frost & North, 2013). The MDC and URS arguably began – from two different directions – the reversal of Liverpool’s fortunes; setting the city on a path towards economic recovery and cultural revival, with population growth in the early 21st century, for the first time since the 1930s, gaining the boosterist accolade of European Capital of Culture year in 2008 (Sykes et al., 2013). This just goes to show that urban change is produced by political decision-making and intervention as much as by structural economic forces.
2.5.1 Towards a dialectical theory of socio-spatial innovation

If we apply these insights to the scale of the neighbourhood, we can construct a conceptual framework for understanding socio-spatial innovation driven by mutual housing alternatives. Drawing on ‘relational’ conceptions of space (Graham and Healey, 1999; Jessop et al., 2008; Massey, 2004, 2005; Pierce et al., 2011; Pred, 1984), an alternative ‘socio-spatial’ approach to neighbourhood change acknowledges both the more structural processes of change – demographic, technological, architectural, and economic shifts – but importantly foregrounds human agency, collective action, and cultural practices (Aalbers, 2006, 2014a; Madden, 2014; Pierce and Martin, 2015). These are essentially development actions, political decisions and counter-contestations over investments, and disinvestments, flowing through specific neighbourhoods. Madden (2014) conceptualises ‘neighbourhood’ as an unfinished ‘spatial project’ in which various actors and organisations impose their own specific agendas, project interests and play out visions in myriad colliding, competing and cooperating ways that combine to enact or produce place. The successful transformation of disintegrating neighbourhoods through social innovation depends on the ability of actors to contest dominant logics and narratives of neighbourhood decline through alternative visions and strategies.

This open-ended, unfinished, contingent yet structured process highlights the active production of place, as ‘place-making’, understood in two senses: the socio-spatial construction or transformation of neighbourhoods and localities; and place-meaning-making, the overlaying of collective meanings, visions, identities and imaginaries (Lombard, 2014). Place-making captures the incremental nature of actions and practices of everyday life slowly changing place over time, as well as the strategic one-off events that radically transform it, such as dramatic top-down state interventions, or ‘tabula rasa’ planning engaged in the erasure of place for redevelopment (Jones & Evans, 2011). Lombard (2014) suggests place-making is more pertinent in informal settlements where inhabitants self-build to a greater extent than in more formalised and developed urban contexts. But in the latter, disintegrating neighbourhoods may be more amenable to transformation through creative place construction. Indeed, the social innovation literature attests that “in many of our case studies, the particular local scale was actually ‘constructed’ through the socially innovative experience”; as “a consequence of the collective action that led to place-building” (Gonzalez et al., 2010: 50).
Another strand in the socio-spatial approach builds on the work of Aalbers (2006, 2014a), influenced by Lefebvre (1991), distinguishing two broad approaches taken by agents towards the production of neighbourhood: one focusing on generation of exchange values and bureaucratic rationalisation of space, as *abstract space*, the other on more social ends of collective use, encounter, and social reproduction, as *social space*. Thus the socio-spatial production of neighbourhood is marked by a struggle between two opposing, radically unequal, forces competing against each other to inscribe space with their own vision, according to fundamentally different conceptions. It is a struggle between what Aalbers’ (2006) calls ‘social space-makers’ – who “produce residential space for use” – and ‘abstract space-makers’, who “follow the instrumental logics of exchange value when producing housing”. However, this is no simple binary: the interactions, conflicts and collaborations between different actors produce ‘entanglements’ of power in complex, unpredictable combinations (Lombard, 2014).

These categories of abstract/social space-makers only provide a vague idea of the diversity in motivations relating to the production of neighbourhood space. Davis (1990) provides a more nuanced, though materialist, framework of property interest groups motivated by accumulative and accommodative interests; which may be broadly correlated with abstract and social space-makers respectively. Within these two camps, groups are differentiated according to positionality with respect to six domestic property interests. Landlords, financiers, developers and speculators have exclusively accumulative interests; varying relations to equity, liquidity, and legacy. Public and private tenants and, obliquely, the homeless, have exclusively accommodative interests: amenity, security and autonomy (see figure 2.3). Homeowners have a more ambiguous relationship to property, with overlapping and often contradicting interests. According to Davis (1990), differences in material property interest between these groups will generally result in tensions, rifts and conflicts motivating action (see figure 2.13). This is because collective identity is assumed to be constructed on the sole basis of shared domestic property interests. However, this overlooks the role of state actors in this process. It also leaves unexplained the involvement of ‘conscience constituents’ with no direct accumulative or accommodative stake but professional, political and/or ideological commitments interests (Martinelli, 2010). Moreover, it leaves underexplored the forward-looking visions and imaginaries that shape action, without necessarily being rooted in property interests.
Davis’ framework is critiqued by Purcell (2001) for failing to account for extra-material motivations, or escape the politics of class and identity. Purcell’s (2001) research into homeowner activism in Los Angeles finds material property interests not the only, or primary, reasons for action. Just as important are complex multi-faceted human motivations, affective attachments and ideological concerns like cultural heritage, environmentalism, territorial self-determination; not easily reduced to property interests, even if expressed sophisticatedly as accommodative use values. Building on Lefebvre (1991), Purell (2001: 178) offers an alternative locus of collective identity in a ‘politics of space’, in which different issues and interests, both material and cultural, are “embedded and held together in the spatial vision that guides homeowner activism.” Cutting across material class and cultural identity interests is a shared relation to place, or ‘communal living space’. Davis (1990) recognises this with the concept of ‘community of fate’, but fails to see the potential to unite diverse groups around a common spatial vision. This might be form the critical mediating link between diverse material grievances and collective action for change: the shared frame through which a common future may be envisioned and potentially realised. A spatial rather than social category approach allows us to see more clearly how otherwise conflicting interest groups can sometimes, in favourable circumstances, come together and mobilise around a shared agenda.
A Lefebvorean approach to socio-spatial innovation shows how past trajectories and future aspirations, material needs and cultural interests, are inextricably combined as part of the same dialectical process. Lefebvre (1991) builds a dialectical theory of space as both thing and flow (Merrifield, 2013a); a ‘unitary theory’ that avoids both a reductionist structuralism and discourse-centric post-structuralism (Pierce and Martin, 2015); reconciling the historical-materialist material dimension of ‘perceived space’ with the poststructuralist conceptual dimension of ‘conceived space’ with the phenomenological symbolic dimension of ‘lived space’ (Schmid, 2008).

In Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial triad, conceived space is “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers…all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived”. This is composed of ‘mental’ abstractions – those intellectual, technocratic and scientific discourses, theories, plans, models, maps, logics and programmes that construct analytical and rational representations of social reality to produce abstract space – which imprints itself onto lived space, in the “devastating conquest of the lived by the conceived, by abstraction” (Lefebvre, quoted in Wilson, 2013a: 3). In what follows, I argue that Liverpool’s ‘slum clearance programme’, Militant’s URS, and HMR are all distinct forms of abstract space, sharing tendencies towards property-led abstraction; reflecting similar arguments made about post-war suburban housing development and transport planning (Butler, 1998, 2005), and neoliberal housing restructuring policy, specifically HOPE VI, the American precursor to HMR (Jones & Popke, 2013).

In contrast, lived space is “directly ‘lived’ through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre, 1991: 38), and also those artists, writers and philosophers who attempt to meaningfully represent lived space and how it could be lived more imaginatively (Leary, 2013). This is the most physical, ‘pre-rational’, imaginative and affective space of everyday experience – producing social space (Pierce and Martin, 2015). It is the realm of memory, imagination, desire, art, poetry, music, play, festivity, eroticism, intoxication, excess and collective encounter (Merrifield, 1995). For Lefebvre, this is the very essence of the ‘urban’, arguably also of creative innovation: the concentrated interaction of people, ideas and cultures through rich social encounter (Merrifield, 2013b).

Conceived and lived space dialectically interact to produce ‘perceived space’ or spatial practices – Lefebvre’s third, unifying dimension in the triad. Spatial practices ‘secrete’ society’s space through accumulated multiple ‘daily realities’ of individual routines, behaviours and habits; the ‘urban reality’ of “routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’
life and leisure” (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). This productive ‘secretion’ is a kind of spatial projection: plans, visions, interpretations, dreams, and desires are projected out into space and play out in physical and social practices, through combined daily movements of inhabitants in and through the material form of the built environment. Abstract space is the accumulation and penetration of ‘conceived space’ into the spatial practices of society, the foreclosure of the possibility of encounter through division, homogenisation and abstraction. Social space is that which resists and escapes the grip of abstraction, as the promise of a postcapitalist ‘differential’ space (Wilson, 2013a).

Differential space seeks to reconnect that which abstract space divides – “divisions between work and product, between repetitive and differential, or between needs and desires” (Lefebvre, 1991: 291); a dialectical counter-movement for the re-appropriation of social space as use value:

Thus, despite – or rather because of – its negativity, abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space…‘differential space’, because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. It will also restore unity to what abstract space breaks up – to the functions, elements and moments of social practice. (Lefebvre, 1991: 52)

Differential space is the space of invention and innovation: difference-as-novelty. Lefebvre (1991: 372) distinguishes between ‘produced’/’maximal’ difference – radical change – and ‘induced’/’minimal’ difference, “generated by iteration or recurrence”, such as the “diversity between villas in a suburb filled with villas; or between different ‘community facilities’.” Induced/minimal difference is the system reproducing itself through empirically distinct, though conceptually continuous, variation. Produced/maximal difference, in contrast,

Presupposes the shattering of a system; it is born of an explosion; it emerges from the chasm opened up when a closed universe ruptures…a given set gives rise, beyond its own boundaries, to another, completely different set. (ibid)

These two forms of differential space recall Andre Gorz’s (1964) distinction between ‘reformist reforms’ – which reinforce dominant logic – and ‘non-reformist reforms’, which challenge the dominant ideology and attempt to transform social relations. Social innovations in property relations tend to walk a fine line between these tendencies (Meehan, 2014). Soifer (1990) suggests that CLTs are a “limited or partial non-reformist reform”, in that they have the potential to enact radical change – to challenge neoliberal financialisation of land (Blomley,
by widening the limits of the possible and making incremental structural transformations; but so often fall short as “a gimmick to keep low-income housing costs low” to take the “pressure off the state and the private sector” (Meehan, 2014: 19).

In attempting to produce a new kind of social space, CLTs can be seen as institutional goals of ‘spatial projects’. Reinterpreting Lefebvre’s theory at the neighbourhood scale, Madden (2014: 480) defines spatial projects as

Coordinated, continuous, collective campaigns to produce and format space according to identifiable logics and strategic goals, pursued by specific actors utilizing particular techniques. Spatial projects are, as the phrase has it, spatial projections of social power; they produce space, in an ongoing, contingent, uneven manner.

Reflecting Lefebvre’s key insight that “the social relations of production…project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself.” (Lefebvre 1991: 129); the socio-spatial approach conceptualises urban space as shaped and reproduced by projections ‘out’ into space, politically-motivated ‘movements’ shaping space in the interests of the movers. Spatial projects broadly correlate with Martin’s concept of ‘place-frames’: competing representations of space used as political tools to re-imagine and re-produce urban space for different ends (Pierce and Martin, 2015; Pierce et al., 2011).

The practical way in which various groups attempt to remake neighbourhood according to place-frames is explicable through ‘performativity’. Abstract space is not simply emergent hegemonic social reality but also specific tools or technologies of power geared towards the “representational erosion of differentiated symbolic systems by an instrumental rationality” (Wilson, 2013b: 4). In this way, blueprint plans, maps, statistical research, viability models, zoning policies, property brochures and vision statements may be seen as technologies of abstract space. Such tools of abstraction have a dual function, or ‘double ontological status’, simultaneously describing or representing the world and constitutively intervening in or ‘performing’ the world (Gieryn, 2006). Aalbers (2014a) and Christophers (2014) adapt Judith Butler’s concept of ‘performativity’ – “the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Butler quoted in Aalbers, 2014a) – to the study of how maps and viability models, respectively, have a ‘performativé’ effect on the urban space they claim to merely map or model. Powerfully remaking space in the image of the very assumptions and axioms used to observe and measure it, these instruments ‘perform’ a certain vision of social reality into existence (Aalbers, 2014a; Christophers, 2014). However, it is not
just abstract space-makers who can remake space in this way: social space-makers too can have a performative impact through grassroots spatial visions.

Visions and utopian projections are critically important to the construction of new social spaces, just as they are for modernist urban renewal (Pinder, 2002). Lefebvre (2009: 178) sees utopian thinking as intrinsic to theoretical reflection: “there is no theory without utopia. Otherwise, a person is content to record what he sees before his eyes”. Utopia is central to the very act of thinking in the dialectical movement: possible-impossible (Coleman, 2013; Pinder, 2013). It is the vital mediating link between practical and theoretical concerns: the ‘critical vantage point’ against which to assess the present (Baeten, 2002); the necessary vision to motivate change; and the basis of planning for the future, at the regional scale of urban planning (Ellis and Henderson, 2014), or indeed the neighbourhood scale of ‘spatial visions’ (Purcell, 2001), ‘spatial projects’ (Madden, 2014), or ‘place-frames’ (Pierce and Martin, 2015). Lefebvre’s (1995: 151) ‘experimental utopia’ is an empirical approach to finding utopia by studying “its implications and consequences on the ground”. Lefebvre distinguishes ‘utopian’, concrete explorations of the possible in everyday life, from ‘utopist’, abstract, transcendental visions of an ideal city, which tend towards authoritarianism in their prescriptions (Pinder, 2013). This distinction captures a deep tension in utopian thought between temporal change and spatial closure, which Harvey (2000: 183) diagnoses:

To materialise a space is to engage in closure (however temporary) which is an authoritarian act…The problem of closure (and the authority is presupposes) cannot be endlessly evaded.

Paradoxically, utopias are created as endlessly open projects of reimagining and reinventing social relations, tending never to come to a point of closure, to maintain the purity of ideas and keep possibilities open for constant evolution; whilst at the same time needing to realise and materialise this vision in definite socio-spatial form. As Harvey (2000) astutely recognises, this is inherently authoritarian and counter-utopian, in foreclosing possibility (Baeten, 2002). Harvey’s solution is a dialectical utopianism that acknowledges spatio-temporal interplay. Lefebvre (1991: 189-90) likewise understands utopian possibilities as dialectically co-produced in space:

The idea of a new life is at once realistic and illusory…the space which contains the realized preconditions of another life is the same one as prohibits what those preconditions make possible…To change life, however, we must first change space.
Yet Harvey (2000) accuses Lefebvre of an ‘agonistic romanticism’; indeed he refuses to make specific spatial recommendations or definitions of utopian futures for fear of falling into the totalitarian trap of reproducing technocratic ‘abstract space’ (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre’s aversion to closure is not so much per se as with the authorial source of utopian design: insisting that utopian projects must flow from the users and inhabitants themselves, not from detached designers or visionaries. Coleman (2013) highlights the problematic implications for architects and planners – as the ‘framers of spatial closure’ and ‘spatial processes’ respectively – and hence the need for participatory design and mutual methods in realising any concrete utopia.

In James Scott’s (1999) thesis on ‘seeing like a state’, such spatial framers as planners, architects and policymakers, especially in the modernist era, apply abstract theories to diverse contexts without appreciation of place-based culture and local knowledge. As a counterbalance to abstract knowledge, *episteme*, and technical knowledge, *techne*, embodied in state projects, Scott (1999) posits *mêtis*: vernacular practical wisdom and know-how embedded in local experience, acquired in response to specific environmental challenges. Whilst the former are impervious to context, *mêtis* enables insight into specific historical-geographical environments. We can see how social innovation – embedded, situated and immersed experimentation by ‘street-level innovators’ – emerges out of lived space, drawing on *mêtis*.

This raises important questions over the role of professional expertise. If we understand social innovation as the production of differential space, then a spectrum emerges: from more grounded, immersive, spontaneous, open-ended and ‘produced’ difference; to more deliberate, controlled, interventionist and ‘induced’ forms of innovation. The former describes social innovation as radical collective action, whilst the latter may describe the growing trend for ‘urban laboratories’ as sites of experimentation by policymakers and practitioners (Gieryn, 2006; Karvonen and van Heur, 2014). ‘Laboratory’ and ‘experiment’ have become buzzwords in urban studies and policy alike, describing the space/site and process/project respectively, in state and market projects promoting urban change and creative innovation (Karvonen and van Heur, 2014). The scientific metaphor of inducing and measuring change in controlled laboratory conditions might describe area-based initiatives, programmes like HMR, and even action-research projects like CDPs and SNAP; as relatively detached ‘experiments’ on a delineated space, conceived as abstract spaces by politicians, planners, sociologists and architects. Urban lab experiments tend to induce minimal difference within the logic of the system from which they sprung; whilst social innovation has potential to produce maximal
difference. But there is a tension here: outside experts are generally required to assist street-level innovators in complex legal, financial, architectural and bureaucratic processes that shape urban development. Grassroots social innovation may well respond better to local context, and reflect desires of residents, but there are limits to how much it can do before coming up against such technical and structural barriers. Moreover, métis can be highly problematic: unevenly distributed among local people, entailing exclusions and power differentials, often tending towards inward-looking particularism (Scott, 1999). This reflects concerns with the commons (Cumbers, 2015; Rose, 1986). There is a need for both street level innovators and higher-scale experts in the challenge of institutionalising mutual housing alternatives. Almost all forms of social innovation have some kind of external support, and so it is better to see the distinction between lab experiments and grassroots innovation more as a spectrum from one extreme to another, with most containing aspects of both tendencies, than as a simple binary.
2.6 Summary

This chapter has prepared the conceptual ground for understanding the empirical development of mutual housing alternatives in the historical-geographical context of Liverpool. In sketching a brief history of mutual alternatives as social innovations initiated by collective action in response to state and capitalist property institutions, I hope to have illustrated how the *Housing Question*, as Engels formulated it, treats housing deprivation in too narrowly a material sense, reducible to economic exploitation. Lefebvre and anarchist self-help proponents, Turner and Ward, broaden the debate to highlight the political exclusion and cultural alienation of residents in state projects of urban renewal and public housing – reflecting broader trends in the second cycle of contention, in which the concept of social innovation was reinvigorated. The contemporary field of territorial social innovation studies focuses on neighbourhood-based projects aiming to resolve deprivation in these three domains – economic, political and cultural – which I relate conceptually to housing needs, accommodative interests and property rights to suggest ways to resolve the housing and neighbourhood questions.

Mutual models – as part of a broader ‘neighbourhood improvement’ approach – have the potential to resolve the housing and neighbourhood questions where conventional programmes tending towards the transformation approach do not. Whereas the latter tend to displace the problem of poverty rather than address it directly – transforming declining neighbourhoods to exploit the rent gap – mutual models tackle socio-spatial deprivation head on by reconnecting the user and producer of dwelling through participatory design, common ownership and management, encompassing various mechanisms for individual empowerment and self-sustaining regeneration. However, these models are in need of empirical investigation through in-depth case studies of specific mutual housing projects. They have a long, hidden history, which cannot be easily periodised in the way collective action is categorised into cycles of contention – suggesting social innovation is a continuous process as much as resulting from moments of crisis. The question of how well mutual models embed within existing structures to potentially resolve socio-spatial problems over time is an empirical one. In what follows I provide a detailed historical analysis of the people, organisations, policies, events and processes that have contributed to mutual housing experimentation in Liverpool. My focus is on the co-op and CLT movements, but I situate these in their political-economic and cultural contexts, by analysing the impacts of national and local government policies, socioeconomic trends, political events and the contingent encounters of place. In this way, I aim to foreground people, place and history in the study of territorial social innovation.
As articulations of the commons, institutionalising co-ops and CLTs is particularly challenging in the context private property relations underpinning capitalism. This means campaigners adopt insurgent, extra-legal methods of occupying space in order to make their claims visible; with more scope for experimentation in spaces leftover, neglected or unoccupied by capital. Social innovation literature puts the emphasis on grassroots collective action from outside the state, which I argue underplays the role of various professional actors and conscience constituents operating at different scales. Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space offers a powerful heuristic for situating social innovation within the broader process of socio-spatial change, structured by cultural practices and political interventions as well as economic forces. Mutual housing experiments may be characterised as experimental utopias drawing on the capacities of users and inhabitants to produce social or differential space, in the struggle against abstract space.

I apply these concepts to the task of understanding how mutual housing alternatives have emerged through Liverpool’s recent history – as social innovations often born out of experimentation by street level innovators in the realm of lived space aiming to produce social space or even differential space, in reaction to state-led urban redevelopment programmes, the tools of abstract space and the product of conceived space. I will show that there is no real clear cut division between these domains, that they fluidly overlap and interact as much as they can be seen to collide and conflict. This leaves multiple contradictions to be unpacked empirically: democratic design vs. professional expertise; radical innovation vs. successful institutionalisation; creativity vs. bureaucratisation; local autonomy vs. multi-scalar dependence; inward inclusion vs. outward exclusion. The purposes of mobilising a Lefebvrean framework of social innovation in this historical study of mutual housing development is to provide the language and conceptual apparatus to be able to draw out these nuances, contradictions and connections in ways which reveal the contingencies, personalities and events at the heart of this process, bringing these to the fore whilst grounding them against the structural forces and material processes that shape urban change. How this research is designed to investigate these conceptual concerns is the subject of Chapter Three.
3 Research design and methods

This chapter describes the tripartite structure of the project, and its constituent parts reflect this accordingly: research design; methods, or empirical stages; and a final section on data analysis and the presentation of findings, where I consider the methodological issues in writing history. The entire methodological process is summarised diagrammatically in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Research process and methods diagram.
3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Case-study approach

The project began with a comprehensive literature review on the conceptual area of interest: the different mutual housing models that have emerged in recent British history, as well as international developments. From the literature I gained a sense of where these initiatives had initially sprung, took root, and then mobilised. I considered a number of case-study urban contexts on the basis of the incidence, density, depth and historical extent of various mutual alternatives. A comparative urban research study with international scope was contemplated (Robinson, 2011; Ward, 2009) as a means of comparing the CLT model across diverse contexts, such as London, Liverpool, Boston and New York. The case for Liverpool as a single-case-study emerged out of the literature, which illuminated the city’s remarkably rich history and uniquely fertile ground for different mutual models: from early experimentation in 19th century industrial model communities, Port Sunlight across the Mersey, and early 20th century tenant co-partnerships, Liverpool Garden Suburb Tenants Ltd in Wavertree; to one of the country’s largest, most concentrated and pioneering non-equity co-op movements in the 1970s, including what would become Britain’s largest community-owned housing trust, the Eldonians; finishing with the pioneering urban CLTs, in Granby and Anfield.

Some of these experiments had been under-studied and there was a research gap in the written histories of these Liverpool-based movements, which, though comprehensively documented individually, had yet to be brought together into an overarching historical study. Moreover, the contemporary CLT movement was in an embryonic state at the time, and there was great scope to investigate the ongoing processes in the campaigns, in the context of the broader historical context. At the same time, the CLT projects in New York and Boston had already been the subject of multiple research studies, including by British scholars (Angotti, 2007; Engelsman et al., 2015; Medoff and Sklar, 1994; Meehan, 2014). Presenting itself, therefore, was a promising opportunity to write the unwritten social history of Liverpool’s diverse mutual housing initiatives – connecting the contemporary CLT movement with the past experiments that have helped shape its present prospects. Comparison thus turned towards time rather than space; across localities within rather than between metropolitan areas, for intra-urban as opposed to inter-urban comparative research (see figure 3.2 for a map of Liverpool’s metropolitan region).
Through the process of case study selection, outlined in detail below, I decided to begin the time-frame for historical analysis from the 1960s, marking the beginning of the second cycle of contention, the fracturing of the Fordist consensus, and emergence of alternatives to post-war urban policy (Martinelli, 2010). I chose to begin the analysis with arguably the most productive period of mutual housing experimentation in Liverpool’s history: the 1970s co-op movement. This was initiated by the Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP), which helped pioneer a new, rehab approach to urban renewal, marking an important break with comprehensive slum clearance. SNAP started in 1969, but the roots of this and the co-op movement that it inspired can be traced back into the early 1960s. There was also the practical consideration of access to participants for interview: those involved in SNAP and the co-ops were still alive and contactable, whilst those of earlier movements generally were not. The 1960s is therefore where I begin my analysis. The earlier history that led up to this point is nonetheless reflected upon as important background to these projects, but excluded from in-depth case study. Of course, there is always a trade-off between breadth and depth: here I attempt to include considerable breadth spanning over five decades of Liverpool’s history, without sacrificing too much analytical depth.
3.1.2 Iterative transduction

The research proceeded through an iterative process, inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s (1995: 141) dialectical method of ‘transduction’ – “an incessant feedback between conceptual framework used” and “empirical observations” to construct ‘virtual objects’. I have worked back-and-forth between conceptual ideas and empirical analysis of case-studies to develop a theoretical framework as my virtual object. When used as a theory-building technique, transduction is broadly analogous to the critical realist method of ‘retroduction’, postulating a theory of how connections occur in empirical reality by abstracting from different concrete contexts (Leca and Naccache, 2006). For Lefebvre, the ‘virtual object’ is an empirically-grounded socio-spatial imaginary towards which we can orient our action. But we can easily adapt this line of thinking towards understanding reality for more methodological purposes. Employing transduction in his investigation of democracy, Purcell (2013: 23-24) characterises the virtual object as a heuristic device and practical tool – as well as experimental-utopian vision – for bringing to light emerging patterns in urban reality:

> It is rather an extrapolation or amplification in thought of practices and ideas that are already taking place in the city, practices and ideas that are inchoate, that have not yet come to full maturity, but are nevertheless being expressed, if only hesitantly, fleetingly, or inarticulately.

The critical point in iterative feedback between theory and practice comes when the virtual object is refined enough through empirical examples such that it becomes a powerful lens through which to see more clearly those merely potential aspects of social reality. Such a method for identifying inchoate, embryonic practices is useful for identifying emerging mutual housing experiments as contemporary case-studies. First, mutualism and cooperativism have long histories, so common characteristics of their development can be identified in the literature; second, the embryonic ‘theoretical object’ thus constructed is tested out and refined through critical comparison with actual contemporary and historical examples; third, this theoretical object is used to identify emerging practices on the ground in Liverpool, by searching for evidence of those fleeting practices that may be the beginnings of more sustained experiments in mutual housing alternatives. Internet research, media sources, scoping interviews, on-foot urban exploration and professional contacts were all used in the search for emerging experiments as potential case studies. Iterative transduction has been utilised throughout the research process, such that conceptual frames used to interpret empirical data are honed through constant testing out in empirical observation of actual cases.
3.1.3 Case-study Selection

Although much was already known about Liverpool’s mutual alternatives from the literature review, a further historical review and survey of media and internet sources was conducted in order to identify all possible case-studies for research. A draft list of possible case-studies was then constructed. Selection coevolved with the early stages in the research process, as further possible cases were revealed through empirical investigation, and some became more obviously researchable or salient. A few were only ever ‘discovered’ once deep into the research process through interviews, emphasising the importance of triangulating desk-based research with the cumulative results of interviews. For instance, the failed Kensington CLT project became known to me only near the end of fieldwork, its relative invisibility due to the fact that it never materialised beyond a political vision; fascinating as a point of comparison with more successful projects. The final selection 10 is listed in figure 3.3 below, and located on a map in figure 3.4.

Case-study selection was based on my research interests in mutual housing alternatives as forms of social innovation, reflecting certain criteria: bottom-up projects aiming for collective acquisition, ownership and control of urban land, specifically of residential assets for the cooperative management of affordable housing for local residents. This automatically excluded many possible grassroots initiatives in Liverpool, notably the occupation of Croxteth Comprehensive School in 1982 and the formation of the Alt Valley Community Trust (Kilfoyle, 2000; Taylor, 2011). The community-owned trust developed a number of community enterprises including the ‘Communiversity’ (Taylor, 2011), but its focus on social assets other than housing situates it outside the parameters of this study. Croxteth would, however, provide an excellent counterpoint for comparison with Liverpool’s housing-based community trusts in future research.
Figure 3.3: List of case studies in chronological order. This is too large a number to examine in depth, so I chose to deepen my focus on just three main case studies, highlighted below in bold, which have become the principal focus for each empirical chapter. The location of each is mapped in figure 3.4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter/period</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Year(s) est.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4) 1970s co-op movement</td>
<td>Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP)</td>
<td>1969-1972</td>
<td>Granby, south end</td>
<td>Council-commissioned action-research rehabilitation project run by Shelter, the national homelessness and housing campaign charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liverpool rehab and new-build co-ops</td>
<td>1972; to 1992</td>
<td>South and north inner-Liverpool</td>
<td>First rehab co-ops initiated by SNAP; later new-build co-ops developed by residents; around 50 in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weller Streets Co-op</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Toxteth, south end</td>
<td>Pioneering new-build co-op; the first in the UK to be designed, developed, and managed by residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5) 1980s alternatives to Militant</td>
<td>Eldonian Community Trust</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Vauxhall, north end</td>
<td>Initial campaign for a co-op; struggle with Militant led to bigger plans for neighbourhood regeneration; the country’s largest community-owned housing trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kirkby Co-ops</td>
<td>1984 – 1987</td>
<td>Knowsley MBC</td>
<td>Co-op movement exported to the new town of Kirkby; some 13 in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Langrove Co-op</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Everton, north end</td>
<td>Co-op est. after occupation of houses in struggle to save street from demolition in Militant’s Everton Park vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6) 2010s CLT movement</td>
<td>Granby Four Streets CLT</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Toxteth, south end</td>
<td>Grassroots campaign to save four streets from HMR-led demolition, originally refurbished by SNAP; protests and guerrilla gardening led to CLT project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homebaked CLT</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Anfield, north end</td>
<td>Arts-led CLT campaign in Liverpool, initiated as Biennial public arts project; started as a cooperative bakery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arena Housing CLT</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>Anfield, north end</td>
<td>Housing Association pilot project to establish CLT with tenants; brought CLT idea to Liverpool from the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kensington CLT</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>Kensington, east inner-city</td>
<td>Unsuccessful attempt to initiate CLT as legacy vehicle for NDC programme in an HMR neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little Klondyke CLT</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>Bootle, Sefton MBC</td>
<td>Unsuccessful grassroots campaign to save streets from post-HMR council-led regeneration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.4: Map of case studies: SNAP and Granby Four Streets (orange), Weller Streets (dark blue), Eldonians (red), Langrove (green), Kirkby co-ops (purple), Homebaked (yellow), Little Klondyke (light blue), Kensington (pink). The city-centre is marked in black. The rehab co-ops are mostly located around SNAP, and the new-builds scattered...
3.1.4 Historical comparative analysis

The aim of the research is to construct a genealogy of the critical moments in the development of mutual housing alternatives in Liverpool, centred on three historical periods: the advent of community resistance to post-war Fordist urban governance in the late 1960s-70s; responses to post-Fordist and neoliberal urban governance in the 1980s; and opportunities presented by the contemporary condition of austerity urbanism post-2008. This historical-genealogical approach focuses on identifying the main motivations, catalysts, drivers, threats, barriers, constraints and opportunities shaping the development of the case-studies.

The issue of path-dependency – and its dialectical counterpart, path-shaping action – is therefore crucial to my approach, which attempts to isolate the critical moments, ‘turning points’, or crisis-opportunities through which such community-led projects take form and evolve (Mahoney, 2000; Malpass, 2011).

The overarching idea of the genealogical aspect of the thesis is to trace the inspirations and makers of mutual housing models across time and space within my historical and geographical frame. I aim to identify the seeds and sediments of radical ideas as they become embedded in place through socio-material practices, as well as follow the movement of mobile policies and ideas as they travel between key people and projects (Gonzalez, Moularé, & Martinelli, 2010).

In this way, I draw on both historical-sociological-institutionalist approaches (González & Healey, 2005; Mahoney, 2000) and mobile urbanism and policy mobilities methods (McCann and Ward, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Peck and Theodore, 2010, 2012; Peck, 2011). The latter provides the methodological tools for ‘studying through’ and ‘following the policy’ as it is mobilised by actors across sites. Although this literature is more attuned to international movements of global urban policy models, it can nonetheless be scaled down to the intra-urban level within Liverpool, and adapted to alternative grassroots ideas. Whilst there was no ‘transfer agent’ as such to follow, I was able to inverse this method to follow the lineages of socio-material assemblages as they were revealed in successive snowballing interviews: tracing connections backwards from the manifestation of ideas in campaigns and policies, towards their material and discursive sources in previous projects and visions. Notwithstanding the limits to this approach – e.g. actors who are untraceable, having passed away or moved on – this enabled me to see how mutual models get assembled, disassembled, and reassembled in context-based configurations, as they mutate through interpretation from place to place. By highlighting the mutations along the way, I can therefore reveal the impact of each interpreter and context: how campaigns come to use certain ideas in certain ways.
Whilst a single case-study approach is taken, this holds true only at the urban-regional scale. Within the Merseyside metropolitan area, a comparative perspective is required to make sense of the similarities and differences between individual projects, located in diverse neighbourhoods and localities (see figure 3.5). Each project has a distinct historical social context and specific trajectories peculiar to its milieu. Within Liverpool itself, most projects have emerged in inner-city neighbourhoods with similar 19th century terraced housing stock, but some are located in more (post)industrial settings nearer the docks – notably the Eldonians – whilst others are in more traditional residential areas dealing with a different set of conditions.

Figure 3.5: Map of Liverpool's localities in concentric rings of development. The inside red ring constitutes the Victorian inner-city terraces, circled by the municipal parks on the ridge, and suburbs beyond (source: MacDonald, 2011)
To pick the broadest example, differences are frequently reduced to a north/south divide in Liverpool, with the north-end traditionally much poorer, more working class and industrial than the south-end – historically home to the city’s political and economic elites and bourgeoisie (Couch, 2003; Lane, 1997). The former is also more closely associated with cohesive and deeply-rooted Irish Catholic communities, being the locus of settlement for the majority of Irish migrants fleeing the Potato Famine (Cowan, Hannay, & Owens, 1988); whilst the south-end, Granby in particular, is composed of a much more ethnically diverse, multicultural and transient population, and the centre of Liverpool’s established black community (Cornelius, 1982). Sectarian divisions can also be seen to mark the city topographically: Catholic residents having dwelt closer to the docks in the inner-city, with Protestants settling further out on the bowl-like ridge to the east of the city-centre (Sheppard and Worlock, 1988). As we will see, religion is yet another driving factor in Liverpool’s mutual housing history. Comparative differences between neighbourhoods within Liverpool occur across a whole range of dimensions: class, built form, demography and religion are just some, perhaps most salient, of many factors.

The need for a comparative perspective is deepened by the emergence of similar projects for co-ops and CLTs outside the political boundaries of Liverpool proper, but still within the metropolitan conurbation of Merseyside, and therefore highly connected to movements within Liverpool. Differences between Merseyside’s various local authority administrative areas are pertinent. First, whilst the Militant-run Liverpool City Council municipalised all co-ops, and effectively halted all further development of the burgeoning movement within its jurisdiction, co-ops were successfully exported to Kirkby, built as a new town or overspill estate during the post-war slum clearance programme, in neighbouring Knowsley MBC, where the movement flourished for a while under a benign administration (Meegan, 1990). The differences in the conditions for co-op development between Knowsley and inner-city Liverpool – not least the built form, social relations and historical context – are worthy of investigation, as is the process of movement and policy mobilisation that facilitated it. Second, another CLT has been struggling to emerge in Little Klondyke, Bootle, in the north end of Merseyside, just across the border from Liverpool, in Sefton MBC. Like the Kirkby co-ops, Little Klondyke has had to contend with a different council administration, but with less favourable results, as is highlighted by my findings. Moreover, the local urban context shares many characteristics with the north-end of Liverpool, constituted by dense inner-city
Victorian terraced housing, in desperate need of renewal, as opposed to the distinct issue of post-war modernist prefabricated blocks found in Kirkby. This provides a good point of comparison with Granby and Homebaked CLTs, dealing with similar, if not quite so acute, urban problems.

Comparison not only occurs across a spatial dimension but also along a temporal continuum. The primary focus of historical comparison is between the co-op models, rehab and new-build, of the 1970s, and the CLT model emerging today. Yet historical comparison might also be said to be intrinsic to assessing the internal development of particular projects that have maintained momentum across different periods – notably the Eldonians, whose institutional form has evolved significantly since the 1970s (McBane, 2008). Comparison is also applied to distinct projects – utilising specific models in different historical periods – within the same neighbourhood space. Granby is a central focus in this respect. SNAP first saved the Granby Triangle from demolition in the late 1960s, initiating the first rehab co-ops in the early 1970s, and inspiring a series of new-build co-ops in the local area, starting with the Weller Streets a few streets away in Toxteth. Granby has since found itself at the centre of struggle against further demolition-and-rebuild schemes, with the contemporary CLT campaign perceived by participants to be the legatee of SNAP. The neighbourhood of Granby, therefore, is a central site for historical comparison and a laboratory for understanding the impacts of social innovation on neighbourhood change.
3.2 Methods

Owing to the place-based, historical nature of the research design, I adopted a mixed-methods qualitative case-study approach enabling a detailed social and political history to be constructed from a wide range of methods and data sources, which have been triangulated and critically-cross-examined (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Robson, 2002; Yin, 2013). These include: genealogical investigation through documentary analysis of secondary texts and archival material; semi-structured interviews; and participant observation, site visits and photography. I address each in turn below, before outlining methods of data analysis.

3.2.1 Documentary analysis

Whilst interviews and observation are the fundamental method of primary data collection, providing me with the bulk of qualitative data for analysis, this was preceded by, and triangulate with, archival and desk-based documentary analysis of key texts. Although interviews are an important source of personal testimony to historical events, such subjective interpretation is reliant on memory and recollection, which often proves partial, incomplete, and amenable to error. Interviews must therefore be critically read alongside secondary texts, which provide a great deal of the historical detail and narrative of events. Much of the history of the 1970s co-ops and Eldonians has already been written. Four key secondary texts are worthy of mention here (see figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6: Primary secondary texts:

1) Another chance for cities: SNAP 69-72 – SNAP Final Report, written by its Director, Des McConaghy, has proven a rich resource, not only on SNAP itself but also for unearthing the historical development of the Granby neighbourhood (McConaghy, 1972). I also interviewed Des, and asked him to reflect on the project, in the some 40 years since it has passed.

2) Citizenship and consumption in the development of social rights: the Liverpool new-build housing co-operative movement – unpublished Masters dissertation by Paul Lusk, a key figure at CDS in the development of the Weller Streets who I also interviewed, providing detailed historical background on the rehab and new-build co-op movements (Lusk, 1998).

3) The Weller Way – a first-hand account of Weller Streets Co-op, from a CDS worker centrally involved in its development, Alan McDonald (1986); my main secondary source for this case-study, particularly for residents’ perspectives.

4) The Rebirth of Liverpool: The Eldonian Way – history of the Eldonians has been comprehensively documented by one of its principal protagonists, Jack McBane (2008), whom I also interviewed in depth.
Although these histories are rich and comprehensive, they are nonetheless specific to particular projects, limiting their analysis in fundamental ways. Indeed, many interviewees, including some of these authors, suggested that no cohesive history had yet been written of all these related movements, but only of specific projects. Aiming to fill this gap, my task has been to compile, critically compare and synthesise these narratives into a continuous history of events from the 1960s through to the present, triangulating and enriching them with my own primary data collection. In addition to these major historical accounts, I have drawn from a variety of other secondary texts (see figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7: Other secondary sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General social and political history of Liverpool</td>
<td>(Belchem and Biggs, 2011; Higginson and Wailey, 2006; Lane, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool's planning and regeneration history</td>
<td>(Couch, 2003; MacDonald, 2011; Meegan and Mitchell, 2001; Meegan, 1999; Munck, 2003; Sykes et al., 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militant period in the 1980s</td>
<td>(Frost and North, 2013; Kilfoyle, 2000; Lane, 1986; Sinclair, 2014; Taaffe and Mulhearn, 1988; Wainwright, 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local social histories of Granby and Vauxhall</td>
<td>(Cornelius, 1982; Merrifield, 1996, 2002; Rogers, 2010, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official publications of the Eldonians</td>
<td>(ECBHA, 1997; Eldonians, 1993, 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy reports and evaluations of Liverpool HMR</td>
<td>(Finlay, 2011; Housing et al., 2003; Leather and Nevin, 2013; Liverpool City Council, 2003a, 2003b, 2007; Nevin et al., 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping studies for CLT alternatives within HMR, and CLT practitioner reports</td>
<td>(Aird, 2009; Bevington, 2008; CFS, 2007, 2008; Crowe et al., 2011; Dayson and Paterson, 2011; GM1, 2008; URBED, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design statements and publications by CLT campaigns</td>
<td>(Assemble, 2013; GM1, 2008; Heesewij and Jurgensen, 2014a; Jones, 2014; MCDA, 2012a, 2012b; Potts, 2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For tracing a genealogy of campaigns through the 1970s-80s, I have undertaken something resembling archival research: searching the archives of various architectural and voluntary housing journals and magazines (see figure 3.7). However, I have been careful to reflect on their professional and political orientations in my treatment of their interpretations; reading them critically alongside opposing viewpoints, such as texts by Militant members (Taafe & Mulhearn, 1988). I have also searched local newspaper archives – the *Liverpool Echo*, and the now-defunct *Liverpool Daily Post* – for relevant articles to provide additional information, where this has been available.

Following case-study selection, a number of experts, as scoping sources, were first identified from the literature and my own and supervisors’ personal and professional contacts. ‘Scoping interviews’ were then conducted with five of those experts who responded to my request, with a broad range of roles, as detailed in Appendix A. These were all conducted between March and July 2013. Scoping interviews proved invaluable in testing out embryonic research questions, deepening my understanding of Liverpool’s historical context, and elaborating upon my own desk-based research to reveal further case-studies for consideration – hidden in history, only just emerging or less visible in the media.

These interviews also helped refine my research questions, providing a sounding board for the questions I would ask in the semi-structured interviews – the primary method of empirical enquiry. Interviews enable a deep understanding of issues, allowing participants to articulate their thoughts on complex conceptual subject matter, as well as delve into detailed historical narratives on their involvement with specific projects. A semi-structured format was followed, with a pre-prepared questionnaire as guide, starting with more open-ended questions about personal experience, and becoming increasingly specific and challenging. Flexibility was built into the approach, whereby questions were asked reflexively, adapted according to the positionality and responsiveness of each participant, for a more fluid exchange of ideas without too much restriction on the direction of discussion, and an open exploration of new topics and aspects as they arose through dialogue. Once this line of enquiry had exhausted itself, I moved onto ‘depth interviewing’ techniques, following Peck and Theodore (2012), in which participants are engaged in debate, and presented contending accounts of policies in order to nudge actors towards an evaluation of their involvement, in a more interactive and candid encounter, whilst acknowledging reflexivity. As a result, the majority of interviews ended up being over an hour long, some over three hours, but most in the region of 1-2 hours.
A first draft of interview questions was developed out of the literature review, in line with the research questions, which have evolved with the project. Initial interview questions were tested out on my supervisors in several sessions through an iterative process, so as to sharpen their tone and meaning. Next, I conducted a mock interview with Neil McInroy, the Chief Executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) who has broad experience in the community housing and urban development sectors, and has played a key role in my PhD as the CASE sponsor auxiliary supervisor. Playing the questions out ‘for real’ enabled further refinement; so did their subsequent use in scoping interviews. A final working draft of question guidelines was then produced, to act as a guide to conduct interviews consistently, and also preliminary material to send to potential participants if requested in advance (see Appendix C).

My approach to identifying potential participants broadly followed the principles of transdisciplinary research, as developed in the social innovation literature, to describe socially-engaged research in closer interaction with social reality, in a mutual learning process (Moulaert, Maccallum, et al., 2010; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). Transdisciplinarity goes beyond post-disciplinary approaches (Jessop and Sum, 2001) to give an “explicit place to ‘practitioners’ in two ways”: making them a “core theme” in the analytical scheme; and “considering them as real partners in the research activity itself” (Moulaert, 2010: 10). First, I developed a typology of different actors and practitioners involved in the social innovation process. This was to be my entry point for case-study engagement, as well as the conceptual lens through which to analyse campaign social dynamics. The second aspect of transdisciplinarity describes a scholar-activist, or participant-action-research (PAR) orientation (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; The Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010), to which I tended towards gradually from a more traditional starting point. I had developed my conceptual focus and research design independently from practitioners, but gradually refined it through increasingly interactive mutual engagement with participants.

To get a good spread of interviewees across the different types and case studies, it was thought that around 30-40 interviews were necessary as a minimum, with a roughly equal split of 7-11 representatives from five categories (see figure 3.8 below). It must be noted that there are a number of conspicuous absences in group selection. Not least are other residents not directly involved in campaigning – for a number of reasons: the difficulties in identifying residents to interview without any names or contact details to go on; and the sheer lack of residents in many of the contemporary case-study areas owing to the impacts of decades of
economic decline and successive generations of regeneration schemes, most recently HMR, with compulsory purchase orders, enforced evictions, and voluntary out-migrations reducing the populations of these neighbourhoods. One way around this would be to find out where ex-residents are now living, if only for the fact that many of the CLT schemes intend to build in a ‘right to return’ in allocating their housing. However, some ex-residents may have welcomed the opportunity to move out, partly out of despair with council policy but also with the relentless campaigning by a vociferous minority who have only decelerated the process of regeneration and hijacked state funding for their own ends – at least according to certain perspectives. Opposition to the anti-demolition campaigns may be just as much a reason for leaving as the quality of housing. Unfortunately, such counter-narratives are harder to ‘hear’ owing to vocal campaigners drowning out other voices, dispersed and diluted, and with less reason to speak out, in their new homes. There is no official record of where ex-residents have moved to, which makes tracking them down extremely tricky. This group therefore remain voiceless in the study, visible only through representations of their views made by those I did manage to engage.

Notable among this ‘silent majority’ are also the remaining inhabitants excluded from campaign processes. For these reasons, I made sure to speak with residents informally at various community events, such as the Granby Four Streets Market, and with customers of the Homebaked bakery. I also observed interactions between residents and activists at several community consultation and info sessions and gained insight into the often tense social relations. By marrying these myriad observations and informal conversations with more in-depth interviews, I have managed to gain some understanding of how residents perceive the campaigns, how included and represented they feel. Nonetheless, I recognise that there is a gap in the perspectives represented in my findings, and acknowledge that other residents’ views are very important in understanding the nature of the projects: who they include and exclude determines the democratic mandate to control ‘community’ or ‘public’ assets.
Figure 3.8: Participant categories and rationale for inclusion:

1) **Community organisers, activists, members and other residents**: composed of 11 participants, mostly people involved in the contemporary CLT movement, simply because those from the original 1970s co-op movement are difficult to track down, many being very old now, having passed away, moved on, or no longer active in campaigning. This is perhaps a blind spot in the study, which I have attempted to illuminate through close analysis and reference to the historical texts on these early movements, which include multiple resident perspectives and representations. However, activists of the later Eldonians, Kirkby and Langrove co-ops are all represented.

2) **Professional co-op development managers, architects, and community development workers**: an important category for understanding the dynamics of the co-op movement, in the relative absence of activist/resident engagement. This group is composed almost entirely of professionals from 1970s-80s co-op movement, with less representation from CLTs. They provided insight into their first-hand experience of helping develop the co-ops from scratch, working closely with community groups, and have tried to represent to me the perspective of those directly involved as residents as well as their own. However, it must be acknowledged that this is only one side to the story with certain biases in historical recollection stemming from their professional positionality. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the importance of speaking to those who took the lead in supporting the co-ops, to enable residents to take unprecedented dweller control.

3) **Public sector managers, local politicians, councillors, and council officers**: important for their central role in designing and delivering urban and housing policy across the city; their insight into local party politics the national political context; and their role in providing fundamental support, or opposition, to mutual housing alternatives in land transfer, funding and legal protection. This is actually a larger group than the seven categorised: several activists and professionals in the first two categories have since become city councillors and MPs. In this group, there is proportionate representation of councillors, council officers, and the national regulatory body, the Housing Corporation, now HCA. However, only one participant has direct experience of managing HMR delivery in Liverpool, although another has been involved in another Pathfinder, as it has been especially difficult to engage HMR managers, possibly because it has been a controversial programme, attracting considerable negative press and academic critique.

4) **Housing association officers and regeneration consultants**: amongst the largest group owing to their increasingly central role in urban redevelopment and public housing provision in Liverpool. This group also includes a large number of professionals originally involved in the 1970s co-op movement, since finding themselves in increasingly managerial positions as the sector has professionalised. Indeed, a large part of Liverpool’s housing history is the evolution and mutation of small-scale charitable housing trusts and co-op development agencies into the commercialised housing association sector. These professionals thus provide deep historical insight into the changing governance structures of affordable housing provision and opportunities for mutual alternatives.

5) **National NGO directors, policy experts and consultants**: an essential component of understanding the broader policy and political contexts of mutual housing development. This group includes a broad number of major national associations, charities, lobby and pressure groups representing organisations in their field (see appendix A).
A comprehensive list of potential contacts was then compiled, with a large number of overlaps in category and case-study roles. This made it easier to single out key people for interview. Alongside desk-based search, scoping interviewees also provided some initial suggestions on potential participants. A large proportion of interviewees were discovered only as interviews ‘snowballed’ – broadening and deepening my sample beyond the initial scoping study. In sum, I interviewed more than originally anticipated – 47 in total including scoping interviews – for it seemed illegitimate to draw the line arbitrarily at a number rather than follow through with snowballing until all leads had been exhausted. As a result, the last interview was conducted in April 2015; but the rest occurred over one year from July 2013-14 (see Appendix A).

My approach was to first send a relatively generic email detailing my research and request to interview; if no response was received after a few weeks, a second email was sent, and then a phone call placed. Contact details for many of the participants were straightforward to find on the internet, as many still had notable public or professional positions. These contacts constituted the ‘elite interview’ section of my sample. This was not so simple for those residents living in the communities in question or involved in grassroots activism, whose contact details were procured through a more lengthy snowballing process initiated through word of mouth from initial scoping interviews.

All participants were given the option to opt out of the research process at any time, and were assured of their rights to anonymity in the case of quotations. They were provided with a ‘participant information sheet’ prior to agreeing to interview, as well as a ‘participant consent form’, which was signed and returned via email or upon meeting (see Appendix D). Most interviews were conducted in and around Liverpool, at work, home or a public addresses. I made sure to give everyone the option to meet at a place convenient to them within my own travelling capacity. London, Sheffield, Barnsley, Chester, Manchester and various small towns between Manchester and Liverpool were also locations for interview. It was stressed that all data would be encrypted and stored securely. All additional ethical guidelines were followed before, during and after interviews. Some participants were happy to be identified in the research and quoted personally. For all personal quotes, I have sent copies of written chapters to those participants for their information and asked for their permission to publish. Only those that have responded in writing are named in this thesis; otherwise, quotes remain anonymous. Appendix B lists all those I contacted but failed to interview, totalling 35, due to either no response at all, logistical difficulties in meeting up within the time frame, or refusal to participate.
3.2.3 Participant observation

Participant observation was considered as an ideal secondary method of enquiry, but it was acknowledged that this would be outright impossible for some of the historical cases – whose contexts have since changed, are no longer active or recognisable as mutual housing alternatives, and whose participants have mostly moved on. For contemporary campaigns, however, this was certainly an option; yet several factors made participant observation less conducive. First, as was imparted by some of my scoping interviewees, many of the CLT campaigns were experiencing what participants would later describe in interview as ‘researcher fatigue’ – the result of intense media and academic interest, particularly in the case of Homebaked and Granby. Second, participant observation poses problems for the requirements of comparative analysis of unequal access across all, but especially historical, case-studies. Third, it requires intensive and time-consuming commitment, thereby imposing physical limitations on participating in multiple projects at once. I nonetheless felt participant observation would be a valuable addition to the study of the contemporary CLT campaigns, were it to transpire. To get there, however, I first needed to gain the trust of key activists involved in the CLT campaigns and prove my commitment as a dedicated researcher. A combination of site visits, attendance and observation of community and public meetings, and interviews with key members and stakeholders would allow me to make contact with the groups in question, with the aim of participating more fully in the long-run.

In the initial stages of empirical data collection, I concentrated my efforts on understanding the historical case studies. By first grasping the dynamics of this earlier period, in interviewing first those able to reflect upon history rather than interpret events happening around them, I gained a foundational understanding of the context, and learned lessons about how experiments have worked in the past for application to the present. This proved invaluable preparation for engaging with current CLT activists: enabling a more informed and considered approach. Moreover, my newly-gained knowledge of the key issues facing co-ops in the past was to be a pivotal asset in gaining access to these activists, who were interested in situating their own efforts within their broader historical context.

With both Granby and Homebaked CLTs, initial contact was made through scoping interviewees. At first, participants were reluctant to meet with me, as there had already been several PhD students involved in documenting the projects from earlier stages, including one of my scoping interviewees. Interviews were successfully scheduled with other stakeholders, who explained that gaining access to the main activists would be difficult at that time, due to it
being a critical ‘watershed’ moment for each project, with time and attention fully focused on securing potential funding packages and negotiating transfer agreements with the local authority and housing associations, particularly in the case of Granby. I decided the best strategy would be to simply show up at some of the monthly street markets organised as part of community efforts to revitalise the derelict streets and demonstrate the social value of the CLT project. I also began visiting the area regularly in the hope of bumping into people, as well as photographing the changing state of the urban environment. Being present on market days provided opportunities for participant observation of local social relations, by becoming a small part of an event so intrinsic to the campaign process, and automatically opened up avenues for meeting people: I was introduced to the main activists and longstanding residents. This demonstrated my interest and commitment, and shortly after, several interviews were arranged with the leading figures. From this point on, I developed a closer relationship and was contacted about upcoming events, and sometimes for advice on the conceptual and legal technicalities of the CLT model. Along with the street markets, I attended various community meetings and events organised in the area to represent the CLT to the wider community, and celebrate important milestones in achieving asset transfer.

A similar story can be told of Homebaked. Initially, activists were unwilling to meet with me, citing lack of time, burnout and ‘researcher fatigue’. At this time, a leadership rotation was in the offing, with the current lead volunteer effectively handing over the reins of project management to a fresh pair of hands. Managing a complex project like Homebaked is an extremely time-consuming, intense and exhausting task, with little time to meet interested outsiders. Again, I realised the best strategy was to make concerted visits, made easier than Granby by the fact that Homebaked was founded as a cooperative bakery, saved from closure and demolition and restored as a community anchor. So I visited the bakery several times to observe activity, speak with staff about their perspective, and hopefully meet key people. On one such occasion – which just so happened to be Global Scouse Day, when they were selling delicious home-baked Scouse pies – I was also fortunate enough to stumble upon a meeting of the CLT board members, providing me the unique opportunity to introduce myself to members. In this way, I managed to speak with the replacement lead organiser, as a kind of impromptu interview, in which she expressed interest in incorporating my research findings into Homebaked's activities. I was then invited to the next board meeting as an outside observer, in which I met the board members, witnessed the social relations between them, and gained great insight into the mechanics of developing a CLT out of an art project. I was invited to ask questions in the meeting, and sought more informal discussion with members
afterwards. Unfortunately, this breakthrough came late in the fieldwork, and I was unable to attend any further board meetings with Homebaked within the fieldwork time frame – although I am still in touch with the board and hope to present my findings to them soon.

This more active involvement in the schemes is a form of scholar-activism, or PAR (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; The Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010). This was not my original aim, for a number of reasons: the logistical and time constraints of conducting an historical comparative analysis; the need to maintain critical distance from the campaigns in order to present myself as thoroughly independent, neutral, and as far as possible, objective, so as to gain access to city politicians, council officers and other elite actors who have been crucial in shaping the projects but who by no means support them politically. I was concerned that too overtly politically directed, embedded or activist-oriented involvement in the campaigns would automatically exclude me from speaking with certain key actors, who would be dissuaded from discussing anything with me due to any apparent or suspected political partiality. As these interviews came to a close, however, deeper involvement with the campaigns became less problematic, and would greatly enrich my understanding, as well as hopefully provide useful help and support for their ongoing development.

To that end, I was able to put the leading activists from Granby and Homebaked CLTs in touch with one another for the first time, and initiated a dialogue for organising the launch event as well as potentially putting in a joint-bid for the National CLT Network’s Urban CLT Project fund. Up until my involvement, the main connection between the two was via one particular participant, involved in both under different guises: as a commissioned architect and advisor in one, and activist working with a partner co-op in the other. This enabled day-to-day informal knowledge sharing and mutual learning, but internal tensions within projects foreclosed any formal meetings between the main activists. In effect, I became a secondary conduit for more formal information exchange. During an interview with the National CLT Network (NCLTN), based in London, I was able to provide in-depth updates on the latest developments on the Liverpool CLTs, which were acknowledged to be strangely isolated from the national network and difficult to reach, despite Homebaked having won an award at the 2012 NCLTN Awards in 2012 for excellence in community engagement. I provided NCLTN with new insight into how far they were progressing – helping consolidate the network’s plan to have the Liverpool projects host the northern launch event of their new Urban CLT Project, which invited urban campaigns across the country to put in bids for £10,000 of funding for development support and project management costs. I became involved in preparing the
groundwork for this event, and asked to communicate this information to the Liverpool projects. NCLTN was unaware who was leading on each, as roles periodically rotate and some activists move on, and were struggling to make contact. I was able to put them all in touch, pass on the invitation to put in a bid to both Granby and Homebaked, and first moot the idea of them hosting the launch event, for which they were both interested. I had discussed with NCLTN the possibility of combining the bids into a £20,000 proposal that could fund a dedicated project manager to work across Liverpool, part-time on each project, and this was generally well-received.

Towards the end of the fieldwork process, therefore, the transdisciplinary aspects of my research came to the fore, along with my positionality as a more active ‘change agent’ embedded in the social reality I was seeking to explain (Jessop et al., 2013). This foregrounded my reflexivity as a researcher not only observing the empirical world but having very real observable effects upon it. I have since sent copies of chapters, articles and other pieces written up to activists as well as other key stakeholders, notably housing association managers, councillors, co-op developers and regeneration consultants – asking for their feedback on my perspective, representation of facts, and the concepts used to interpret them. For them, this has hopefully helped the projects gain an outside critical perspective on their activities, and provided some useful reflections on ways to position themselves within the broader movement, and how to further develop their campaigns. For me, this has proven very constructive in making the presentation of findings more inclusive of different perspectives, reflexive, and robust; and also provided me the opportunity to request permission to use names and quotes of participants where this enriches the narrative. However, I have nonetheless taken measures to ensure that the independent integrity of the research has not been sacrifice, such that where data contradicts participants’ perspectives on my own work, I have maintained critical distance.
3.3 Analysis and presentation of findings

For analysing both my interview and key documentary data, I have used the qualitative data analysis software, QSR NVivo – as a tool for manual coding for thematic analysis, whereby common themes are generated through recursive and reflexive interpretation (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This includes all interview transcripts and also my summaries of the key quotes from the four main historical accounts cited above. Almost all interviews were audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed by me – a good primer on the common themes. I took detailed notes by hand during all other interviews and wrote these up afterwards. NVivo then enabled a more systematic manual coding of interview data into themes. Rather than onerously highlighting particular quotes by hand on paper, and then inputting these back into the computer, NVivo provides an integrated platform for holistically analysing the data altogether, through the use of expandable code headings and sub-headings.

Thematic analysis was conducted through two interacting approaches: first, a deductive, theory-driven ‘template approach’ (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) generated themes from my research questions and conceptual frames, to construct an initial schema for naming and ordering codes in the first iteration; second, this was deepened by an inductive, data-driven approach, through a more grounded interpretation of themes derived from the data itself, which might be said to ‘speak for itself’ (Boyatzis, 1998).

As I made my way through the texts and transcripts, one by one, new codes and different inflections on existing themes presented themselves, and so all completed texts had to be systematically re-analysed with these new codes in mind – repeated several times until no new themes emerged from the data. However, this system was by no means linear: the ‘codebook’ or theme template was constantly reconfigured throughout analysis, as new codes were generated, in an iterative and reflexive process (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Indeed, iterative reflexivity extended outwards beyond analysis into the research process as a whole, whereby data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection, beginning around mid-way through the interview process, to create a productive feedback loop for more grounded research. Reflexive learning began with manual note-taking in interviews, as they were being audio-recorded, and then through transcriptions of the interviews, as soon as possible afterwards, allowing for constant reflection to inform further interviews and observations.

The validity of findings was further strengthened through feedback from interview participants. I sent fully anonymised drafts of chapters to each participant as they were completed and asked for any comments or feedback. This method was actually suggested by
many interviewees, particularly those involved in the co-op movement, who were interested in what I had written about the history that had been such an important part of their lives. It also enabled me to ask certain participants – those figures who had played a central part in shaping Liverpool’s housing history – for their consent in being named as authors of their quotes, which has provided a far richer people-centred history than would otherwise be the case with a fully anonymised narrative. For the contemporary campaigns, my findings were tested and validated through this same process but also in a more informal way, by presenting my interpretations of events verbally to various activists and community members of Granby whilst at the street market and other community events. Throughout the process, I have presented my findings at various practitioner and academic conferences – in Liverpool, the rest of the UK and around the world – which has provided means by which to test and validate findings. Some of these events have been attended by key activists and practitioners involved in both the co-op and CLT movements, who have provided the constructive critique required for robust results.

3.3.1 Writing History

Following data analysis, the writing up period commenced. The process of representing my findings through narrative is just as important to consider methodologically as the research design, data collection and analysis stages – for it is the medium through which the research is represented and communicated to others. In writing history, it is important to bear in mind historiographical issues. Using both ‘following the policy’ (Peck and Theodore, 2012) and path-dependence (Mahoney, 2000) as methods involves ‘writing history backwards’: first identifying point B – the significant transformative juncture, decision or event, such as the successful transfer of land to a community group – and working backwards to find point A, or a series of point As, as the inferred start of the ‘path’ (Malpass, 2011). Harloe (1995) and Malpass (2000, 2011) warn of the teleological reasoning in this method: privileging certain past events over others in light of knowledge of the present, closing us off to the radical contingency and complexity experienced at the time of the event. It is difficult to ascertain precisely when the exact critical moment or turning point occurs in history, as pathways emerge and evolve often through gradual accumulation as much as ruptural transformation. Indeed, there are several dangers in constructing social histories through contemporary concepts and vocabulary (Harloe, 1995); the temptation to base choices on selection of information in the final narrative on hindsight to create a teleological explanation, as if history were leading inexorably to the present (Malpass, 2000); becoming blind to the messy reality, confusions, multiple possibilities and contradictions experienced by participants, who do not
necessarily see or react to the critical markers that historical hindsight makes visible; over-
simplifying the relation of problem and solution, as if a perceived unmet need automatically
provokes a response (Harloe, 1995); and unwarranted conclusions from limited information,
creating a distorted base for future research (Malpass, 2000).

All historical writing must therefore be cognisant that all occurrences identified as
foundational or significant are merely interpretations of the past in light of present knowledge.
First, I have sought to represent the development of housing alternatives in Liverpool using
the language appropriate to the time and context, and explaining any concepts, jargon or
acronyms that are unfamiliar to target audiences. However, in my concluding analysis, I do
seek to connect past ideas to the present, and show how they relate to the conceptual currency
with which my research deals. Second, where possible, I have let participants ‘speak for
themselves’ within the historical narrative, but offer my own critical interpretation in
conclusions. Third, I have asked interviewees to try to inhabit their mind at the time when
relating history, so as to narrate events as they occurred to them then, rather than after years
of reflection. This is clearly impossible to recreate entirely, but an awareness of these issues in
questioning participants, reading historical accounts, analysing data and writing my own
narrative has hopefully helped reflect events as ‘accurately’ as possible – all the while
recognising the inescapably subjective interpretation that underlies any representation of
history. Another important consideration is the selectivity and partial representation of
participants, as well as events. My research approach necessitated the privileging of certain
subjects over others, owing to their greater involvement in the case studies; but this means
other voices are left out, and what is told here is by no means the full story.

Finally, owing to the localist focus of my research, I have been wary of falling into the ‘local
trap’ – the tendency to assume uncritically the local as preferable to other scales (Purcell,
2006). This is a major methodological principle of the ALMOLIN model developed by social
innovation scholars (Gonzalez et al., 2010; Moulart et al., 2005). Three dangers of ‘uncritical
localism’ are identified: 1) ‘socio-political’, an exaggerated belief in the power of local agency
and institutions to effect change, ignoring scalar interdependencies; 2) ‘existential’, that all
needs are best met locally with local resources, such as the back-to-the-land utopian fantasy of
self-sufficiency; 3) the fallacy of ‘misunderstood subsidiarity’, misapprehending motivations
for state offloading of responsibilities for public service provision onto localised scales, as a
kind of ‘trapdoor of community’, or ‘neoliberalism-from-below’ (Herbert, 2008). To avoid
these pitfalls, I adopt two methodological strategies devised by the social innovation literature
First, I treat the ‘local’ as an analytical entry point only, rather than normative-political vision; fully acknowledging the power of other scalar processes, by incorporating the multi-dimensional TPSN (Territory-Place-Scale-Network) perspective into analysis of socio-spatial dynamics (Jessop et al., 2008) partly derived from Jessop’s (2001) SRA.

Second, I follow recent relational theories of space and place to understand the ‘local’ scale as relational, politically produced, and socially constructed – as opposed to a ‘natural’ territory (Graham and Healey, 1999; Massey, 2005; Pierce and Martin, 2015; Pierce et al., 2011). Indeed, as I will argue below, many of the neighbourhoods and localities I investigate, Granby in particular, are actually constructed as socio-politically meaningful entities through the very process of social innovation and the local collective experience of campaigning for mutual alternatives – not forgetting the effects of state-led regeneration programmes delineating such spaces for intervention. In many ways, writing a history about the construction of localities through proactive interventions in space is tightly bound up with this collective process of place construction. Historical representations, like spatial interventions, rewrite places in subtle and unforeseen ways. It is not just events, people and projects that get unevenly interpreted according to different historiographical approaches – but places too. The following is intended to reflect these concerns.

Before embarking on this history, however, it would be useful at this point to summarise the major legislative, political, socioeconomic, institutional and local events that helped shape the co-op and CLT movements – as a recap on what has already been covered and a resource for future reference. Figure 3.9 below provides a timeline of these significant events since 1955, as a summary record of what I will explain in detail in the remainder of this thesis.
Figure 3.9: Policy timeline of major socioeconomic, institutional and political events affecting Liverpool’s mutual housing campaigns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Liverpool Council control</th>
<th>Domain/scale in which critical events occur</th>
<th>National legislation and funding regime</th>
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<td>City-regional political, institutional and socioeconomic events</td>
<td>Neighbourhood politics, local organisations and campaigns</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Construction of Kingsway Mersey Tunnel</strong> displaces Tony McGann to Eldon St. (1968)</td>
<td>Shelter founded as homelessness charity (1966)</td>
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<td><strong>Community Development Projects</strong> 1969-78: Vauxhall CDP chosen over Granby</td>
<td>SNAP begins work with residents, campaign against highway plan, bollarding of streets (1970)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Council invites Shelter</strong> to develop action-research project in Granby (SNAP) (1969)</td>
<td><strong>Granby Street Co-op</strong> est. – Liverpool’s first rehab co-op (1972)</td>
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<td><strong>Closure of entire southern docks</strong> system (1971)</td>
<td><strong>1972 Rent Strike</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1961 Housing Act</strong> Conservatives introduce state funding for cost rent housing, including co-ownership societies</td>
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<td><strong>1964 Housing Act</strong> Harold Campbell lobbies govt. to est. Housing Corporation, for funding co-ownership</td>
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<td><strong>Co-ownership Development Society</strong> est. by Campbell as secondary org. (1965)</td>
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<td><strong>Skeffington Report</strong> (1969)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>1969 Housing Act</strong> introduction of GIA policy for rehab over demolition</td>
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<td><strong>1972 Housing Finance Act</strong> raises council rents to ‘fair rents’, sparking strikes</td>
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<td>Realmdeal/ Hibernian portfolio of 3,000 terraced homes transferred to council (1974)</td>
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<td>Liberal's controversial 1975/76 Budget</td>
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<td>57 slum clearance areas identified, including Weller Streets and Eldonians' Eldon and Burlington St. tenements (1976)</td>
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<td>Eldon and Burlington St. tenements earmarked for demolition – galvanising Eldonians (1978)</td>
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<td>1981 Uprising (Toxteth Riots)</td>
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<td>MDC, Special Task Force, and Merseyside Special Allocation est. by Heseltine, Minister for Merseyside (1981)</td>
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<td>Tate &amp; Lyle factory closure (1981)</td>
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<td>Tate &amp; Lyle ideas competition – Eldonians' Self-Regenerating Community bid (1982)</td>
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<td>NHS founded as UK's first secondary co-op agency (1973)</td>
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<td>Liverpool Improved Houses (est. 1928) becomes MIH (1973)</td>
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<td>CDS est. (Liverpool branch of CHS) as independent secondary org. (1977)</td>
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<td>Weller Streets Co-op est. – UK's first resident-led new build, innovation of Weller Way (1977)</td>
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<td>Hesketh Street Co-op est. (1979)</td>
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<td>Leta-Claudia and Thirlmere est. (1980)</td>
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<td>Weller Streets breaks from CDS; secondary co-op experiment fails (1981)</td>
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<td>CDS negotiates land reclamation from MDC for Shorefields/Mill St. (1981)</td>
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<td>Eldonian Community Association est. – campaign for Portland Gardens (1982)</td>
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<td>1974 Housing Act: introduction of 100% HAG funding of HAs, and ‘fair rents’</td>
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<td>Campbell Report ‘official launch’ of co-op movement: Cooperative Housing Agency (CHA) est. within Housing Corp. to fund co-ops; Cooperative Housing Services (CHS) est. as secondary from remains of Co-ownership Development Society liquidation (1975)</td>
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<td>Housing Rents and Subsidies Act amendments to 1974 Act: co-ops allowed to register as HAs and receive HAG (1975)</td>
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<td>CHA shut down and Housing Corp. budget cut by new Conservative govt. – forcing council to fund co-ops (1979)</td>
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1973 – 1983

‘The Lost Decade’ (no overall control but Liberal minority)
### 1983 – 1986
**Militant Tendency-controlled Labour**

- **Militant Tendency council elected** – co-op municipalisation begins (1983)
- **DLP policy statement denounces co-ops** as “calculated attack on municipal housing”;
- **URS development principles published** (1984)
- **British and American Tobacco closure** (1984)
- **Alice Coleman approves URS** (1985)
- **Militant finalise plans for Everton Park vision** and decant residents of Langrove community (1986)
- **Occupation of Portland Gardens** (1983)
- **First co-op in Kirkby** (Southdene) est. (1983)
- **Merseyside Federation of Housing Cooperatives** est. by CDS (1984)
- **Public march on city hall against Militant municipalisation led by Merseyside Federation** (1984)
- **Eldonians win planning approval in Public Inquiry** (1985)
- **Last Langrove resident move out and Langrove Street Action Group est. to fight demolition** (1986)
- **Task Force Derelict Land Grant and Housing Corp. funding for Eldonian Village** (1984)
- **Patrick Jenkin visits** Liverpool/Eldonians and approves funding (1984)
- **Rate-capping rebellion** of 15 English councils against Tory budget cuts, with Liverpool at the forefront (1985)

### 1987 – 1997
**Labour**

- **Labour re-elected – Phil Hughes (Weller Streets treasurer) app. Housing Chair** (1987)
- **MDC boundaries extended to include Eldonian Village** (1988)
- **Granby Renewal Area declared** with Special Allocation funding (1992)
- **Liverpool Housing Action Trust** starts tower block rehab – largest HAT in country (1993 – 2008)
- **Langrove Co-op campaign**; Phil Hughes approves Langrove housing acquisition (1987)
- **NHS closes down** clients shared among CDS, LHT, MIH (1987)
- **First phase of Eldonian Village complete** (1990)
- **Granby Residents’ Association** (GRA) est. in response to Renewal (1996)
- **1988 Housing Act** ends co-op movement, grows HA sector: cuts HAG funding, ends fair rent regime, introduces private finance into HA sector, forces co-ops to register with larger HAs
- **EU Objective One Structural Fund** ‘Pathways to Integration’ (1994 – 1999)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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4. Liverpool’s housing cooperative revolution 1960-83

The book had a salutary effect in Liverpool during a brief period when the Liberals controlled the city’s housing policy. It inspired several instances...of newly-built housing where the tenants of old slum houses were enabled to find a site, and commission an architect to design their own new housing... The proudest moment of my housing advocacy was when the Weller Street Coop chairman, Billy Floyd, introduced me at a meeting by waving a tattered copy of Tenants Take Over and saying: “Here’s the man who wrote the Old Testament . . . But we built the New Jerusalem!” (Ward & Goodway, 2003: 74-5)

The ‘New Jerusalem’ here refers to the Weller Streets Housing Co-operative; the man in question is Colin Ward, the anarchist planning theorist whose radical ideas for dweller control in his book, Tenants Take Over (Ward, 1974), became founding principles for the Weller Streets. They in turn ignited what some have dubbed Liverpool’s “new-build cooperative revolution” (CDS, 1994: 7), or “Co-op Spring” (Ospina, 1987); fuelling what became the country’s largest housing cooperative movement outside of London. This constituted an extraordinary break with the past: from Liverpool’s working class residents being housed by the council – or the ‘Corpy’ as it was known – without any control over the type, design, or location of their home; to gaining, for the first time, a real sense of control and ownership. This remarkable period in which various fortunate factors came together in mutual combination, produced around 50 resident-led co-ops, most of which still function today (see figure 4.1 below).

The geographical spread of this new-build model right across the Liverpool conurbation in less than a decade is evidence the movement was ground-breaking in more than one respect. Catherine Meredith, the chief executive of Co-operative Development Services (CDS), Liverpool’s leading secondary ‘mother’ organisation supporting primary ‘daughter’ co-op development, claims that

The scale and number of co-ops on Merseyside, alongside the very radical approach taken to the control of the design process, represents a major innovation which has no comparable phenomenon in Western Europe (CDS, 1994: 10)
Figure 4.1: map of Merseyside co-ops, both rehab and new build, established by 1994. Source: (CDS, 1994). These are also listed in Appendix E, in chronological order with further details.
Other commentators have characterised it as the beginning of a new paradigm in public housing: public sector housing phase 2 (Wates, 1982), 2.0 or mark II (interview, P2). It was seen by many as the birth of the third sector, but one distinct from the large-scale housing association sector we see today:

What’s happening now, in Liverpool, is that a new form of public sector housing is being developed…new-build co-ops. Only through new-building do you have the opportunity to shape an environment. And it’s going to be…a major, possibly dominant, form of public housing in the twentieth century. And the Weller Streets would have been the model. (interview with Paul Lusk in McDonald, 1986: 208)

Rather, it heralded a radical new model, the Weller Way of doing things (McDonald, 1986). This put residents in the driving seat of a development machine funded and legislated for centrally by the state but deploying resources through an unprecedentedly decentralised programme of design and construction, using a range of local professional services organisations, all chosen and commissioned by residents themselves. A figure centrally involved in constructing this new model explains the idea:

There’s a possibility here of public housing mark II. Instead of the state or the Corpy being in charge and doing a miserable job, why can’t people who don’t have educational qualifications, don’t have often much of an employment, don’t have the money, why can’t they nonetheless be in charge of running their own estates? (Interview, P2)

So why did these bold predictions fail to materialise? Why have we not seen Liverpool’s new-build co-op model replicated across the country to become the dominant form of public housing? And could the right factors again coalesce in a specific place to recreate the conditions favourable to co-op development? What follows is an attempt to provide some possible explanations; I reconstruct this complicated social and political history of how, and why, the new-build co-op movement in Liverpool came to be considered by some as the blueprint model for public sector housing mark II.
4.1 Origins of Public Sector Housing 2.0

To truly understand why the co-op movement was so successful in Liverpool during the 1970s, we need to understand the extraordinary local political and housing contexts from which it sprung. Liverpool was unusual among northern industrial cities, dominated by working class labour, for electing Liberal and Tory council administrations when others voted in Labour. This was partly due to religion and the sectarianism that had divided the city since the Irish immigration in the 19th century. The resulting political maelstrom may go some way towards explaining why – for social historian Tony Lane (1978: 340) – a Tory council rather counterintuitively built Liverpool’s most successful public housing:

The key to Tory success was religion: working class Protestants voted Tory, working class Catholics voted Labour where they didn’t vote Irish Nationalist…Naturally, the Tories could not just rely on religion: the working class had to be supplied with something tangible—like housing. In the 1930s, apart from the Labour-controlled London County Council, Liverpool was comfortably the most progressive housing authority in Britain. The monolithic tenements of the inner city were modelled on the Karl Marx Stadt blocks of socialist Vienna and the suburban estates were borrowed from Welwyn Garden City. The best council housing ever built in Liverpool went up under the aegis of a Tory council.

Through a mix of Tory paternalism and the need to resolve severe inner-city overcrowding and housing squalor, the Conservatives had already begun to embark, in the 1930s, on policies – slum clearance and construction of new towns and industrial estates on the periphery, starting with the Norris Green estate – that would go on to inform local urban policy into the 1970s (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980). In 1950s, the labour movement – boosted locally by political wins nationally since 1945 – began to challenge sectarian influences on party politics; and in 1955, the Labour Party was finally elected, bringing to an end a century of Conservative rule. This inaugurated a period of almost two decades of Labour control of the council, a political machine led by the Braddocks, representing a distinctively right-wing, traditional, anti-communist ‘boss’ politics (ibid). Under the Braddocks, the council embarked on a more systematic and large-scale plan of comprehensive redevelopment, involving large numbers of inner-city residents decanted to overspill estates and new towns on the metropolitan periphery. An article published in the Liverpool Post on 19th July 1957 states that “this exodus would affect close on 125,000 people”, revealing the huge scale of the overspill plan (quoted in Rodgers, 2010: chp.24):

- 48,000 people would go to Skelmersdale (population at that time 6,216).
- 18,000 would go to Widnes to increase the population to 66,000.
• 19,350 would explode the numbers in the Parish of Halewood (population 6,216 at that time).
• 6,000 would go to Cantril Farm.
• 3,500 would swell the population of Formby from 10,000 to 13,500.
• 30,000 would head for Kirkby.

The collective sense of outrage and resistance to these forced relocations was expressed through various cultural mediums at the time, notably ‘Back Buchanan Street’, a popular folk song written by Harry and Gordon Dison in the mid-1960s for a BBC song-writing competition, and broadcast on television:

A fella from the Corpy, just out of Planning School
Has told us that we’re being moved right out of Liverpool
They’re sending us to Kirkby, or Skelmersdale or Speke
Don’t want to go from all we know in Back Buchanan Street

We'll miss a lot of little things like putting out the cat
For there’s no back door on the fourteenth floor of a ‘Unit-Camus’ flat
Don’t want to go to Kirkby…

We'll miss the fog horns on the river and we'll miss the ole’ Pierhead
An’ short cuts through the jiggers when we’re rolling home to bed
Don’t want to go to Kirkby, or Skelmersdale or Speke
Don’t want to leave. We’ll only grieve for Back Buchanan Street

We'll miss the pub around the corner, with the parlour painted red
Just like we miss the Green Goddesses and the Overhead
Don’t want to go to Kirkby, or Skelmersdale or Speke
Just want to stay where we used to play in Back Buchanan Street

We'll miss the Mary Ellens, an’ me Dad'll miss the Docks
An’ Gran’ll miss the washhouse, where she washed me Grandad’s socks
Don’t want to go to Kirkby……

They’ve closed down Paddy’s Market, where me Ma once had a stall
And soon their picks and shovels, will be through our back yard wall
Don’t want to go to Kirkby……

From Walton to the Dingle, you’ll hear the same old cry
Stop messin’ round with Liverpool at least until we die
Don’t want to go to Kirkby, or Skelmersdale or Speke
Don’t want to go from all we know in Back Buchanan Street.

The threat of displacement and the breaking up of tight-knit communities was one of the main drivers behind the development of campaigns for cooperative alternatives, as we will see below. But it was not simply resistance to relocation to estates outside Liverpool proper that
galvanised the movement from below – it was also the terrible conditions of the housing that existed within Liverpool. The 19th century two-up two-down terraced houses were in a terrible state by modern standards, often ‘back-to-back’ or else separated by a narrow alley, with insanitary conditions:

You were saying ‘slum’ is quite a harsh word, but all those houses had outside toilets…it was pretty primitive, and there were thousands of them like that (interview, C2).

In response, the council replaced thousands of terraces with tenements and high rise blocks. Part of the slum clearance programme was the construction of new tenements on the sites of old terraces. Yet the tenements built in their place soon deteriorated. By far the most notorious of these tower blocks were what were colloquially known as ‘the Piggeries’ or the ‘ugly sisters’ (see figure 4.2 below); a trio of high rise flats built in 1965 in Everton to replace ‘slum’ terraced housing, and which, at the time of this account by an ex-council housing officer, were

Only about five years old, but…so badly built that the tenants had gone on rent strike and therefore the council, in direct retaliation, had gone on a repairs strike…Within another five or six years the blocks had gone. So there was great hunger for anything that was better (interview, C7).

Tony Lane (1978: 338-9) explains some of the motivations leading to the demolition of such tower blocks as the Piggeries after only a few years of use:

Who would have dreamt in the 1950s that a housing dept., would have to invent the term “hard-to-let”? Who would have dreamt that some tenants would have been driven to a systematic destruction of their own housing as a means of forcing a change in policy? Who could have imagined a situation where tenants would have complained of the state of repair of their buildings—and then said that they didn’t want repairs carried out because they wanted the place to deteriorate to the point where they would have to be re-housed? (338-9)

When residents resisted in such large numbers to live in these conditions, the council had little choice but to begin emptying flats out for demolition, which, as one resident of the Piggeries recalls, made conditions even worse for those unfortunate enough to remain until the end:

The conditions towards the end were appalling. Once something has been declared for demolition everyone stops caring. Some of those flats stood for less than ten years when the previous terraced streets, as bad as the conditions were, had stood for a century. (quoted in Rogers, 2010: ch.30)
A leading co-op activist cites terrible conditions in the tenements as a main motivation for co-op campaigning, and recalls one of the worst examples:

Larry’s on the Arkwright Street estate…when they actually built them they were just thrown up, they were laid on top of all the sewerage system, it wasn’t replaced, so that started to crack, people had sewage literally coming up into their properties… I went upstairs, and she had not just black mould in the corner…it was like a black blanket right the way across the ceiling…so they were all living downstairs and the sewage was coming through. (Interview, A3).

Hidden behind these images is a story of neglect and bureaucratic failure. One council housing manager at the time remembers

One tenement…Melrose Place…where they were actually fitting in new gas fires at one end while they were demolishing the other, because the contract had already been made – it was madness! (Interview, C4).

Another ex-council housing officer describes how the ‘Corpy’ had become “a shockingly poor landlord”, exemplified in the working culture of the Scotland Road office where he worked.
Managing 14-15,000 properties with a team of about 25 of us, so it was quickly getting out of control; and the culture in there despised the tenants…the poetic name for the tenants was ‘deadbeats’ (interview, C7).

Another recalls the

Dreadful housing conditions…awful, horrendous multi-storeys everywhere; there were no adequate repair and maintenance programmes, cyclical maintenance just didn’t happen (interview, H2).

Conditions were so bad in some of the high-rise blocks that repair reports were simply ignored:

At the end of every day they were thrown away, because the council was just refusing to do repairs in these, the Piggeries (interview, C7).

Such conditions sparked collective action among Liverpool’s tenants. Various rent strikes and marches mark this period, from the 1960s to the 1980s, in which residents of council tenements organised to challenge mismanagement or rent rises. Collective action came to a head in 1972, in reaction to the Conservative government’s 1972 Housing Finance Act, which brought in so-called ‘fair rents’, representing rent rises for council tenancies of 25%. Many Labour councils across the country were re-elected on the strength of pledges to resist implementation of the Act (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980). In Liverpool, Labour councillors were unable to prevent Tory and Liberal members forming a majority to vote in the measure. As a result, large marches took place across Liverpool and the wider Merseyside region, with around 3,000 protestors led by tenants’ campaign groups marching to the Pier Head.

One particularly striking example of the 1972 rent strikes occurred in Kirkby, in the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley, one of the ‘overspill’ new towns built to the east of Liverpool in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the slum clearance programme, but which by the early 1970s was, like Liverpool, suffering with severe unemployment and social problems as the multi-national company branch plants that had located there began to close (Meegan, 1990). Women from one particular estate, Tower Hill – the overspill of the overspill – were particularly vocal and began to organise discussion and support groups in response to the factory closures and 1972 Housing Finance Act, which led to the formation of the Tower Hill Unfair Rents Action Group. The group initiated a 14 month-long rent strike involving 3,000 tenants in Kirkby (Meegan, 1990) – demonstrating how the male-dominated traditions of docklands militancy had outflown their origins into female-led struggles in the sphere of
reproduction. A decade later, Kirkby women were once again leading the campaigns for new-build housing co-ops to replace the crumbling tenement blocks – explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

It was these experiences – coupled with growing collective anger over the slum clearance programme – which eventually led to the diminution of support for the local Labour Party. In 1973, the Liberals were elected as controlling party on the council, promising a new kind of ‘community’ or ‘pavement politics’ to Labour ‘boss politics’ or Tory paternalism (Frost and North, 2013). The Liberals took advantage of various policy changes at the national level to install a new public housing programme at the local – one which turned its back on council housing and focused on private and cooperative alternatives, in a bid to diversify and decentralise what they and many residents now saw as moribund municipal housing. Before exploring these changes and their effects in detail, we must first turn our attention towards a little-known policy experiment in Liverpool, which did a great deal to pave the way for the Liberals’ housing policy and the development of the co-op movement.

4.1.1 Neighbourhood renewal in a SNAP!

By the 1960s, emerging urban social movements composed of communities and idealistic professionals were beginning to resist top-down comprehensive redevelopment and propose rehabilitation in its place (Towers, 1995). In response, the government passed the 1969 Housing Act, which put the onus on local authorities to consider rehabilitation through general improvement areas (GIA), specifically prohibiting combining GIAs with slum clearance in the instances where residents prefer this option (Hook, 1970a).

The development of this new rehab approach to regeneration was profoundly influenced by a policy experiment in Granby, a deprived inner-city neighbourhood to the south of Liverpool city centre (Cornelius, 1982). The Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP), an action-research programme rolled out from 1969-72, was one of the first programmes nationwide to deliver rehabilitation of inner-city terraced neighbourhoods rather than demolition (McConaghy, 1972). Founded in 1966 as a voluntary charity campaigning for the homeless, Shelter had by 1968 developed its role beyond homelessness, seeking to resolve the broader urban issues at the root of homelessness. At the same time the 1969 Act opened up the space for local authorities to engage with voluntary associations in ameliorating housing problems (McConaghy, 1972). Following the 1969 Act, the council set up Granby Planning Action Area and invited Shelter to investigate the local demand for rehabilitation of a section of this area (see figure 4.3 and 4.4).
SNAP paralleled Community Development Projects (CDPs) which were established on similar principles: understanding the nature and causes of deprivation in deindustrialised inner-city areas, and finding solutions (Loney, 1983). Shelter lobbied for Granby to be included as a CDP, but lost out to Vauxhall in north Liverpool – where the Eldonians later developed their village – over council concerns that resources should not be too spatially
concentrated (McConaghy, 1972). Unlike Vauxhall’s largely homogenous, stable, cohesive working class Irish-Catholic communities, Granby, and much of Liverpool 8, is seen as the most multi-cultural and ethnically diverse area of the city, marked by transience (Cornelius, 1982). Once a prosperous quarter of merchant and artisan houses fronting tree-lined streets and grand boulevards, the area had by the 1960s accrued a reputation for crime, vandalism, squalor, and vice (Hook, 1970b).

SNAP was forward-thinking in conceptualising Granby as a ‘twilight area’ – stuck in a ‘twilight trap’, a vicious cycle of poverty compounded by societal discrimination (see figure 4.5 below). The acknowledgement of systemic forces by SNAP meant a more holistic approach: “To deal with such areas in isolation”, says SNAP Director, Des McConaghy (1972: 11), writing in the final report, “would be to treat local sores without administering any systemic medicine.” SNAP recommendations anticipated those of the final CDP report (Loney, 1983). Indeed, SNAP prefigured later ideas in urban theory and the kind of area-based initiatives now de rigueur in urban renewal policy. More immediately, it helped pioneer and test in practice the GIA approach that had only been given legal definition in the 1969 Housing Act. It was the “flagship” project of GIA policy and would later influence the development of Housing Action Areas (HAA) (Holmes, 2005: 124).

Communications between Granby residents and the council were made difficult by local deprivation and transience, the hostility garnered by the threat of demolition imposed by the post-war slum clearance programme, and, also by the predominance of small-time investors – absentee landlords for a largely privately-renting population (Hook, 1970b). SNAP was to provide the vital link with residents, articulate their needs to the council and offer free advice on health, welfare and housing issues. Its main task was to deliver environmental improvements: reducing housing densities, repairing existing properties, reorganising internal space, and installing inside toilets, bathrooms and kitchens. Generally none such amenities were available in the 19th century terraces, which were perhaps understandably described as ‘slums’ (interviews, C1/C2). This became the blueprint for the GIA rehab approach. Yet the idea was to go deeper than mere physical upgrading: to work closely with existing residents to understand their complex needs and deliver lasting improvements in health, welfare, environment and employment. A local office for SNAP workers – architects, housing managers and a sociologist – was opened in Granby, allowing direct contact with residents. Street committees were elected by residents at SNAP meetings (see figure 4.5 below), and task forces organised on each topic of local concerns, such as housing, health and crime. Their
findings were incorporated in the SNAP report to the council; an early experiment in community participation in regeneration.

Yet the SNAP project revealed a complex knot of place-based problems tied into a Byzantine local bureaucracy that presented too many complications to be loosened by the participatory rehab approach alone (McConaghy, 1972). The principal problem was the scattered distribution of housing ownership and the large number of multi-tenanted private-rented dwellings. Absentee landlords were not incentivised to voluntarily invest in rehabilitation, owing to low and unreliable rents. Of the 740 terraced dwellings in the Granby GIA, only 17% were owner-occupied; almost all of the rest owned by private landlords, and 566 in need of improvement (McConaghy, 1972). The SNAP final report revealed a convoluted bureaucratic process of 71 separate procedures required to obtain a single council grant. One of the main SNAP findings pointed to too many competing agencies, regulations, contractors and ‘welfare chaos’ (McConaghy, 1972). Alternatively, it recommended whole-scale restructuring into development corporations coordinating local service agencies and strategically directed at the national level through a central urban task force.

Figure 4.5: SNAP poster for public meeting (left), and image and conceptualisation of spatially concentrated poverty cycle (right). (source: McConaghy, 1972)
The problem of rehabilitating multi-tenanted private-rented terraces split between small-time landlords was partly resolved by their consolidation into co-operative and housing association ownership (Hook, 1977). One side of the holistic SNAP strategy was to build tenants’ buy-in and find a common regeneration solution through participatory mechanisms. The other was to persuade absentee landlords to endorse the scheme despite their disinclination, before resorting to Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) (Hook, 1970b). However, wholesale municipal ownership was too expensive in the context of large numbers of individual owners needing to be bought out (Hook, 1970a). Local housing associations (HAs) were therefore encouraged to buy stock from landlords and owner-occupiers. Shelter had supported the development of two key local HAs: Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT), established in 1965 as a church-based initiative (Holmes, 2005); and Merseyside Improved Houses (MIH), established in 1928 as Liverpool Improved Homes, becoming one of the first Shelter-supported HAs, later morphing into Riverside, one of the biggest HAs in the UK. Both LHT and MIH were geared towards inner-city neighbourhood improvement using fundraising from Shelter, council improvement grants and mortgages (Lusk, 1998). The SNAP approach innovated by Shelter was a major inspiration for the housing association and co-op movements, as this former LHT officer attests:

LHT’s whole ethos came out of the SNAP project. The SNAP project in Granby had shown, at least for a while, how much good it could do to one small area...Not just on the housing but on housing, shops, all of the public services, and work intensively with the community in that area and turn it round. And so that became our idea and that’s why we always then had small teams in local offices wherever we then went to work...It’s how everybody works now, but at the time it was really quite revolutionary. (C7)

SNAP was directly involved in kick-starting the co-op movement. A small group of idealistic architects and housing professionals – living locally and working with SNAP – approached the council to negotiate a mortgage for the acquisition and rehabilitation of terraced houses. Granby Street Housing Co-operative was established in 1972, Liverpool’s first rehab co-op (Towers, 1995). This became the model for a whole series of replications, driven by aspiring and idealistic young professionals seeking to ‘make a difference’ (interviews, N1/C1). Shortly after Granby’s establishment, Liverpool council designated a second GIA not far away, in the Canning area of Georgian terraces, and invited the co-op to participate directly in the improvement programme (Clay, 1978). Granby declined this invitation but helped residents set up their own, Canning Co-op, in 1973 to rehabilitate empty council houses. Canning was full of what one co-op member describes as “the arty-farty middle class” (quoted in Lusk,
These co-ops were ‘non-mutual’: not all members were residents or tenants. This allowed outside activists with expertise to help establish and manage them, but without necessarily the full involvement of residents themselves, who were therefore not always given an adequate cooperative education to enable full mutual control (Lusk, 1998).

Granby and Canning were run entirely voluntarily, but the acquisition of further houses, totalling 30 between them, meant the workload was taking its strain on volunteers (Lusk, 1998). By pooling resources into a more professionalised secondary co-op, members could service both primaries more effectively. They jointly founded Neighbourhood Housing Services (NHS) in 1973, as a subsidiary company wholly owned by members of co-ops using its services. This was Britain’s first secondary housing cooperative (Clay, 1978). Once in place to promote their development, the co-op movement grew rapidly: NHS began with just two employees but by 1977 it had 20 staff serving eight rehab co-ops completing 100-129 housing improvements a year (Towers, 1995: 91).

4.1.2 Cooperative legislation: the 1974 Housing Act
A secondary co-op is a necessary but not sufficient condition for such rapid growth. How did prospective co-ops establish themselves and acquire land? More to the point: where did the finance come from? To understand the swift genesis of the new-build following the rehab co-op movement in Liverpool, we must first rescale our attention the national level, to build a picture of the critical changes to the legislative landscape that had occurred in the 1960s. Co-op growth at the local scale was preceded by the development of a supportive legislative, regulatory and funding regime at the national level (see: Birchall, 1988, 1991, 1995; Clapham and Kintrea, 1987, 1992; Lusk, 1998). The establishment of the Housing Corporation as a government agency dedicated to the funding and regulation of a new form of tenure, co-ownership societies, was the result of colliding political impulses. From one direction, came the promotion by key figures in the cooperative movement of housing cooperatives as an alternative form of social housing provision; from another, came largely Conservative calls for an enlarged private-rented sector to assume responsibility for state provision and fill in the growing supply gap between owner-occupation and council housing (interview, N1). In 1961, the Conservative government identified unmet housing needs in good quality, low cost private-rented housing and homeownership, and sought to expand the cost-rental sector with £25 million made available in the 1961 Housing Act (Birchall, 1991).

Inserting themselves into this policy context to carve out new opportunities for the cooperative movement were two especially influential individuals: Harold Campbell, a leading
figure in the Cooperative Movement, serving as Secretary of the Co-operative Party; and later, Reg Freeson, Housing Minister in the 1974-79 Labour government, a Co-op party member, and key supporter of the very first post-war cooperative housing experiments in London (Lusk, 1998). Campbell was an influential promoter of cooperative ownership in the early 1960s, and persuaded Conservative government ministers to support co-operative housing alongside cost-rental in the 1961 Act – but dubbed ‘co-ownership’ societies as a political tactic to assuage Conservative suspicions of cooperative, and by association socialist, values (interview, N2). Campbell’s lobbying of the Conservative government led to the establishment of the Housing Corporation in the 1964 Housing Act as a body to fund co-ownership societies and other forms of cost-rental housing. The Act earmarked £100 million to underwrite building society loans for co-ownership schemes, to be administered through the Housing Corporation with Campbell becoming its Deputy Chairman (Birchall, 1988). This position enabled him to better promote the model, which as an idea was originally imported from Scandinavia. In 1965 he helped found the Co-ownership Development Society, a secondary service organisation along the lines of the Scandinavian model, in which a ‘mother’ or secondary society helps establish many independent ‘daughter’ or primary co-ownership societies (Clapham and Kintrea, 1987).

Co-ownership societies however, had several failings. They were developed by professionals with financial stakes in the projects with too little participation or input from residents, who were often unaware they were even living in a co-op (Birchall, 1988). Moreover, the 1970s inflationary house price spiral revealed a fatal flaw in the co-ownership financial model – trapping individual equity stakes in inflationary bubbles, enabling individuals to profit from their sale, and making capital loans too expensive to fund – eventually leading to its demise as a viable model (Birchall, 1991).

Yet the co-ownership model nonetheless helped pave the way for the next phase of common ownership co-op. SNAP Director, Des McConaghy, paints the background context:

The major 1972 ‘sea change’ occurred when governments began to panic about a threatened collapse of the lower end of the private housing rental market. They feared the threat of US style ‘abandonment’ of property and in particular the bi-partisan fear of any further ‘municipalisation’ of our older housing areas. This triggered a Ministerial bid for direct control over public sector housing – and that called for a new super national quango. Hence the Conservative’s 1973 Housing Bill became Labour’s 1974 Housing Act – and a tiny and moribund Housing Corporation was resurrected to promote and oversee a whole multitude of new local quangos…a truly massive expansion of our ‘voluntary’ housing movement.
However the bottom drawer plan was to eventually replace all our UK public sector housing in this way; and almost immediately ambitious civil servants – and many charities and voluntary movement leaders themselves – saw this as an opportunity to pioneer the wider concept of the ‘privatised and voluntary state’ – albeit one initially and indeed still mainly reliant on central government funding (personal correspondence, 2013).

This provocative account suggests the Conservative government’s 1973 Housing Bill inaugurated the now-familiar ‘shadow state’ (Wolch, 1990) by resurrecting the Housing Corporation to oversee the outsourcing of public housing into the housing association sector – which would come to include common ownership co-ops. Their ‘great breakthrough’ came after Labour had won the 1974 election, appointing Reg Freeson as Housing Minister and turning the Conservative Bill into the 1974 Housing Act (Birchall, 1991). This empowered the Housing Corporation to become the funder and regulator of housing associations, administering an extraordinarily generous funding regime of 100% capital and revenue Housing Association Grants (HAG) for land acquisition, development costs, and ongoing management and maintenance. Labour’s influence on the Conservative Bill led to inclusion of ‘fair rents’, to be fixed by a rents officer, and tenancy allocations according to ‘need’, which guaranteed affordability for low income tenants (Lusk, 1998). Cooperatives, however, were not initially eligible for funding, as they were not officially housing associations. It was only with Freeson’s appointment of his political ally Harold Campbell as his advisor that co-ops were to be given this vital statutory status. Campbell set up a working party on co-ops to report findings just in time to amend the 1975 Housing Rents and Subsidies Act, which was to make amendments to the 1974 Act. What became known as the Campbell Report recommended that co-ops be allowed to register as housing associations with the Housing Corporation and therefore gain access to HAG. Due to their inclusion in this regime of ‘fair rents’, co-ops became affordable to those on low incomes for the first time (Birchall, 1991).

The Campbell Report also recommended the establishment of a national representative body for housing co-ops, resulting in the formation within the Housing Corporation of the Cooperative Housing Agency (CHA) – described by Hook (1977: 1215) as the “official launch” of the housing cooperative movement “after nearly 150 years of private experiment”. With 10% of the Housing Corporation budget, the CHA was to fund the development of local secondary co-ops and crucially provide education and training for primary co-op members. This resulted in the rapid growth of co-ops nationwide, a quarter of which were in Liverpool, including a further eight rehab co-ops (Birchall, 1988). The Co-ownership Development Society (CDS) went into voluntary liquidation around 1975, following the 1974 Housing Act.
and the demise of the co-ownership movement. It was nonetheless quickly reincarnated under a different guise, as Co-operative Housing Services (CHS) with its original staff and Campbell remained as chair. Just as the Co-ownership Development Society had been set up by Campbell to support the development of co-ownership societies, CHS was to be the national secondary organisation providing services for local primary co-ops.

4.1.3 Competition for council contracts

The 1974 Housing Act enabled MIH and LHT, as well as NHS, to position themselves as leading players as council policy turned increasingly towards rehabilitation (interviews, N1/N2/C1). With the 1969 Act supporting the establishment of GIAs and the 1974 Act providing the financial and institutional infrastructure for housing associations and co-ops to deliver improvements, all the blocks were in place for a large-scale rehabilitation policy. But the driving force was to come from a fortuitous change in local politics. In 1973 the Liberals broke the nearly two-decade Labour hold on Liverpool council (Taafe and Mulhearn, 1988). In minority control in coalition with the Tories, the Liberals pursued an alternative policy of neighbourhood improvement, expanding the voluntary rental housing sector and owner-occupation, whilst halting council demolition and house-building. The result, as one Housing Corporation official observes, was that

Liverpool declared the biggest number of Housing Action Areas [HAA] in the country – probably the most successful and prolific take up of the housing association movement was in this city – so major portfolios of private stock transferred from the private sector to housing associations in the older housing. (Interview, P3)

By the mid-1970s Liverpool council had the largest HAA policy in the UK, covering 23 inner-city 19th century neighbourhoods (CDS, 1994). At this time, around 3,000 terraced houses in south inner-city Liverpool suddenly became available for improvement, following the bankruptcy and liquidation of a big property investment company, known as ‘Hibernian’ or ‘Realmdeal’ Portfolio (Lusk, 1998). This was divided between the housing associations operating in each area, with the council zoning whole neighbourhoods over to organisations for rehab. These council-demarcated zones created natural monopolies for the housing associations, thereby ensuring they were the only actors capable of delivering improvements under the 1974 legislation. The ‘fair rents’ regime proved too stringent for private landlords to cover relatively high costs of rehab, whilst the generous HAG funding and tight eligibility requirements guaranteed the economic viability of only housing associations. With the 1975 amendment, these powers were extended to co-ops.
Looking for secondary support to develop its rehabilitation programme, Liverpool council and the Housing Corporation invited Harold Campbell’s new London-based body for developing co-ops, CHS, to work with them in Liverpool (Ospina, 1987). But NHS also decided to pursue rehabilitation as a means of expanding the co-op sector, and lobbied the council to be considered in the zoning policy. As a result, large parts of Toxteth and Granby were zoned for ‘cooperatives’ as part of council GIA strategy, with NHS owning and managing the stock (Lusk, 1998). Out of this competition, a Liverpool branch of CHS was established, detaching itself from London as an independent organisation in 1977. Specialising specifically in the development of Liverpool co-ops, it was called Co-operative Development Services (CDS). Confusingly, CHS in London went on to reconstitute itself as the Co-operative Development Society, now known as CDS Co-operatives; but this thesis will refer only to the Liverpool organisation as CDS.

CDS was now well-placed to capitalise on the Liberals’ rehab policy regime, having inherited swathes of land in areas zoned for co-operative development originally bought by CHS after the collapse of the Realmdeal/Hibernian Portfolio. The majority of CDS’s work initially involved improvement – with 823 families helped in total – building on the pioneering participatory techniques of SNAP to identify local needs through resident committees, meetings, surveys, conducted from a local office (CDS, 1990, 1994). A radical change was to occur, however, through contact with a particular group of residents in the Weller Streets area of Toxteth (McDonald, 1986). Despite the Liberal preference for rehabilitation, by 1976 the council had nonetheless earmarked 57 neighbourhoods for clearance, “the fifty-seven varieties, somebody called them – and the Weller Streets was at the bottom” (McDonald, 1986: 30). But being at the bottom of the list, crucially gave the Weller Streets time to campaign for alternatives. This was not a holistic approach to regeneration: the council knocked down whole streets and blocks, and rehoused residents wherever they had available properties scattered across the city. This meant communities were not moved together, as the council simply did not have the empty stock, but dispersed as well as displaced (McBane, 2008).

However, like the other 57 varieties, it was generally agreed that the tiny insanitary houses were beyond repair, lacking most basic amenities (interview, C2). Indeed, despite nostalgic tendencies among some residents and commentators to romanticise life in the old terraces (Rogers, 2010, 2012) there was a real need for state intervention to upgrade such housing:

People’s memories are with tinted glasses, some of those properties that they demolished needed demolishing…people remember playing ball in
the street and they don’t remember playing with the rats in the street (interview, C4)

Weller Streets residents were thus not against demolition per se but “didn’t want to be rehoused by the council, partly because of the quality of the housing on offer, but mainly because they would lose their community ties” (interview, C1). They wanted to be kept together as a community and so approached CDS who unsurprisingly suggested they form a co-op – but this time a new-build. There were also other, more politically radical motivations in play: the Weller Streets, like many communities across inner-city Liverpool, had a deeply antagonistic relationship with the ‘Corpy’, and sought greater autonomy from council control.

When they finally acquired their new site for the co-op from the council in 1979, two years after the first community co-op meeting, a new slogan was scrawled across a wall: “THIS LAND NOW BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE” (McDonald, 1986: 137). The final inscription chosen for the completed project, in 1982, though less radical, illustrates the Weller Streets’ anti-displacement motivations (figure 4.6)

Figure 4.6: The founding stone plaque with inscription at the Weller Streets. (source: author’s own, 2015)

Unlike the early NHS co-ops, the Weller new-build model was fully mutual, with all and only residents represented as members, as joint collective owners – the most fully realised form of cooperative (Birchall, 1988). Non-mutual NHS co-ops were led by local professionals who had indirect personal interests in the rehab projects:
The early housing associations...formed in the early ‘70s...were actually formed by architects and surveyors and lawyers who saw it as being a pretty good way of getting a load of business, and at that time there wasn’t a rule that said that they couldn’t earn money out of it (interview, C6)

This interest often included protecting their own homes from demolition, if situated in nearby clearance zones, and furthering their professional careers in the housing sector (Lusk, 1998). Tenants were given more choice over the design of architectural improvements for their homes, and NHS was more open and responsive to tenant preferences than their private landlord predecessors or housing association competitors. But NHS effectively maintained a monopoly in architectural and housing services. Whilst residents had some say over cosmetic design issues, there was no real choice between agencies, nor was education in cooperative principles sufficiently developed (interview, C1). Real power over the process remained with NHS and its managing team of aspiring professionals rather than with residents themselves, treated more like tenants than collective landlords (Lusk, 1998).

During their bid for preferred partner in rehab zones, NHS committee members talked of “buying property over the heads of tenants and then pretending that you are a co-op” (Lusk, 1998: 127). This top-down strategy led to rehab co-ops being scattered or ‘pepper-potted’ throughout an area rather than clustered together in a tight-knit community at street scale. This resembled the structure of housing associations or speculative landlords more than co-ops, which rely on spatial proximity for cooperative relations. Corn and Yates Streets Co-op, however, was the exception: residents were tightly clustered around the two titular parallel terraced streets, and successfully campaigned to save their houses (see figure 4.7 below). But the power to exert dweller control was to truly assert itself with the innovation of the new-build model – co-produced by CDS professionals and Weller Streets residents, a mutual learning process producing dweller control in almost every aspect of housing: from planning and design to ownership and ongoing management.
Figure 4.7: Corn and Yates Co-op, in the early 1980s (left) source: (Towers, 1995: 92); and in 2015 (author's own), suggesting good upkeep over the decades. Formed in 1976 by a group of around 60 active resident members on Corn and Yates streets, previously part of the Realmdeal/Hibernian portfolio, and then declared a GIA by the council responding to the co-op campaign.
4.2 Weller Streets and CDS: co-producing the new-build model

The Weller Way of doing new-build relocated control from external professionals to users themselves (CDS, 1994; McDonald, 1986). The fundamental principles of this model are summarised in figure 4.8 below, whilst figure 4.9 explains the complex bureaucratic stages involved in co-op development.

![Figure 4.8: the Weller Way model of new-build co-op development. (Source: CDS, 1994; interviews with C1/C2/C6):](image)

1) residents of slum clearance areas self-organise into cooperatives as a means of being rehoused without being displaced;
2) a secondary organisation helps the co-op identify a site, acquire land, and apply for funding from the council or Housing Corporation;
3) the secondary works closely with co-op residents on education and training in a range of essential skills and knowledge, such as the planning process, interviewing, chairing meetings, accounting;
4) the secondary advises the co-op on suitable local firms and contractors, and co-op residents select a shortlist of competing agencies and then personally interviews them;
5) co-op residents are given the chance to select their preferred secondary organisation, aside from CDS, as their development agency to build, manage and advise on the project, as well as choosing their preferred architect;
6) residents work closely with their chosen architect to design a scheme according to community preferences through tenant participation;
7) final design reflects local needs but must meet Housing Corporation regulations to be eligible for funding, with tenants paying ‘fair rents’.

![Figure 4.9: The bureaucratic process of developing a new-build co-op (source: ibid).](image)

1) Registering as a friendly society under Industrial and Provident Societies legislation
2) Housing Corporation as a housing association capable of providing social housing, and receiving state funding
3) Making a formal application to the Housing Corporation for HAG funding for land acquisition and development
4) Negotiating contracts with architects, developers, building suppliers, accountants and other professionals
5) Negotiating with the council the number of council nominees for allocations, which was often set at 50% if the council had part-funded development.
6) Working with architects and developers to design and build the scheme according to planning regulations
7) Managing the co-op according to regulations pertaining to public grant obligations, such as developing a formal allocations policy which houses people according to need and on ‘fair rents’, and dealing with rent arrears and other legal complications
For the Weller Streets, condition 5 in figure 4.9 was problematic: the sites available were already almost too small to fit enough new homes on for the entire community to live together, let alone council nominees (McDonald, 1986). Luckily, CDS chief exec, Catherine Meredith ardently supported the co-op in council meetings, persuading them to give Weller Streets full control over their own allocations (interview, C6). The professional prowess and passion of CDS became indispensable to achieving dweller control: much of the political brokering, professional expertise and administrative oversight came from CDS. They were crucial in the successful development of this and later new-build co-op schemes.

4.2.1 Community campaigning

Notwithstanding the crucial administrative, educational and support role of CDS in the successful development of new-build co-ops, the energy and drive for Weller Streets’ campaign came from the grassroots: community motivations to be rehoused locally, together, rather than displaced to an outer estate by the council slum clearance programme. Developing a co-op in your neighbourhood required extraordinary energy, time and dedication throughout a long and arduous process, which could often take four years to complete. This was an all-consuming and exhausting process for many involved, but one which produced some amazing unforeseen benefits. In *The Weller Way*, Alan McDonald (1986) provides a rich description of the campaign process: residents’ countless meetings after work; the search for land, in which members would pile into cars on searches across the locality for suitable empty sites; presenting their site surveys to the council; petitioning local Labour councillors to back their bid to acquire public land; and “late night debates in the pub…like three nights a week in the pub, getting it going in the early phases” (interview, C2). Then there were the more formal committee meetings with CDS, interviewing architects and builders, and working with them on a weekly basis thereafter. A centrally involved figure emphasises how the

Intensity of what people were going through was at one level very exciting for all of us, but it was also kind of very destructive, you know, destructive of marriages…It was a high pressure cooker. At the time obviously people were living in a slum, so you can imagine a lot of domestic tensions, and uncertainties (interview, C2).

Maintaining a high level of input over a long period, keeping the whole community faithful to the project, whilst also sustaining personal domestic life, was additionally stressful with constant doubt and the niggling feeling that it was an experiment, that it might not even work. Whilst campaigning imposed strains on people’s lives, and the constant threat of burnout, it also brought people together in solidarity, and strengthened the community in common cause.
It garnered trust between members, forged new friendships and deepened old ties – helping the co-op survive and flourish long after the development period was over. It also created mutually beneficial relationships between residents and professionals – both exposed to different perspectives and ways of working. This was helped by the fact that the Weller Streets, and the first few new-builds that followed, were established exclusively in working class communities of overwhelmingly English, Welsh and Irish ethnic origin – already very cohesive owing to familial, kinship, cultural and religious ties. There are sharp divisions between Granby – renowned for being the most multi-cultural area of the city, with the oldest black community in the UK (Merrifield, 2002) – and the Dingle part of Toxteth, nearer the Mersey and the docks, where Weller Streets and many of the new-builds are located. No new-build co-ops developed in Granby because the early work of SNAP helped save and rehabilitate the artisanal housing stock, of higher quality than the smaller, denser terraces in the Dingle. More multi-cultural campaigns for mutual housing were only to emerge several decades later, with Granby CLT.

4.2.2 Behind every empowered man there's a powerful woman

Central to the success of Weller Streets was strong leadership. A traditionally gendered image of a strong male leader was at the centre of a common military metaphor used to describe many new-build co-ops. The campaign process was likened to a ‘battle’ with the authorities; and leading men to ‘dictators’ or ‘war leaders’ (interviews, A1/C1/C2); whilst the transition from campaign to management characterised as that “from the ‘military’ administration to the ‘civil’ one” (McDonald, 1986: 203). Allied to this was broad recognition that once the war was over, skills of leadership required were very different, calling for peacetime leaders to take over day-to-day management:

Like Churchill, he [Billy Floyd, Weller Streets leader] was a warmonger; he was all right while the battle was going on; in peacetime maybe somebody else should lead (Weller Streets resident quoted in McDonald, 1986: 177)

Such leaders were crucial to the success of co-ops, using their authority to persuade powerful figures, such as Patrick Jenkin, Prince Charles, or Max Steinberg – Max held the keys to co-op funding, as Regional Director of the Housing Corporation during much of the cooperative movement, as we will see in the next chapter – to support their respective campaigns, as well as convincing key gatekeepers to open doors to land, funding and planning permission. These ‘warmongers’ were strong-willed men with untapped skills in organisation and leadership, often employed on the docks – or whose fathers had been – and infused in local traditions of
worker organisation and trade unionism, proving transferable talents for community organising. A fascinating possibility – argued by the likes of Tony Lane (1997) but which requires deeper historical investigation – is that Liverpool’s traditions of anarcho-syndicalism, brought here through maritime contact with Spain’s anarchist movement and Industrial Workers of the World in the US, influenced the local trade union culture, and in turn the nature of community organising and housing activism (Belchem, 2011; O’Brien, 2011). This quite possibly accounts for the infusion of local working class culture with a radical edge, versed in spontaneous direct action and anti-authoritarian insurgency, which would help animate co-op campaigns.

This was perhaps more an indirect than direct influence. Weller Streets leader, Billy Floyd, was not a docker, but a milkman, “up at four in the morning delivering milk, and then finishing 11 or 12 at night, after the end of meetings: long, alcohol-fuelled meetings” (interview, C2). Men like Billy were suddenly given the chance to flex their dormant skills and capabilities, wasted in previous work. As one professional working closely with Weller Streets remarks, co-op campaigners had been

Lost in their day jobs...[until]...they found a vehicle. So the co-op process was a kind of a university for some people. In the same way that the trade union movement was a university for other people (interview, C2)

This process of empowerment is evident throughout the membership of co-op communities and remains one of the most remarkable and lasting contributions co-ops made to life in Liverpool. However, many benefits, and certainly most power, accrued to those in leadership positions; sitting awkwardly, incompatibly even, with cooperative principles of participation, democracy and equity. Weller Streets was marked by a problematic division between general membership and leadership, the self-appointed representatives speaking and acting on behalf of the rest:

The co-op, in its development period, was clearly more a ‘collective’ than a broadly-based democratic organisation. Members put their trust in a leadership, an inner cabinet that they believed represented them. (McDonald, 1986: 201)

The ‘inner cabinet’, or ‘war cabinet’, was composed of a management committee with three main specialist sub-committees, deciding on important design/development issues. Whilst it

Depended on a substantial group of people to make it work, it was Billy who led and guided them to the goal of getting houses on site. He chaired
meetings, led deputations...had cajoled, connived and pushed behind the scenes (McDonald, 1986: 177).

Yet working beside Billy and other leading men were a group of powerful women. They sat on the sub-committees in majorities and made most decisions regarding design details, working to meticulously gather residents’ views through questionnaire surveying. The Weller Streets’ broad consensus on design choices was “connected with the women’s network on the streets” (McDonald, 1986: 175). They also led committee concerns to involve other residents, encouraged to join sub-committees. As it happened, the committee failed to inspire much interest from the general membership, resulting in Weller Streets “operating on two levels: the committee involved in the ‘co-op idea’ [and] the general membership in it for a house.” (ibid: 104). But it was the female members who played a fundamentally important role in holding the co-op together despite this bifurcation. They tended to run the committees, rally the community, communicate information, gather opinion, and sustain the tight networks that would sustain the lifeblood of cooperative governance. True of most co-ops across Liverpool, “generally speaking the men were the figureheads...the women were the people who made it work” (ibid). Participants concur that 1970s Liverpool, particularly neighbourhoods in the south end, was a “matriarchal society” (interview, P1/P3).

4.2.3 Participatory design: ‘you hold the pen and we’ll tell you what to draw’

Whilst the community, spearheaded by strong leadership, was the driving force of co-op campaigns, it was their interaction with key professionals committed to cooperative ideals that would prove so fertile a ground for social innovation. CDS was central to the development of an intensive participatory design process unprecedented in public housing (CDS, 1994). Its small team of architects, housing officers and community workers were “sparky creative individuals”, “with enquiring minds”, politically passionate about cooperative housing (interview, H1); carefully selected by Catherine Meredith, who had become director of the Liverpool branch before its independence, bringing two colleagues from Liverpool council housing and architecture departments (interview, C5). Meredith’s management philosophy was to bring a diverse group of creative people together to create a uniquely inventive and resourceful working culture in finding solutions to tough housing problems. One of those recruited was Paul Lusk who “took on most of the ‘educational’ work with the [Weller Streets] co-op” (McDonald, 1986: 73). Such an inquisitive and experimental problem-solving style was critically important in the task of developing new-build co-ops from a blank page.
The learning process was ad hoc, auto-didactical, driven through mutual exchange between CDS workers and co-op residents (interviews with C1/C2/C6). Paul Lusk admits “none of us knew anything about new-build. We were sitting there desperately trying to find books about new-build” (quoted in McDonald, 1986: 73). Whilst the initial co-op idea came from CDS, ideas for the design and development process were the result of residents’ demands coming into creative collision with CDS. For instance Lusk suggested that a series of sub-committees should be formed out of the Weller Streets residents in order to decide more effectively how to go about the development process, and therefore a “a special sub-committee was set up to consider which architect to appoint. They went through a list of possibles with CDS, and came to an agreed shortlist of three that the co-op would interview” (McDonald, 1986: 83). Residents then decided on radical conditions for resident control over the design process (see figure 4.10).

![Figure 4.10: ‘You hold the pen and we’ll tell you what to draw’. Weller Street’s residents “decided on three criteria for the architect… (Source: McDonald, 1986: 84).](image)

1. The people must be the ones who tell the architects what should be built
2. The architect’s involvement with the cooperative must be total
3. The architects act as advisers and scribes (tell us what is and isn’t possible and suggest alternatives)

This not only put working class residents in newly powerful position as clients, but also went further by radically redrawing, almost inverting, the traditional professional relationship between client and architect. CDS’s role was more ‘enabler’ than ‘adviser’:

Not to provide them all the assistance they wanted, it was actually to provide them with mentoring guidance, so that they were able to organise themselves as entities (interview, H1).

The agency had a seminal role to play in educating and training residents so they had the requisite skills and confidence to ‘do-it-themselves’. A CDS development manager explains how they “developed a set of training packages for doing architects interviews; because how does someone without any background in that sort of stuff interview an architect?” (interview, C6). Four local architectural practices were involved in bidding for and delivering co-op schemes, including: Brock Carmichael Associates; Innes Wilkin Ainsley Gommon; McDonnell Hughes; Wilkinson, Hindle and Partners. The latter were chosen by Weller Streets, and one young architect in particular, Bill Halsall, was to be their architect and go on to design many of
Liverpool’s new-build co-ops, including the Eldonians. Bill was brought up in Liverpool with a loyal sense of place, not long out of Liverpool University, influenced by radical ideas associated with the emerging community architecture movement (interview, Halsall). This was a loose coalition of minority interests within the architecture profession but with strong links into wider community resistance and alternative experiments in cooperative and community self-build housing of the early 1970s, including SNAP and NHS in Granby (Towers, 1995; Wates and Knevitt, 1987). Probably the leading figure in new-build co-op participatory design methods, Halsall’s thinking was shaped early on by SNAP:

My former partner Dave Wilkinson was the architect with SNAP, and as a young idealistic student I got involved with SNAP, as a voluntary basis (interview, Halsall).

Indeed, SNAP was an important seedbed for co-op activists and professionals, as a co-op officer explains:

A lot of the architects, landscape architects…the urban discontents – all worked for SNAP; and the early generation of all those people who worked then with the co-ops were around and were graduates of the SNAP programme (interview, C3).

With the election of self-build pioneer, Rod Hackney, as RIBA President in 1987, coupled Prince Charles’s endorsement, the community architecture movement gained considerable influence (Wates and Knevitt, 1987). Prince Charles was a key ally of Liverpool’s co-ops, writing the foreword to the Weller Way (McDonald, 1986). However, the label was not something consciously identified with at the time:

Community architecture was not a phrase that we used…because we wanted to be architects, real architects…I always felt community architecture was a way to say ‘well you do that bit, we’ll get on with the main act’ (interview, Halsall).

Participatory design was about architecture being self-defined by users themselves, not labelled condescendingly as a subset of an elite profession. Nonetheless, the community architecture movement was to gain much of its shape from cooperative experiments in Liverpool. Halsall’s work with Weller Streets pioneered the radical participatory design process with which community architecture sought to associate itself. This involved participatory techniques and ‘planning for real’ exercises aiming to traverse the wall between technical architectural knowledge and lived experience of residents (see figure 4.11).
Figure 4.11: participatory design techniques (source: CDS, 1987, 1990, 1994; interviews with C1/C2/C6).

- surveys and questionnaires of residents’ needs and preferences
- communicative planning meetings to discuss choices
- community exhibitions to illustrate design ideas
- fact finding trips and site visits to schemes designed by bidding architects
- bus trips to other local co-op schemes to brief architects on desired design features
- group modelling methods, such as moveable block models re-arrangeable on cork boards to find desired layouts and house type models
- pre-allocation of residents to each house, enabling individual design choices of ‘member’s extras’, such as gas fires, bathrooms, patio doors etc.

Figure 4.12: Weller Streets co-op in 1980s (top left; source: Towers, 1995); and in 2015, illustrating the endurance of the urban environment and the care residents take in its ongoing maintenance. The co-op community anchor, the Charles Dickens Centre is still used today (bottom right). (source: author’s own, 2015)
Just as the CDS/co-op relationship involved an intensive mutual learning process, so too was the architectural education more a dialogical interaction than didactical lecture. The architect was to learn as much about residents’ needs and desires as the latter were to understand design possibilities and constraints. This enabled particular obstacles in understanding to be easily surmounted. A common confusion was the location of the ‘kitchen’ in two-up two-down terraces, which in working class Liverpool could refer to either the living room, or ‘front kitchen’, where the cooking was traditionally done, or the ‘back kitchen’, which was more of a scullery (interview, C1/C2/C6). By simply engaging residents in modelling exercises such misunderstandings were easily avoided. The resulting design reflected resident desires and aspirations, and better responded to their needs, for more durable and manageable dwellings (see figure 4.12 above).

4.2.4 Empowerment: the personal is political

Skills learnt in the co-op campaigns could be life-changing. Working class people otherwise without access to the professional discourses and mores of architects and planners were suddenly immersed in these worlds, picking up new knowledge and skills which would help them in their own lives. What might have initially seemed alienating and intimidating jargon, such as ‘cost yardsticks’, was absorbed and put to good use in negotiations with professionals (interview, P2). This not only turned power relations on their head, but crucially, gave individual members the tools to expand their aptitudes and open opportunities to new areas of employment. For instance:

The secretary of Mill Street co-op got a secretarial job in an architect’s office, not the architect who had done the work, but a different architect, because of what she learned…she’d minuted meetings, she’d explored the options for bricks and joist and roof tiles and goodness knows what (interview, C6).

Empowerment was not simply a matter of education and skills, but also of power, confidence, self-belief and personal identity. Co-op development was like a “kind of political school” for many members, inspired by co-op campaigning to enter politics full-time, becoming councillors and representing their communities (interview, C2). For instance, Phil Hughes, treasurer of the Weller Streets, became a Labour councillor and eventually Chair of Housing following the fall of Militant, helping later co-ops campaigns to acquire public land (Mars, 1987).
4.2.5 Market competition: the counterintuitive component of cooperativism

Another key innovation of the new-build model was the level of choice residents enjoyed in selecting their own agents and architects from competing firms. This CDS worker explains:

A really big factor in the new-build coops was...if we had been reliant on the architectural services that were provided by the CDS in London, and then by NHS, the new-build co-ops would never have got off the ground. Those guys, bless them, would never have gone out to evening meetings and listen to a bunch of you know...The competitive market has got to be intrinsic to empowerment. It was because those private architects were competing with each other for the work, that they were prepared to go so far out of their way (interview, C1).

The seemingly contradictory notion of the central role of competitive markets in achieving greater user control in cooperative development is not, however, a capitalist model of competition based on the profit motive alone. Motivations of firms involved are a strange mix of political idealism, and seeking status and prestige. Architects particularly were put under great strain in delivering participatory design, which involved many extra hours and voluntary work from staff, generally working for ‘free’ until the site was purchased (interviews, C1/C2). Some firms worked for two years without fees returned (Wates, 1982); most did not receive any payment until at least 10 meetings into the process, with 15% greater costs than their average housing projects (Anderson, 1984). New-build co-ops required great personal dedication and time commitments from architects. Yet local architects nonetheless competed for the work – believing the process to be worthwhile, enjoyable and important for releasing the architectural imagination from the straightjacket of council housing, placing it in the service of user needs (interview, C1/C2/C6).

Moreover, CDS’s introduction of a market in architectural services was not only important for user choice, but also the financial viability of secondary agencies themselves. NHS, which used a monopoly model for secondary services, employing in-house architects and surveyors, was left dependent on its original rehab co-ops. In failing to expand and diversify its customer base, develop its own assets, or compete for new contracts with the new-build co-ops, NHS eventually collapsed as an organisation (Lusk, 1998). It closed down in 1987, its clients shared amongst MIH, LHT, and CDS. These housing associations were however keen to compete for the new business CDS had initially opened up, despite the commonly-held belief that “CDS were quite territorial...about the idea” (interview, C7). CDS’s main rival was MIH, whose chief exec, Barry Natton, was locked into a competitive rivalry for prestige with CDS’s Catherine Meredith (interviews with C3/C6). Tom Clay, who had started his career as in-
house architect for NHS, left the organisation for its lack of interest in competing for new business, and joined MIH, becoming Development Director, and bringing with him experience and commitment in co-op development. Another key figure was Jack McBane, a Canadian community development worker who had his first glimpse of how co-ops could revolutionise public housing whilst working in London borough councils, before being hired by MIH (interview, McBane). He went on to help develop the Eldonian Village, writing the principal historical account of their achievements (McBane, 2008). Jack explains how

one of the critical things [about] MIH – and they weren’t alone – [was] they were willing to use some of their surplus money…there was a lot of surplus money around in those days for housing associations to do innovative stuff…and they were really quite courageous in allowing that to happen. So they had for example a special projects team that I was put in, I was hired as…co-op project manager (interview, McBane).

After visiting the Weller Streets and south end co-ops for inspiration, McBane realised that “the deal here is new-build, and it was pretty much agreed [with Natton] that the MIH co-ops…would be in north Liverpool” (interview, McBane). Unlike the first new-build co-ops, who approached CDS for help, McBane explains how for MIH co-ops the “very initial push came from me”, knocking on doors of council tenants in clearance areas and asking ‘would you like to be involved in what your house looks like?’ (Interview, McBane). These residents were already organising against the threat of displacement, but it was Jack’s, and his MIH colleagues’, enthusiasm for the co-op idea that opened this up as a realistic possibility. Thirlmere Co-op was established in 1980, and this helped persuade residents of another clearance zone, in Leta and Claudia Streets, around from their initial scepticism. Leta-Claudia Co-op was established in the same year – both based on the Weller Way model, likewise designed by Bill Halsall.
4.3 Tenements: the second wave of new-build co-ops

The new-build co-op model was so successful that within a few years of Weller Streets’ completion, some 10 further co-ops were replicating the model. Swiftly following was Hesketh Street, another CDS-driven co-op built on land that the council had initially offered to Weller Streets but turned down due to size constraints (McDonald, 1986). Hesketh Street residents had likewise come from ‘slum’ terraces assigned for demolition and were funded directly by the Housing Corporation, relying on support from the Director of its North West division, Max Steinberg. Together, these two represented the vanguard of new-build co-ops, with a strong communal identity, ideologically-motivated leadership, and collective will to stay together as a community and become politically self-governing (interviews, P3/C1).

The next wave, however, tended to emerge from different housing contexts to the 19th century terraces of Hesketh/Weller/Thirlmere/Leta-Claudia Streets: the municipal tenements built in roughly four phases, from the first pre-war perimeter blocks to the tower blocks of the post-war period. Unlike the later co-op and CLT campaigns, these second wave cooperative initiatives were almost unanimously pro-demolition. Although much of the terraced housing was in good enough condition to rehabilitate, tenement blocks were by the 1970s in need of a drastic overhaul, and so the ‘slum clearance programme’ was rearticulated as the Liberals’ ‘tenement rehousing programme’ (McBane, 2008). Out of this came the second phase of new-build co-ops. The first was Prince Albert Gardens in the south end, formed in 1979 and completed in 1983; shortly followed by other tenement-based co-ops, such as Dingle and Mill Street and Shorefields (Lusk, 1998). Bill Taylor, a CDS manager in the 1980s, explains:

The people on these two [Mill Street and Shorefields co-ops] were living in really appalling conditions – mostly four or five storey walk up deck access flats. I’m from a northern steel town and I’d previously worked in St Ann’s in Nottingham and in Brixton, but these flats really shocked me. To be frank they were inhuman, and the council had not invested in them through lack of resources or whatever. Although the brick structures were probably sound, though in disrepair, their facilities like kitchens, and heating systems were really poor – probably not much better than the Victorian slums that people had left to move into them originally (interview, Taylor).

In part, the cooperative movement was a pragmatic popular response to these conditions. An ex-council officer believes that

The co-operative movement was growing because our housing offer was just awful: the waiting lists were huge…we had squatters coming out of our ears, and…we couldn’t manage voids (interview, H3)
His colleague agrees, remembering how would-be tenants would turn to desperate measures, indicating the scale of unmet housing needs:

> Well people on the waiting list used to just open up voids and just let themselves in. At one stage we had three or four hundred squatters…it was madness! So you can see why the co-operative movement…was ripe really: ‘these won’t do it for us, let’s do it ourselves!’ (Interview, H2).

Two relatively distinct phases therefore mark the early new-build co-op movement: the first arising from ‘slum’ terraces among tightly-knit communities who wanted above all to be rehoused together; the second emanating from dissatisfaction with housing conditions in the tenements built only a few decades earlier.

4.3.1 Liberal compromises: the role of party politics in the ‘lost decade’

Why had the tenements deteriorated so rapidly and deeply? A large part of the problem was insufficient funding of maintenance from the council. This was not a fault of the architecture itself or the design per se, but rather the lack of care and investment it received following construction. Depending on your political perspective, this was either the fault of too much public intervention in housing or too little. Owing to unique circumstances in Liverpool in the 1970s, in which neither perspective was able to hold sway over public policy, this debate was never truly resolved; the housing crisis left unabated.

Through the 1970s, the city suffered from political inertia, lacking majority party control or clear leadership in the ‘hung’ council administrations of 1973-83 – Liverpool’s ‘lost decade’, in which too little was done to rectify the city’s worsening economic and housing problems (Parkinson, 1985: 23). The Liberals exercised some overall control over this period, but did little to abate deteriorating council-housing conditions, pursuing a policy of municipal retrenchment. By 1979 all new council house-building was completely stopped by the Liberals – despite 12,000 people on council waiting lists, 10,000 awaiting transfer (Grosskurth, 1985a), and around 25,000 increasingly dilapidated dwellings, a third of the stock, classified as ‘hard to let’ (Wates, 1985a). The obvious question to ask is: given these worsening conditions, why did the Liberals do this?

After nearly two decades of Labour control, the Liberals came out of nowhere in 1973 to beat both main parties as the controlling force on the council. This extraordinary electoral success was largely founded on Labour’s failures, yet it was also down to clever tactics of capturing votes where the main parties were weakest, thereby making housing the main political battleground, as Michael Parkinson (1985: 21) suggests:
The in-joke went that the Liberals had only one housing strategy – to build houses for sale in Labour wards and houses for rent in Tory wards.

Resources were consequently concentrated into a private sector renewal strategy complemented by housing co-ops in potential Liberal wards, diverting limited funds away from existing public sector housing to do so (Kilfoyle, 2000). Yet there is no evidence that co-operative membership itself secured the Liberals any more votes. Most co-op members were traditional Labour voters and remained so; a few even went on to become Labour councillors, notably Phil Hughes and Peter Tyrell from Weller Streets and Margaret Clark and John Livingstone from Eldonians (Lusk, 1998).

A more convincing explanation is the lack of policy strategy: paralysed by the peculiar political settlement – or rather, lack of – produced by electoral stalemate. The ‘lost decade’, in which no one party had an absolute majority, resulted in minority administrations having to forge precarious coalitions; for the Liberals this meant the Conservatives (Parkinson, 1985). For four of these years, Labour was the largest party but refused to take control of a minority administration, leaving a Liberal-Tory alliance to rule, but without sufficiently shared politics or coherent agenda to push through necessary reforms. Conflict between parties over budgets meant that plans could not be made. Particularly controversial was the Liberal’s 1975/76 Budget, which used some of the additional £21 million central government funds to support revenue from local ‘rates’ to actually cut council taxes instead of supporting services like council housing (Parkinson, 1985: 28). The anger this instilled on the Left helped sow the seeds for the backlash within the Labour Party, ushering in Militant Tendency’s subsequent high-spending municipal socialist programme in the mid-1980s – and their municipalisation of co-ops (Frost and North, 2013).

This turn of events becomes more explicable as we dig deeper into the nature of party politics at the time. The Liberals were opposed to the notion of a unitary bureaucratic authority meeting housing needs for all, controlling tenant choices, and monopolising maintenance services – believing it to be costly, inefficient, paternalistic and damaging to tenants’ capabilities to manage their own lives (interviews, P1/P2). Richard Kemp, who was Chair of the Housing Committee from 1979 to 1981, and Chris Davies, his deputy who succeeded him, laid the housing crisis at the door of a bloated bureaucracy (interviews, Kemp/Davies). This was held to be too unwieldy and distant to properly manage the 90,000 or so council properties owned by the council, which “had virtually become a ‘slumlord’” (Parkinson, 1985: 19). Specifically they located the problem in a heavily-unionised and politically powerful
Works Department – “the inefficient and poorly-managed direct labour organisation which maintains council houses” (Parkinson, 1985: 23) – but which was leaving a backlog of repairs, failing to deliver decent services for tenants. Kemp acknowledges that “repairs cost us a fortune, we didn’t manage our stock properly”, and that such a state of affairs contributed to the Liberals’ refusal to build more council housing:

I used to go to public meetings and say ‘we’re such a bad landlord I’m not gonna build anymore except special needs and specific ones’, and that’s what we did for three years…everything that we then put in new was housing cooperatives (interview, Kemp)

For a city substantially housed by the council and relying on in-house services for the upkeep of their homes, the Works Department enjoyed a surprisingly powerful position in city politics – threatening strike if its budget were cut, which in turn might inspire mass protest, or at the least incite the city’s other trade unions to strike. This was at a time when public sector employment had become a crucial counterweight to Liverpool’s evaporating port economy. Over a third of the city employed by the public sector; a third of these in turn employed directly by the council (Parkinson, 1985: 13); and “every 100th person in Liverpool was employed in the Works Department!” (Interview, Kemp). The housing revenue budget went mostly to the Works Department, whilst the capital budget for new-building was controlled by council committees. So long as the Liberals could win a vote in the housing committee through their loose alliance with the Conservatives the capital budget could be diverted to co-operative and housing association schemes and away from council-housing (interview, Davies).

The Works Department were understandably opposed to working on rehabilitating council-owned terraces for co-ops, funded out of the revenue budget, because this diversion of funds out of council housing and into the third sector translate into a loss of future work. Co-op tenants would no longer be tied into maintenance jobs with the Works Department but could choose their own contractors. Labour continued to oppose co-ops for this very reason: their potential power to weaken the trade unions and liberate what was guaranteed council work into competition with the private and voluntary sectors. The Works Department “threatened to go on strike immediately if we did this because it would be a chink in the armour” (interview, Davies). This made rehabilitation politically difficult – and may account for the policy shift away from rehab co-ops towards new-build, funded out of the Liberal-controlled capital budget rather than union-controlled revenue budget.
4.3.2 ‘You can have any house you like so long as it’s a new-build co-op’

The Liberal policy was therefore geared towards circumventing problems associated with council management of housing by expanding alternative forms. Moreover, they had come to power on the back of Labour losing working class voters opposed to the slum clearance programme and frustration with the poor service of council house maintenance (McBane, 2008; Parkinson, 1985). Liberal housing policy was a three-pronged approach. First, promotion of development of private houses for sale on council-owned land around the city centre, for the first time since the 1920s, in a bid to end the council’s century-long obsession with tenement-building (Mars, 1981). Aiming to instil a new social mix, this was augmented by a policy of selling off council homes to tenants, presaging Thatcher’s Right to Buy and the Mixed Communities agenda (interview, P2). Second, demolitions were to be slowed down if not brought to a halt, with over 30,000 terraced homes rehabilitated though HAAs, utilising the 1969 and 1974 Acts and first experimented with SNAP, producing the country’s largest HAA programme and housing association sector outside London (CDS, 1994). Third, as part of this strategy, housing co-operatives were to be the “icing on the cake, they were the public sector 2.0…a Liberal approach to public sector housing in the inner city” (interview, P2).

However, the Liberals’ policy approach was by no means a coherent or systematic programme: described by Parkinson (1985: 21) as “one-legged only” for its overemphasis on developing the private sector at the expense, even neglect, of municipal ownership. It was passionately informed by liberal ideals for dweller control, choice and self-government – but such a lucid ideology became strangely distorted by their lopsided housing strategy. Richard Kemp acknowledges the motivations were an incongruous mix of “a high blown Liberal viewpoint that people can and should be able to run their own lives”, and a “response to the practicalities”:

We didn’t want to throw good money after bad; we knew that if we provided more council housing it would be useful but it wouldn’t be as cost effective or as good as finding other ways of doing it (interview, Kemp).

In this way, the Liberals gradually abandoned council house-building, switching the ‘tenement rehousing programme’ towards new-build co-ops. Their inability to reform the Works Department for better maintenance services further fuelled the physical deterioration of the tenements. An increased demand for rehousing coincided with a diminution of options to just one, with perverse consequences. By presenting co-ops as the only route to be rehoused, the Liberals inadvertently created a surge in demand that slammed up against tight fiscal limits:
“It started to snowball…more and more groups started to come to us, in the course of this period, saying ‘we’d like a new house please, we know that if we form a co-op we can get one.’ OK that goes so far, but there’s also a limited amount of money (interview, P2).

Money was limited for a number of reasons. First, new-build co-ops were much more expensive than rehab, owing to greater costs incurred from demolition, land assembly, construction and development. Second, the Housing Corporation’s budget was cut and CHA – the subsidiary agency Harold Campbell set up to support their growth – was closed down in 1979 (Birchall, 1988). Third, this meant funding for the co-ops had to come increasingly from the council, with only Weller Streets and Hesketh Street getting through the Housing Corporation funding process before an expenditure moratorium was imposed in 1980 by the new Conservative government (Anderson, 1984). Hesketh Street found itself caught up in the uncertainty, with development put on hold whilst replacement funding streams were secured from the council. All co-ops from then on were predominantly funded by the council (see Appendix E for a breakdown), yet the council’s own housing budget was tightly constricted by the Liberals, responding to these strange and complicated political circumstances unique to Liverpool in the 1970s.

Despite the principle of choice underpinning the Liberal overhaul of public housing, their policies had the adverse effect of reducing choice to just one underfunded alternative. Paradoxically, this undermined the foundations of the entire co-op movement – built on the ethos of co-operability, the active cooperation among members. This is formulated in the Campbell Report, recommending that co-ops be developed only where “it can be clearly established that the tenants really want to take part in a cooperative venture and are not simply anxious to be rehoused” (quote from Campbell Report, cited in Hook, 1977). Yet due to the failure of Liberal policies to overcome the distortions of coalition politics, co-op housing was now almost the only way council tenants of crumbling tenements could get rehoused.

4.3.3 Diluting the radical cooperative revolution?
What had initially started as a radical movement for cooperative dweller control and strategy for fighting council demolition plans had become a watered down part of the mainstream. Ironically, the success of the new-build model had a ‘bandwagon effect’ that created a groundswell for undiscerning co-op development. In response, CDS made sure that potential co-operators were sufficiently motivated:

People used to ring CDS quite a lot and say – especially if they’d seen their friend move into one – ‘I want to form one of these co-op things’, and the
standard line was ‘no you can’t, it’s too hard, go away’, put the phone down virtually; and if they rang back like three times then you thought they were quite serious…But you would actually challenge them in the early days just to see if they had the nous to go away and do this stuff, because the resilience it takes to see it through was incredible! (interview, C6)

Nonetheless, its popularity diluted its original principles of dweller control, reducing co-ops to little more than glorified housing associations, and splintering the movement into fractious camps. On the one side you had the Weller Streets, who were vehemently political and thought of themselves as the pioneers: “to the likes of Billy, Steve, Rory and Kevin the co-op seemed to be a socialist idea: bringing ‘power and control’ that unions wielded in the workplace to bear on people’s housing” (McDonald, 1986: 49). They were a “group that was ‘high on an idea’, the idea of a fight, a mission, a mini-revolution, not merely a way of getting decent housing for themselves” (ibid: 69). Such ambitions were not limited to internal debate but were often publicly stated:

The intention of the Cooperative is that we should eventually become a completely autonomous organisation, responsible for running our own affairs…With the services of a grant-aided worker, we can work towards our goal of establishing a self-sufficient community (Billy Floyd, letter to Minister for Housing of new Conservative government, in McDonald, 1986: 162-3)

Their aspirations for radical self-government distinguished the Weller Streets from most that followed, inflating their sense of righteousness and self-confidence to go it alone. They eventually severed ties with CDS and set up their own independent secondary co-op as “an anti-professional alternative to the likes of CDS” (see figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13: Aims of Weller Streets secondary co-op agency. (source: McDonald, 1986: 186)

1. To encourage co-operative housing
2. To offer mutual support between co-ops and strengthen the movement.
   By;
   a) Offering Weller Streets’ experience to other co-operatives.
   b) Teaching co-operatives how to become self-sufficient.
   c) Providing an alternative style of education with co-op members teaching one another.

Without the professional expertise of CDS, however, the Weller Streets’ secondary experiment failed within a matter of months – partly attributable to their fiercely independent, often arrogant, sometimes violent approach to getting what they wanted (interviews, C1/C6). This brought the Weller Streets into repeated conflict with their professional partners, culminating
in a bitter feud with CDS, whom they had always harboured a sceptical mistrust as an organisation with an “odd mixture of business and idealism”, run by “middle-class student types” and “trendy left-wingers” (resident members quoted in McDonald, 1986: 70-78).

Indeed, CDS did have financial interests in the scheme, asking for 90% of the co-op’s administrative allowances, funded by the Housing Corporation. Yet the organisation relied on such income for their survival as a business, and they had certainly earned their fees. Almost all the administrative work was done by CDS, albeit increasingly entrusted to the co-op committee themselves, but who were initially trained by CDS (interviews, C1/C6). Without CDS, neither the co-op, nor the movement, would have developed. They supported progress from conception, through gestation, birth and early life; overseeing the full arc of the development process. This was important, for the residents “never understood the problem as a whole. They only ever saw it in stages” (McDonald, 1986: 65). Yet despite these debts to their ‘mother’ agency – and the close working relationships cultivated – Weller Streets were quick to sever the umbilical cord, preferring to go it alone with their own independent secondary organisation. The split culminated in the storming of CDS offices to recover all ‘their’ files – provoking a prolonged legal battle (ibid).

Weller Streets promoted their secondary to others at the Liverpool Federation of Housing Co-ops in 1980 – a city-wide member organisation recently-established on the suggestion of CDS – but were regarded as “oddballs, the socialists, the sometimes rather arrogant pioneers” (McDonald, 1986: 209). However, as one of the leading activists recalls,

‘We did meet some good ones’, Peter Tyrell says, ‘Thirlmere and Leta/Claudia – especially Thirlmere: Cummings [their chairman]…he used to come and see me or Billy. Then he’d go back, and they’d done it the way we done it.’ (ibid: 181-2).

What set Weller Streets apart from the rest were their belligerently political motivations, expressed by a committee member as being concerned with:

Mainly the fight, mainly the idea: let’s take them on, let’s see who they are – cause your life had been fucking dominated by people you never knew…Let’s have a go at them (quoted in McDonald, 1986: 207).

Such a fighting spirit earned them a reputation. Weller Streets got drunk on their own story of success, reflected in the common belief that they were the “only real co-op” (ibid: 184). Their aggressive and uncompromising style of campaigning and political lobbying unsurprisingly alienated potential allies:
In November 1980 they invaded a private dinner party hosted by Hugh Cubitt, then chairman of the Housing Corporation...to protest at possible cuts to housing co-operative schemes; climaxing in one of the members sticking their finger into Cubitt’s soup and saying “You won’t eat that will you? It’s contaminated. That’s what our places are: contaminated” (ibid: 183).

Ironically, Weller Streets’ single-minded defence of cooperative principles undermined cooperation with outsiders. Such an obstinate stance lies at the origin of their dramatic fall out with CDS: specifically in their opposition to CDS offering advice to the city council on how to set up local authority co-ops (interviews, C1/C5). Weller Streets’ gripe was not with new co-ops per se – they were all for expanding the movement through their own secondary. Indeed, from 1979,

Paul Lusk had begun to use them to talk to other groups that approached CDS...‘Once they got big...I was very keen we should use the Weller as a demonstration project, the model, the teacher for others’. (McDonald, 1986: 181)

They opposed CDS’s idea of forming co-ops among council tenants, which according to a leading member, was “assisting the Corpy to manage their fucking shite” (quoted in McDonald, 1986: 208). They saw council tenants as less deserving, having not earned their right to form a co-op, and whose “housing need” was less urgent than the need of the Weller Streets members living in clearance” (ibid: 181). Thus a division was cut between, on the one hand, politically principled Weller Streets – joined by close cousins, Hesketh, Thirlmere and Leta-Claudia – and on the other, those that followed in the wake, forming co-ops with council support and funding as a means purely to get better housing.
4.4 Form follows function: ‘utalitarian’ design

Co-op design outcomes reflect these distinctions. Weller Streets design was for ten identical courts of six houses wrapped around a communal landscaped area (see figure 4.14 below);

A series of L-shaped courtyards, very different from all the others [co-ops]...I actually thought almost Japanese really in its logic...each northwest-facing courtyard, in terms of landscaping and management, each cluster was supposed to be responsible for their own courtyard, and then at the back you had the private kind of gardens, individual gardens (interview, C8)

These courtyards were conceived as the replicable cell structure for cooperative self-governance, with management devolved to down to what was thought the optimum spatial unit for everyone to get involved in organising collective life:

Self-management will mostly be organised around the activities of individual courts, with each group of people co-operating amongst themselves. The overseeing and overall control of management and maintenance will remain with our management committee. (letter to rent officer July 1981, from McDonald, 1986: 191)

The cell-like layout of identical courtyard units was the material expression of a uniquely egalitarian political philosophy. One of the leading members explains how “the idea of the design was to make the courts, to make them more intimate, packed away, everyone the same,
no one having more” (ibid: 98). Bill Halsall remembers the internal debates between members, arguing for individual design choices, and the more puritanical committee:

One of the coop members dared to say ‘could people have different coloured baths?’ which was debated round and round and round, and stamped on firmly, on the basis that this was like a bourgeois tendency coming out…to have an avocado bath. So the answer to him at the end was ‘you can have white with a grey ring round it like everybody else!’ (interview, C2).

Such an ideological commitment to egalitarianism produced what some describe as ‘Stalinist’ tendencies (interviews, C2/C5). And locals dreamt up a neologism for the Weller Streets blend of totalitarian utilitarianism: “our ‘utalitarian’ style – a sort of Mersey-propism”, from the Scouse propensity to “invent words on the hoof out of other words” (interview, C2). The co-op leadership were acutely aware of the political sensitivity surrounding co-ops, anticipating the controversy they would kick up during the Militant period, accused of being elitist or exclusive. Seeing as “half the co-op was related to somebody else in the co-op” and “two-thirds of committee members had a relative among the general membership”, there was a concerted effort to “look to be fair. It couldn’t be houses for the boys or the girls” (McDonald, 1986: 98). A ‘utalitarian’ design was intended to ensure that everybody had exactly the same housing, regardless of who they knew, or how much effort they put in, allocated according to need. This principle was taken to its extreme, with uniformity across almost all aspects, from bricks to letterboxes to internal fittings:

Everybody had to have the same share of sunlight…no frills. It’s like what socialist housing might have looked like (interview, C2).

Weller Streets was an anomaly, an imposter, a mutation of the cooperative model towards something more akin to state socialism at the neighbourhood scale. The principle of equality was taken so far as to contradict another key aspect of cooperativism: individual autonomy and choice. Weller Streets was unusual for its persistent insistence on the principles of uniformity and utility. Responding to the opportunity to have different colour bricks for different courts, and different internal fittings for each household, questionnaire surveys revealed “an amazing degree of unanimity” among residents, despite individual choice not costing anymore, or causing any delay (McDonald, 1986: 175). Uniformity was the answer because “uniformity would avoid arguments” (ibid: 160): a key aspect of ‘utalitarianism’. But some members were understandably concerned that “some degree of ‘choice’ ought to be possible, otherwise how would the co-op be different from the Corpy?” (ibid: 104). A
significant component in communities’ motivational matrix was indeed choice over their housing. This not only included choice at the level of the community – to stay together and not be displaced – but also in the hands of the individual, over the design of personal living space. Dweller control is as much about individual self-governance as collective. But these came into tension in the Weller Streets, whose committee did not tolerate much individual expression, leading some members to eventually choose to leave the co-op, and assert that: ‘I believe if you have a row with your neighbour you get evicted. You’re all a big clique’ (McDonald, 1986: 139).

4.4.1 The contradictions of choice: sectarian urbanism and defensible space

Hesketh Street was different (see figure 4.15 below). Residents chose a variety of individualised designs, with a resulting 25 or so different porch designs in a scheme of some 40 houses (interview, C6). It was derided by architectural critics for being “cluttered” and “not particularly outstanding”, incorporating

Many of the vernacular themes popular at the end of the ‘70s…like other ‘landscaped’ schemes of this sort, it blends awkwardly with its urban surroundings and its design is somewhat inappropriate to an urban infill site (Anderson, 1984: 45).

This reflected the co-ops in general. There is a striking incongruity between their political radicalism and the ordinary, conservative, suburban design outcomes. But the same critics also acknowledge that “to be revolutionary doesn’t mean that you have to lose sight of common sense” (Anderson, 1984: 45); the common sense of co-op members was for warm, dry, clean, spacious houses, arranged to promote social interaction among neighbours, where their children could play safely in secluded streets sheltered from encroaching dereliction. Having lived for so long in a state of neglect, amidst decay, dereliction, vandalism, and crime, the co-ops were adamant to enclose themselves off from the city. One of the leading Weller Streets activists explains that they

All wanted to leave them streets; get down here; surround ourselves with a fucking wall and gun-turrets. We’d lived in that shite, we wanted to protect ourselves (McDonald, 1986: 96).

But such extreme fantasies were partly counterbalanced by their architect:

Bill [Halsall] pointed out that ‘as soon as you have a wall, you get people wanting to get over it’. They began to look at ways of making the scheme uninviting to outsiders without a wall: screening with trees, houses not looking directly out on to Miles Street (ibid).
This defensive instinct arose from a strong desire to escape harsh inner-city conditions, combined with aspirations for something better than council housing, something more akin to a wealthy suburban housing estate:

They didn’t want to live in terraced blocks put it that way, cause they associated that with slums. They wanted something detached or semi-detached and that was the nearest we could give ‘em (Billy Floyd quoted in McDonald, 1986: 92).

Having lived in poorly-managed council houses all their lives, the first thing co-op residents would tell their architect is they wanted homes as different from ‘Corpy housing’ as possible (Wates, 1982). Weller Streets initially toyed with the idea of creating a village green as the focal point; their fantasy was the rural idyll of English village life:
Our intention is to build a rural village in the heart of a dilapidated inner city area and rehabilitate a community (Billy Floyd quoted in (McDonald, 1986: 133)

Such anti-urbanism was taken to its extreme by some of community architecture supporters, notably Prince Charles, who advocated turning the derelict sites of “crushed tower blocks” in inner-city Liverpool “back into countryside” (quoted in Wright, 1991: 246). However, due to the physical constraints of their site, requiring a dense design to fit the entire community, Weller Streets took on a more urban quality – of courtyard squares – than most of the co-ops. These were typically cul-de-sacs, “like a sort of wagon train when they stopped for the night”, arranged in a tight, inward-facing circle (interview, C6).

Figure 4.16: site layouts of Merseyside new build co-ops, showing ‘wagon train’ urban design. Leta-Claudia’s snake-like design is third down on the far left column. (Source: MacDonald, 2012)

Leta-Claudia’s curved terraced layout, for instance, is “like a very organic snake”, created by residents asking for more curves when their architect Bill Halsall presented right-angled layouts (interview, C8). At the end of the snake, in the middle of the co-op is “a circle of bungalows for the elderly people and in the middle of the circle there’s a little pyramid, like a
community facility” with flexible communal space and toilet/kitchen amenities for social use by all co-op residents (interview, C8). But without a masterplan connecting these wagon trains at a higher scale, they are “like oases in a desert of dereliction” (Towers, 1995: 230). Indeed, a Weller Streets annual report describes their co-op as an “oasis in the desert” (McDonald, 1986: 108). The overall result is for “mini clusters of garden cities but…disconnected” (interview, C8). What may appear internally connected is cut off from the wider city – a dialectic of simultaneous inward inclusion and outward exclusion (see figure 4.16).

This is not for want of city planners trying to assert their professional expertise. Residents’ desires came into conflict with the professional mores of planners, who feared the creation of isolated, exclusionary ghettos disconnected from the urban fabric, lacking connectivity and permeability. A participant recites a showdown between planners and Thirlmere co-op, whose chairman, Reg Cummings, a generally “quiet, peaceful man”, spoke up against professional aversions to their cul-de-sac design of inward-facing houses:

‘I tell you what mate, you either change your fucking mind right now or I’ll get on that phone…there’s a bus load of people down on the dock road, they’re gonna fucking come in here and sit in this fucking office until you fucking change your mind alright?!’…and the planner said ‘well what do you mean?…Mine is a professional decision’. He said ‘stick your profession, I have to live here and I come from here, and I’m telling you, we’re gonna sit in this office until you change your mind and see it from our perspective!’ (interview, C3)

Ironically, it was planning decisions that had first created the urban conditions against which residents turned inwards – understandably not wanting to “look out onto an empty derelict site”, with “no faith in the council ever rebuilding here” (interview, C3). Shielding themselves from an unpleasant environment, co-ops literally turned their backs on the city, preferring the “security of looking inwards so we can keep an eye on each other” (interview, C3). In being given more power to decide and a voice for the first time, residents were empowered to challenge professional decision-makers and contest their knowledge claims – a rare triumph of lived space over conceived space.
Not only large-scale municipal urban renewal incited cooperative desires for defensible space; religious sectarianism played its part. The historic conflict between Protestants and Catholics produced divisive forms of urban design. Owing to council housing policy allocating on the basis of need alone, many tenements were “mixed Catholic and Protestant, so there were disputes all the time, religious disputes” (interview, C6). Two particular co-ops in the south end, Shorefields and Mill Street had formed out of a group of residents occupying four and five storey walk-up tenements, but split into two along religious lines: Shorefields Protestant; Mill Street Catholic. This produced some interesting results: two separate cul-de-sac developments by two different architects, sharing the same entrance road, but spatially distinct and divided by back garden fences – fixing firmly in space sectarian divisions (see figure 4.17). Yet even in the more celebrated examples of co-op design, problems still persist. Orienting co-op housing around an inward focal point – a ‘community anchor’ or communal area – is great for internal community cohesion, but has the simultaneous effect of enclosing co-ops off from the city, discouraging through-flow, and imposing spatial barriers between surrounding neighbourhoods.
4.5 Summary

By way of conclusion, I can now proffer a preliminary answer to the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. The new-build co-op revolution was triggered in Liverpool in the late 1970s by a unique and complex set of mutually conducive factors, producing extraordinary social innovation in participatory design of first rehab and then new-build cooperative housing. Local housing need was the driving factor – owing to the inability of the local state to resolve a worsening housing crisis – but the space to experiment was opened up politically by co-op promoters, Harold Campbell and Reg Freeson, working at the national level to pass crucial legislation, the 1974 Act, providing all-important funding. A minority Liberal council capitalised on the pioneering work of SNAP to pursue a housing policy centred on rehab delivered by housing associations and co-ops, in turn developed by professional co-op agencies like CDS in creative dialogue with communities. The central role of professionals and the state in the genesis and evolution of the co-op movement demonstrates that social innovation can be a far more complex and multi-agentic process than is suggested by the social innovation literature (Maccallum et al., 2009; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010), which locates social innovation outside the state in the domain of collective action and social movements. In the case of the Liverpool co-ops, however, the state was centrally involved from the outset: providing the crucial legislative framework and funding support for co-ops to flourish as a form of public housing. Likewise, professionals played a key role in not only supporting the development of co-ops and growth of the movement but so too in the original innovation of the new-build model and participatory design techniques themselves. Communities and grassroots groups provided the principal impetus and desire for change – but it was only through their creative interaction with professional and state agencies that social innovation occurred. These findings demonstrate that a more nuanced conceptualisation of the state in the process of social innovation and urban change is required.

Part of the reason why the state was so involved in this instance is the fact that this is a special case of public sector reform, as opposed to civil society stepping in to meet needs unmet by the state. The development of the co-op movement in Liverpool, through the influence of the 1969 and 1974 Housing Acts, the GIA and HAA policy programmes, the restructuring of the Housing Corporation towards supporting the growth of a budding housing association sector – all these developments show how the co-op movement was intimately bound up with the emergence of the ‘shadow state’ (Wolch, 1990) in Britain. This was the very start of the third sector with which we are so familiar today; the start of the modern housing association sector. For a brief moment in time, it seemed possible that John FC Turner’s (1977) model of
‘resourcefulness’ was going to redefine municipal housing in the UK, to produce public sector housing mark II. In this direction, we see the development of a secondary support infrastructure in the roles played by CDS and MIH, among others, which mobilised and coordinated public resources from the national level down to communities at the local, who were in turn empowered to make most of the management decisions affecting their housing, including its design and development. Taken together, the common ownership co-op model coupled with the participatory planning techniques and design democracy of the new-build development process gave residents an unprecedented level of control over both the procedural decision-making process and over the economic assets themselves. In short – articulated in the conceptual terms offered up by Lefebvre’s Right to the City (Purcell, 2002) – the Weller Way, offered some residents of Liverpool’s inner-city neighbourhoods the opportunity to exercise, more fully than ever before, their right to participate in decision-making over the use or management of key resources, specifically land and housing, as well as the right to appropriate the benefits of those resources. Within its politically circumscribed remit, the co-op movement did a great deal to ameliorate the worst effects of socio-spatial deprivation in 1970s Liverpool.

Lefebvre’s third value in the three-pronged Right to the City, the right to difference was not, however, enabled to anywhere near the same degree. The vanguard co-ops, particularly the Weller Streets with their ‘utulitarianism’, set strict limits on individual dweller control if it were seen to impinge in any way on collective values of egalitarianism and community cohesion. The ability to express individual autonomy and identity were often strictly delimited by co-ops, whose social composition was anyway relatively homogenous and internally consistent – generally white, working class and either unanimously Protestant or Catholic. This social class character of the 1970s co-ops reflects the class structure and the kind of working class organisation of the post-war period associated with the development of urban social movements, identified by Castells (1977) as emerging in what collective action theorists call the second cycle of contention (Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978). Communities had inherited a militant and anti-authoritarian ‘repertoire of contention’ from the trade union movement, with which many of their male members were associated, and from the anarcho-syndicalist heritage of the docks. Although men largely led the political campaigns, it was women who played the critical part in organising and galvanising support among the rest of the community. It was the strength of community organisation in Liverpool at the time which drove the growth of co-ops, assisted by professional networks. In later chapters, we will see how this changes, with the roles almost reversing: CLT campaigns in the third cycle of contention being driven by
activists and professionals – conscience constituents – rather than beneficiary constituent residents.

Despite strong community organisation, deeper social divides within the co-ops emerged between the leadership – pursuing campaigns out of political anger with council policy and for ideological ends – and the majority, who mostly just wanted a new house. These rifts within mirrored divisions between co-ops: between those pursuing a radical agenda of collective self-government, and those more opportunistic groups simply out to meet housing needs. Such divisions reflected the problematic way in which co-op housing had been opportunistically promoted in Liverpool by the Liberal Party; weaknesses which the incoming Militant Tendency-dominated Labour council would exploit with a vengeance. They objected to co-ops on the grounds of their place-based exclusivity, partiality and elitism; qualities they saw as anathema to the entire ethos and social function of public housing.

Indeed, such objections mirror those arguments made against the commons in critical urbanism: that ‘housing commons’ are themselves forms of enclosure, albeit collective ones, entailing direct and intensive participation, which necessarily means excluding others from their benefits – qualities difficult to marry with the concept of universal public provision (Blomley, 2008; Harvey, 2012). Whilst the new-build co-op model produced so many benefits for those residents lucky enough to be a part of it, it also required painstaking efforts and considerable investment of time and resources – demands which made it difficult for the minority Liberal council, constrained by problematic political circumstances during the ‘lost decade’, to support new co-ops to a significant degree such that even a majority could benefit. Without this political and financial support, the co-op movement failed to grow beyond a marginal sector for a privileged minority. But what gave these fortunate few residents the right to reap the rewards of new co-op housing when most other council tenants had to put up with deteriorating conditions? Was it their ability and opportunity to proactively organise as a community and vocally express demands for better housing to the right organisation at the right time, coupled with the willingness and capacity to carry a campaign through to the bitter end? Should adequate shelter not be a civic right granted to everyone regardless of their inclination to be entrepreneurial, to ‘do it themselves’? These were precisely the questions the Labour Party, led by certain key figures associated with the Militant Tendency, were asking when elected to the council in 1983, largely on the back of promises to fix the housing crisis, left to spiral out of control through the 1970s. The following chapter explores this battle of ideas, and the concrete consequences for the co-op movement.
5. Militant Municipalisation and the Eldonians

Within only a few years of the Weller Streets’ completion, the new-build cooperative revolution was cut short by political events. The first major change came in 1983, when Labour were elected to city council, led by the Militant Tendency who pursued a municipal-socialist strategy of council house-building. For highly political reasons bound up with their ideological opposition to cooperative housing, and their conflictual relationship with the Liberal Party, the Militant-led council not only abandoned but also actively reversed the Liberals’ pro co-op policies, through a programme of ‘municipalisation’, whereby gestating co-ops were either aborted or taken into municipal ownership. This climate of antagonism galvanised two co-ops, the Eldonians and Langrove, still going strong today. These campaigns mark a pivotal turning point away from using co-op housing against displacement and for better housing conditions, towards more expansive visions for local economic development. These place-based community-led development projects demonstrate how co-ops can be used in a wider strategy of neighbourhood renewal – providing a platform for the CLTs emerging in Liverpool today. Their stories are told in the following chapter; concluding with reasons for the decline of the cooperative movement in Liverpool, pivoting around the second critical turning point of the 1980s, the 1988 Housing Act.
5.1 A Militant response

As the preceding chapter illustrated, Liverpool’s housing conditions were particularly poor by the end of the 1970s. This concern with housing helped secure the election victory of the Militant Tendency-controlled Labour administration in May 1983 (Taafe and Mulhearn, 1988). The Militant Tendency was a far left entryist group within the national Labour Party, embodying a peculiar strain of hard-line socialism: a “Trotskyist organisation operating semi-clandestinely within the Party, which after mass expulsions now enjoys occasional moderate electoral success in Preston or Coventry as the Socialist Party” (Hatherley, 2011: 334). In Liverpool of the 1970s, Militant were able to inspire and mobilise large sections of the left-leaning networks, who had become disillusioned with the Labour Party with historical connections with the Labour Right owing to the Catholic traditions in the city (Frost and North, 2013). For some Labour councillors, such as Peter Kilfoyle (2000: 39) the Militant Tendency offered a “clear and simple analysis of the political condition, together with soundbite solutions, which struck a chord with the young, the idealistic and the naïve”; for others, they simply captured the mood of the time, particularly among the young Left, that the Labour Party had forgotten its roots as the party of working people and needed to be reformed from the inside (Frost and North, 2013: 44). Through this appeal, Militant built support in the District Labour Party (DLP), which in turn exercised its power in selecting council candidates and developing the policies that would then be implemented by councillors once in office. By using the DLP as a conduit to power, Militant intended to short-circuit the ‘boss’ politics and personal favours which secured power for many ward-elected councillors; but this meant Militant put forward DLP delegates rather elected representatives as council candidates, which critics saw as bypassing the democratic process (Kilfoyle, 2000). Whatever the take, the strategy worked: by 1978, there were 7 Militant-supporting councillors on the council, and by the early 1980s, the Liberals were campaigning against what they saw as a poisonous infiltration of Marxists to the Labour Party (Frost and North, 2013).

Militant were excellent at mobilising the trade union movement and the broader Left into a Labour group which shared broad political priorities – anti-cuts, anti-rent rises, pro-public spending on schools, housing and public services. Labour went into the local election of 1983 with a manifesto that promised no job losses or council tax rises – which proved very popular among voters, fed up with worsening economic conditions. The promise of investment in housing, jobs and services was appealing after a decade of underinvestment in public services and decline in employment by a third over the same period (Frost and North, 2013). By 1983
unemployment was 24%, double the national average (Parkinson, 1985a). A Liberal councillor, Chair of Housing at the time, recalls how

We’d lost 60,000 jobs in Liverpool, across Merseyside, in those first Thatcher years…Labour had this massive surge…it was a bit of a revolution really (interview, P2)

Militant’s famous political strapline – ‘no cuts in jobs and services’ – was a simple and powerful promise (see figure 5.1 below) (interview, A3). A leading co-op activist, who fought against Militant policies before becoming a Labour councillor herself, explains the powerful impact of the Militant message:

People can gather around very quickly…you get people on the streets, you get people energised, you get people politicised, you get people out there, you control that agenda, you move it forward (interview, A3).

In May 1983, Labour won the local election, securing an unprecedented 46% of the vote (Wainwright, 1987). Only 9 of the 51 Labour councillors elected in May 1983 supported Militant, yet they exercised extraordinary power over the council’s policies for the five years they remained in effective control (Frost and North, 2013)

Figure 5.1: ‘Building houses, creating jobs’ poster. (source: Sinclair, 2014).
Following election, the council announced a budget with a £30 million deficit, to pay for their ambitious municipal-socialist programme of rebuilding the economy and environment. A large component of the budget was additional government funding for the appalling housing situation, which the council argued was a unique problem and under-recognised by government, which had cut housing spending from £61 to £38 million since 1979; part of the £270 million stolen from the council by government (Frost and North, 2013: 62). Central government contributions to the council budget had fallen from 62% in 1980 to just 44% in 1983 due to a recalculation of the block grant based upon previous expenditure, which had been lower than other major city councils (Wainwright, 1987: 127). Labour accused the Liberals of running down the budget and setting (council tax) rates intentionally low in order to please potential Liberal voters (Kilfoyle, 2000). In order to implement the URS, the council would either have to raise the rates by 170% – and this was 60% just to maintain existing services – or run a deficit budget, which would bring them into confrontation with the government. The Militant-led council not only pursued the latter but argued that this was owed anyway, that £270 million had been stolen from Liverpool by the government in response to Liberal under-spending (Wainwright, 1987). The resulting battle with central government has been well documented elsewhere (see: Frost and North, 2013; Parkinson, 1985), but one salient consequence is that it created an enemy in the Thatcher government, which then sought to bypass local authority control to fund Liverpool’s regeneration via centrally-directed measures, such as the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC), supporting alternative schemes that were either side-lined or outright opposed by Militant.

A central policy of the new Militant-led council was a radical programme of housing renewal, the Urban Regeneration Strategy (URS), which according to prominent Militants Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhern (1988: 158) in their retrospective account, “represented a complete rupture with all previous housing schemes in Liverpool” The URS was a bold and ambitious £350million programme of council house-building, centred on 17 Priority Areas, with a target of 1,000 new homes built per year up to 1988: a remarkable achievement for a time when, nationally, municipal housebuilding had come to a standstill (Cowan et al., 1988). The new homes were to be simple suburban semi-detached two-storey houses with gardens, to replace over 5,000 dilapidated tenements and tower blocks; whilst a total target of 15,000 existing council houses were to be dealt with through conversion, improvement and repair (Grosskurth, 1985b). However, housing was only one, albeit central, component of the URS, which adopted a ‘Total Approach’ to regeneration, including the provision of new leisure centres, environmental improvements, schools, parks and other public infrastructures.
Despite highly critical commentary in the voluntary housing press (Cowan, 1986; Cowan et al., 1988; Grosskurth, 1985; Mars, 1987), the URS was undeniably popular among Liverpool residents, especially Liverpool’s large council tenant population. Workers too – including some 15,000 unemployed construction workers – were generally very supportive of the URS, which promised new homes as well as jobs for those who would build, maintain and manage them (Grosskurth, 1985b). However, the URS was bad news for the growing co-op movement in Liverpool – for its apparent ideological incompatibility with cooperative housing.

Rightly or wrongly, Militant associated co-ops with the privatisation of public housing. They accused the Liberals of diverting public funds into a privatised sector of housing provision which was simply incapable of addressing the structural issues facing the city. In contrast to the huge scale of the problem – with over 10,000 people on waiting lists needing to be housed – the capacity of the marginal co-op movement was simply inadequate, with estimates ranging from around 800 families housed by co-ops (Wates, 1985b) to around 2,000 homes built in the six years up to 1985 (Grosskurth, 1985). Even staunch supporters, such as Bill Halsall, the pioneering architect of the Weller Streets and Eldonians, nonetheless recognises that

The Liberals’ housing policy was ‘if you want a new house, form a co-op’. So they kind of forced it…and when it all blew up in 1983 one of the things that the Militants were saying was ‘your housing policy is elitist’, because the people who formed…a co-op get the new houses, the people who aren’t in co-ops don’t get a new house – and that was actually true, they had a point (interview, C2).

Indeed, Militants’ more deeply held ideological opposition to co-ops – that they are an elitist, exclusionary and nepotistic form of housing – was in some respects well-founded. Co-ops were not open to new members on the basis of need alone, and so in this respect fell short of the socialist ideal of universality. The pre-allocations process was a fundamental part of co-op development, and required that residents were selected before design or construction commenced, so that they were able to be centrally involved in the process of creating their own homes – a guarantee of dweller control (interviews, A3/C1/C2/C6/H1). This gave legitimacy to the lever by which close-knit communities ensured only their own kind would be included within the resulting co-ops, if not their friends and neighbours then perhaps those sharing similar ethnic, religious and cultural identities. Such stark self-selection is visible in the sharply divided yet adjoining Mill Street and Shorefields Co-ops, each exclusively catering for Catholic and Protestant residents respectively. Yet there was also a co-op actually called
‘Friends and Neighbours’ – “and they were friends and neighbours” (interview, C6). Even those supportive of co-ops, such as this co-op development manager, nonetheless acknowledge that “the reasons Militant – and this is actually quite justifiable I think – had a problem with it was you formed it from your mates” (interview, C6). Max Steinberg, Housing Corporation regional director and promoter of co-ops at the time, admits that “we began to wonder as years went by, was this causing allocation policies to be controlled in a paternalistic way – was it creating little enclaves?” (interview, Steinberg). Despite the fact that all co-op members were sourced from poor working class communities, with many in severe housing need, the co-ops were, if not elitist, somewhat nepotistic.

Whilst Militant certainly had a point about some of the shortcomings of co-op housing, their reaction against the movement went way beyond this: assuming co-ops were incompatible with other forms of public housing; and conflating the model’s efficacy with its ideological associations with the Liberal’s approach to housing policy. Militant animosity to co-ops as a form of elitist and exclusionary public housing, diverting resources away from universal municipal provision, is made starkly explicit in a District Labour Party (DLP) policy statement from 1984 (figure 5.2)

Figure 5.2: DLP policy statement from 1984 Source: (Lusk, 1998: 161)

“THE CO-OP ISSUE

The co-op issue has been the most controversial one as far as housing is concerned. The question to be asked is:

a) Did co-ops in Liverpool start as a spontaneous desire by people for an alternative form of tenure which is compatible with municipal housing, or,

b) Were co-ops part of a deliberate and calculated attack on municipal housing by the Tory Party nationally, aided and abetted by the local Liberal/Tory alliance?

The Housing Sub Committee holds the view that the latter is the answer to the question. That is not to say that individual families were of that mind but that was clearly government’s, both local and national, intention. There is also little doubt that the Housing Associations and leading advocates involved in the issue knew full well the consequences on public housing of the policies being pursued. The co-ops which have been part of the controversy were all formed since 1979.”

Such a strong position discloses Militants’ deeper ideological suspicion of cooperatives as a Tory conspiracy, rather than as a pragmatic form of democratic socialism with which they are
traditionally associated (Birchall, 1988). Writing in his account of the period, co-op promoter, Paul Lusk (1998: 162) makes the strong claim that the DLP’s “opposition to co-ops could only be justified by a paranoid conspiracy theory of Stalinist intensity”. Rather than see co-ops as the natural ally of socialism – or a compatible and complementary sector of public housing, catering to a minority desiring more dweller control and choice – Militant associated the movement with the failings of the Liberal administration, as an integral part of a Tory plot; holding it accountable as the “gravedigger of municipal housing” (Cowan, 1986).

The Liberals, of course, saw it differently. There is no evidence that co-op membership persuaded people to vote for the Liberals, who “gained nothing politically by building co-ops in inner-city wards for loyal socialists” (Lusk, 1998: 177). If anything, co-ops strengthened the socialist leanings of what were traditional working class Labour voters, and politicised members into more active involvement in the Labour Party – evident by the surprising number of co-op members who went on to become Labour councillors and leading lights in a later reformed DLP (interviews, C1/C5/C6/A2/A3). Moreover, Frank Carroll from Prince Albert Gardens has been a regular Communist Party council candidate (Lusk, 1998). Those professionals promoting co-ops were also affiliated with socialist politics: several CDS staff were members of the Communist Party (interview, C5). George Howarth, former Labour councillor and now Labour MP for Knowsley, was responsible for seeding the idea of co-ops into Kirkby whilst he worked for CDS in the early 1980s (interview, A2). Whilst the Liverpool co-operators saw co-ops as the cell form of a socialist society in the tradition of mutualism and libertarian socialism – celebrating the collective self-sufficiency, dignity and autonomy of working class culture – the Militant view, a more extreme variant of the traditional Labour perspective, saw co-ops as an alternative middle-class lifestyle choice, less about need than want, and therefore incompatible with the socialist agenda of ensuring needs are met through universal provision of all public services.

Despite Militant conspiracy claims, there was no explicit link between the cooperative movement and the Liberal Party, other than a vague ideological belief in choice and autonomy. The principal supporters were driven more by disinterested political principles than by electoral interests. Chris Davies, Chair of Housing during the new-build co-op revolution, and now an MEP for Northwest England, explains how

there was an upsurge of hatred for Liberals...Labour had very cleverly portrayed us as the Liberal-Tory alliance, and it was quite true that we were dependent on Tory votes because we couldn't get any votes at all...even for sort of socialist measures...so it was the Lib-Con Alliance, only there was
no alliance, it was always just…every vote was see which way the cookie crumbles (interview)

Davies describes a site visit of the Liverpool co-ops by Labour councillors from Glasgow – the other notable leading city council of the era pioneering cooperative housing development – who were

horrified at their Liverpool counterparts’ attitude. They were saying ‘but co-operatives are a good thing, you know it’s socialism, it’s proper socialism, it’s people in charge…it doesn’t have to be all this top down stuff.’ But the Militants were having none of it (interview)

Powerful players in the Militant-led council had diverse motivations for their stance against co-ops: split between socialist ideological convictions, loyalty to their constituency and long-term political self-interest. On the latter end of the scale, there was Derek Hatton, the Deputy Leader of the council – whose Leader, John Hamilton, was Labour but not Militant – and in many ways the public face of the Militant Tendency, as the most prominent and outspoken member. At the other end, was Tony Byrne, the principal architect of URS, but avowedly ‘non-Militant’, whose policy ideas gained support in the DLP and who later became Chair of the council’s powerful Housing and Finance Committees (Meegan, 1990). Byrne famously stated his position in a local newspaper interview:

I am a Socialist. I believe in public ownership, control and accountability for housing through the elected council. It is the local authority who must satisfy the needs of the working class. Working-class organisation in this city lies in the Labour Party and the unions, and not in housing associations (quoted in McDonald, 1986: 211)

The differences between Byrne and Hatton are neatly captured by a co-op activist and later Labour councillor:

Tony Byrne particularly very very bright guy, very sharp, took no prisoners, just went for it, Exocet missiles kind of stuff. Apparently he was going to be a Jesuit priest at one stage and then stepped back from that – very very principled. He was the one guy that I would say didn’t change, so you know, he’d always turn up in a trackie and his plassie bag to carry his papers in, he wouldn’t go a Hatton route of getting smart and booted, and using the money and kudos and status and all of that – so Byrne was quite scary. So he had this vision and the council had this vision of municipal housing, getting that back on the agenda, they would provide for the people, so you know false consciousness of the working class and all of that stuff. (interview, A3)
This fundamentalist view of socialism, in which power is firmly invested in the centralised state – a representative ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, elected by the people, for the people, but without their further input or participation – is, as Byrne makes clear, strictly opposed to all forms of decentralised public provision through housing associations, however popular, democratic and free from capitalist relations they may prove to be. Byrne’s fundamentalist belief in the universalist socialist state – that people have a right to a decent home regardless of political participation or collective engagement – rested on a concomitant suspicion of community control as petit bourgeois forms of exclusion and elitism.

5.1.1 (Policy) design disadvantagement?

Like the Militant-dominated council at large, Tony Byrne believed their ability to influence the private sector was limited, partly due to ideological opposition to capitalism, which meant their power lay in harnessing the public sector for socioeconomic recovery, stating:

I can’t do anything to locate a new factory in Speke or anywhere else, but what we can do is to deal with unemployment, and the environment and living conditions within the limits of our capabilities (quoted in Meegan, 1990: 94)

For Byrne, this could be delivered through large-scale municipal house-building, by providing jobs and decent homes for all and improving the urban environment in the process. But in promoting municipal housing as a panacea to urban ills, Byrne became seduced by a form of design determinism that sat awkwardly next to socialist beliefs in controlling the material means of production. The URS rationale was to target 17, later extended to 22, Priority Areas of modernist ‘hard-to-let’ flats and tenements built 1930s-70s, which had become unpopular sites of crime, vandalism, squalor and dereliction (Taafe and Mulhearn, 1988). Byrne’s assessment of council house designs revealed “one bright spot” of “problem-free” semi-detached housing built in the inter-war period, and concluded that this was the pinnacle of British council housing design; this “insight was the germ of the URS housing programme” (Mars, 1987: 26).

At around the same time, the geographer Alice Coleman was popularising her ideas on the ‘design disadvantagement’ of modernist council housing estates, which she had adapted from Oscar Newman’s theory of defensible space in North America (Jacobs and Lees, 2013). In her book, Utopia on Trial, she recommended that ‘corrective measures’ should modify the worst features of existing council blocks; and that semi-detached houses with front and back gardens, territorially bounded by walls or fences, should be built instead of flats (Coleman, 1985). These ideas were taken up by Thatcher’s government, informing the Right to Buy and
estate improvement policies, and finding resonance with the privatisation of council estates and the responsibilisation of tenants through ownership (Jacobs and Lees, 2013). Ironically, the Prince of Wales was also very impressed and met with Coleman, incorporating some of her ideas into his advocacy of community architecture, which was one of the ideological wellsprings of the new co-op movement and participatory design process (Wates and Knevitt, 1987). Indeed, the Liverpool co-ops adopt some defensible space principles in their design, especially in the wagon circle enclosures, overlooked gardens and external boundary fencing.

In a counterintuitive convergence with Militant policies, the co-ops also resembled

really good defensible space principles: so you’ve got loads of overlooking, you’ve got shared surfaces…you’ve got good strong boundaries at the back, you’ve got very little permeability through the site, they’ve got all those aspects of defensible space, so from Alice’s point of view that’s good (interview, C6)

Despite the clear influence of Coleman’s ideas on Militant’s most despised ideological opponents – Thatcherism and cooperativism – Byrne had come to the same conclusions, and phoned Coleman to speak with her, inviting her up to Liverpool on a site visit (Mars, 1987). In a strange twist, Coleman gave her seal of approval to Militant housing policy, quoted by the Liverpool Daily Post newspaper in 1985 saying that “Liverpool has got it right”, which leading Militant members are proud to report: “she completely concurred with the main thrust of the URS and of the council’s conviction that the majority of people preferred to live in traditional houses” (Taaffe & Mulhearn, 1988: 159). The URS development principles that she praised were published as new guidelines (Grosskurth, 1985) (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: URS development guidelines, published summer 1984 (quoted in Lusk, 1998: 157).

Only houses and bungalows, semi-detached where possible, are to be built according to the following conditions:

- “generally conventional with through routes rather than cul-de-sacs”
- “no clusters” and “short streets” with “dwellings to face roads”
- “conventional system of carriage” and pavement with “no shared surfaces”
- “solely private gardens and pavements” for external spaces with “no common areas; no play spaces”
Militant believed they were giving the people what they truly wanted; and in many respects they had accurately captured the mood of many tenants, alienated by dysfunctional and decaying council flats (see figure 5.4 below). In his architectural review of Liverpool, Owen Hatherley (2011: 335-8) concurs, but points to “bizarre” effects on Liverpool’s impressive urban landscape:

They built the sort of story book look of what a house was supposed to look like, in a way entirely wrong for a hundred yards from here…It’s not dignified for the city centre to mimic the ‘burbs. It leads to depressing juxtapositions…the scale is preposterous, with the houses seeming to desperately want to be somewhere less dramatic…it becomes a tragicomedy.

Figure 5.4: URS-built ‘Hatton houses’ juxtaposed against Liverpool’s urban core: with the Anglican Cathedral of Liverpool 8 looming large (top left) and the Catholic Cathedral visible (bottom left); suburban houses overshadowed by Radio City tower (top right); bungalows directly adjacent to citycentre cranes (bottom right) (source: author’s own, 2015).

Owing to fiscal constraints on the URS from the ongoing struggle to find financial sources amidst the budget battle, the housing was often of a lower design quality than the council
housing it replaced (Lusk, 1998) – nicknamed ‘Hatton houses’ “because they were directly controlled by Derek Hatton” (interview C7). The HAG-funded co-ops were in fact the last form of public sector housing to benefit from Parker Morris standards, and so remained more generous and liveable than Hatton houses, which have been described as “stupid little doll’s houses”, often not big enough for new tenants to fit the furniture from their old house (Kilfoyle, 2000: 91).

Despite definite gains made in creating an extra 10,000 jobs in the building industry, the council’s rather contradictory political partnership with private building companies had adverse consequences:

They did deals with Wimpey’s where the quality was just crap…they had very high voids because they had real maintenance problems in those properties that they’d built that were supposed to be better…Terribly designed housing is no better than terribly designed flats…you have to manage and maintain them in the right way (interview, C6)

Byrne’s ‘monomania’ for housing – reflected in the stringent URS design prescriptions – was found guilty of spatial determinism by critics: CDS Chief Exec, Catherine Meredith, accused Byrne of a “megalomaniac belief in housing type”, for failing to recognise the importance of dweller control in the management and maintenance of housing (quoted in Mars, 1987: 27). The Coleman/Byrne ‘design modification’ approach worked on the assumption that people wanted semi-detached Hatton houses, overseeing the fact that working class co-op tenants had opted for terraces, enclosed courtyards, cul-de-sacs and communal features in the participatory design process. In many ways, the URS made the same mistake as the post-war modernist council designs it critiqued: a top-down housing-led focus on form over function: over any consideration of tenant participation in housing design, management or ownership; amounting to a kind of commodity fetishism. Supposedly alienating high-rise flats and council estates may have been replaced by more popular, human-scale traditional houses, but the distant paternalistic bureaucratic structure remained unmoved.

5.1.2 The spectre of municipalisation

Militant came to power with a manifesto promise to permit co-ops so long as they did not divert resources from the URS (Grosskurth, 1985b). In practice, however, Militant pursued an aggressive campaign against co-ops, going so far as to actively move URS Priority Area boundaries to include a block of flats they had initially agreed to transfer to local residents to renovate as a co-op, so as to build new council houses instead (Lusk, 1998). Quickly after the
election, the council decided to place a moratorium on all further funding of co-ops and take into municipal control – *municipalise* – those already started. Although ideological in origin, some see the decision as part of a pragmatic strategy to deliver the URS:

The deal was: the council wanted numbers. Militants wanted to be able to say that ‘we built 5000 houses over three years’, and the co-ops would just be added onto that total; they became part of building council houses (interview, C2)

However, leading Militants Taafe and Mulhearn (1988: 161) explain that “to have given housing co-ops the £6.5 million being demanded would have meant severely cutting the council’s housebuilding programme”. The council was under great pressure to deliver its promised URS plans with diminishing budgetary allocations and from hard-found funds, and so diverting scarce resources away from the main priority areas and towards what its socialist leaders saw as petit bourgeois elitist housing was politically untenable.

What did this mean for the co-ops? If a co-op had already signed a contractual commitment with the council to acquire the land, then it was left to complete the scheme under cooperative ownership. Six HAG-funded co-ops – including the MIH co-ops in the north end, Leta-Claudia and Thirlmere – were safe, building 170s homes in total (Lusk, 1998). However, for those already started on design work but yet to exchange contracts, this meant municipalisation (see figure 5.5 below). At least eight co-ops were affected: six small CDS co-ops in the south, totalling 220 dwellings; a new LHT co-op at Gerrard Gardens in Vauxhall, with over 100; and the Eldonians’ project at Portland Gardens, also over 100 (Lusk, 1998). A few co-ops were shielded by being built on non-council-owned, notably MDC land – but the standard development model utilised council land. Part of the problem was that the co-ops could not exchange contracts until formal approval of the outline design proposals had been granted by the DoE (Lusk, 1998). However, there were other reasons why so many had yet to sign contracts, which with hindsight, as this housing association director and ex-council officer reflects, was

Probably a mistake. The idea was that the land was owned by the city, the finance was coming through the city to do the development, and...the co-op would buy the units back at the end, when they were completed....And the reason why that was done was to save everyone the VAT. Because the co-ops weren’t VAT registered – they were too small to be VAT registered – the local authority didn’t charge VAT on development of houses, so it was getting done the most economic way. But it still meant that the council owned the land and they were paying for the development initially; which is why in '83...the initial co-ops that we'd started were...able to be
municipalised because the council owned the land...were putting the money in. The Militants who took over were not interested in selling them off to the communities (interview, C4)

What had been a clever strength of the new-build model, exploiting a loophole in the tax system to improve economic viability, was exposed as a fatal flaw, vulnerable to the whims of electoral politics. With legal power in the hands of the council, the Militants were able to take full control of the eight co-ops without contracts. Their chosen architect would be kept on by the council but CDS and MIH would receive no compensation for their work, and it was unclear whether Militant would allow co-ops to proceed as designed with the original tenants. The URS design guidelines meant that all new developments had to accord with standardised through-road semi-detached housing layouts, foreclosing all possibility of cooperative designs that incorporated communal spaces or courtyards (Lusk, 1998). The loss of central communal play spaces, gardens, and community centres – the heart of cooperative designs – was particularly problematic for the successful functioning of co-ops unlucky enough to be caught up in municipalisation.

This galvanised some groups, such as the Eldonians, into fierce political action, fighting for something more than just a housing cooperative. The Merseyside Federation of Housing Cooperatives organised public demonstrations in 1984, with over a thousand co-operators marching from the heartland of co-ops in the Dingle to the town hall in the city centre, along with various prominent political allies, such as the then Liberal Chair of Housing, Richard Kemp (interview). The public campaign drew on media sympathy, and supportive commentary in the Architects’ Journal and Shelter’s ROOF magazine (Cowan et al., 1988; Cowan, 1986; Grosskurth, 1985; Mars, 1987; Wates, 1985). An open letter to Tony Byrne pleaded for greater concessions towards “principles of tenant control”, and was signed by four of the municipalised co-ops (quoted in Lusk, 1998: 156). Others pursued successful legal appeals and managed to stay in the homes they had helped design, but now as council tenants without taking collective action for a co-op any further. Some co-ops were able to use arms-length planning instruments controlled by central government to bypass council opposition. CDS negotiated a site for two co-ops in the south end, Mill Street and Shorefields, from the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC) just before municipalisation hit. CDS also managed to secure MDC payment of remediation costs of what was contaminated land near the docks (interview, C6) Being on MDC land, these and several smaller co-ops were safe. Using this tactic, the Eldonians were able to bypass council opposition: a unique struggle against adversity which will be analysed in detail below.
Figure 5.5: Map of all new-build co-ops in Liverpool and Knowsley by 1987, showing the municipalised co-ops. Source: (CDS, 1987)
5.2 Exporting the co-op movement to Kirkby

Except in such rare cases of resistance, the Militants brought the cooperative movement to a standstill in Liverpool – ironically at a time when they received unprecedented policy support nationally. However, outside Militant jurisdiction, prospects were different. Knowsley, a neighbouring Metropolitan Borough Council within Merseyside, was composed mainly of overspill outer estates from Liverpool with new towns such as Kirkby, built during post-war urban renewal to house those displaced by inner-city slum clearances (Meegan, 1990). Knowsley residents still had personal and familial connections to the neighbourhoods in which the co-ops were springing up, and so just as residents were exported out, so too was the co-op idea: eventually taking seed as the second generation of new-build co-ops. Knowsley MBC was a non-Militant Labour administration with links into the co-op movement, perhaps the most pivotal of which being George Howarth, a Labour councillor and Chair of Knowsley’s Housing Committee when he joined CDS as a co-op development officer (interview). He talks of the unusual political partnership between Knowsley’s Labour council and Liverpool’s Liberal council against the Militants of their own party. In the early 1980s, Knowsley was likewise dealing with an oversupply of unpopular hard-to-let flats, and had a strategy to clear some of the three-storey walk-up flats and top-down some of the maisonettes, essentially knocking storeys off to create two-storey houses. CDS had begun working with some of the tenants being re-housed, and George Howarth saw similar opportunities here as in Liverpool’s tenements. He began a more proactive approach of dropping CDS leaflets through flats, entitled ‘design your own homes’ in an attempt to mobilise co-op groups (interview A2/C5).

Much of the initial interest for co-ops in Kirkby was drummed up through neighbourly pressure, despite there being far less established community ties or collective neighbourhood identities in Knowsley due to the shorter history but also the nature of the urban environment, lacking the convivial density of the terraces or the 1930s tenements (interview, A2). For the first Kirkby co-op, Southdene, it was more a case of proactively recruiting co-op members from across Kirkby, scattered in isolated blocks, than reacting as a pre-existing community wanting to stay together. The remaining members were hand-picked from high rise flats, families and elderly residents who wanted a garden, to form a total of 15 – rising to 17 when the funding was secured and the co-op decided to build additional bungalows for two elderly people to create a more balanced community out of the mainly young families. This reflected the general trend in Kirkby for far smaller co-ops than in Liverpool.
This mobilisation was facilitated by CDS armed with pictures of the first new-build co-ops such as Weller Streets (interview, A2/C5). The principal proponents of the Kirkby movement, however, were young single mothers, who often felt isolated in the flats and wanted something better for their children (interview, A2). Max Steinberg, regional director of the Housing Corporation at the time, and life-long co-op supporter, describes how

So many of the housing cooperatives I dealt with in Kirkby...were being promoted by, negotiated through the requirements of the Housing Corporation, by women, who were often their leaders. [They became] very powerful figures who wanted to see improvements in their neighbourhood....very much the sort of dominant household figure regarding the future of the households in the area (interview).

The Kirkby co-ops shared this characteristic with the south end Liverpool co-ops, such as the Weller Streets – dominated by women in their everyday practices – but were different in that Kirkby women were the outward leaders and figureheads of the co-ops too. Female empowerment was thus a major feature of the Kirkby co-ops. Women like Jackie Harris, a founding member of Southdene, were suddenly thrown into running campaigns, mobilising their communities, and lobbying the authorities for support – a stepping stone into successful political careers. Jackie is now a Labour councillor for Knowsley, leading on Crime and Disorder for the council, and involved in numerous community initiatives. Her experience as the leading co-op proponent took her around the country as a consultant and lobbyist, speaking at political party and housing conferences. Jackie often travelled to London to lobby the Housing Corporation to fund further co-ops, notably the Northward co-op, in Kirkby’s north side. There are several other examples of female political empowerment: the leader of the Northwood co-op, Maureen, stood against Jackie as an independent candidate in the 1993 local by-election, mobilising the Northwood co-ops to campaign and vote against Jackie's Southwood co-ops, when Jackie first got elected as a Labour councillor (interview, A2).

The empowering effect of co-ops was not limited to formal politics. When Southdene was formally registered in 1983, all 17 members were unemployed, but by the time the houses were built – tenants moving in by 1987 – around 90% were employed, seen to be the direct result of the training and skills learned in co-op development (interview, A2). Many of the single mothers and families were very young when they first started, around 21-22 years old, and the co-op development process proved invaluable for their own personal development, as well as an inadvertent educational experience for their children, who were often involved in the design and decoration of campaign materials and later the houses themselves; and learned how
to “respect their elders” and the environment through close community contact with some of the retired co-op members (interview, A2).

By this point, co-ops had begun to take over from CDS the role of organising the process of education, training and knowledge transfer. First, the Kirkby co-ops would go on site visits to the more established Liverpool new-builds to learn from the pioneers: to speak “to them about the early stages, how they got where they were…designing the co-ops…campaigning – they did give you a lot of guidance” (interview, A2). Second, the Liverpool Federation of Housing Cooperatives was expanded into the Merseyside Federation in 1984, by co-ops to include Kirkby. Each co-op would send representatives to monthly meetings to share experiences, trade knowledge, develop best practice, build solidarity in a difficult economic period, and socialise with fellow co-operators; it became

The meeting place where you got your better ideas...as a group of co-ops, our Federation, that was where we discussed the political side: of how we get funding, where we go, if we had to go to London, if we were putting Federation stuff into the co-ops to adopt, you know strategic planning on co-ops all being a part of the same one constitution (interview, A2)

Co-op members would pay £1 ‘subs’ at weekly co-op meetings, which would go towards helping fund bus fares for Federation meeting volunteers, as well as small fees to CDS for their administrative work and advice, and capital reserves for useful items like a typewriter to type up minutes and publish newsletters and leaflets. The Federation was the beginning of a more outward-facing, cooperative, self-organised and collaborative process of movement-building through cooperative education, support and knowledge transfer. It could have become a successful self-governing membership organisation – as a kind of democratically-governed secondary development agency – where the Weller Streets’ attempt at establishing one independent of CDS had failed. However, Militant’s opposition to co-ops hindered this by shifting the focus from creative institution-building to defensive protection of existing assets. Co-ops became more combative – forced to focus on protecting immediate interests from the Militant threat, rather than build bridges with others.
5.3 Langrove: keeping the cooperative spirit alive in Liverpool

One example of direct action taken to contest Militant was the Langrove Community Housing Co-op, situated in the West Everton community – straddling the ridge that broadly marks the divide between the Catholic neighbourhoods nearer the docks, and the Protestants who moved up the hill. They faced demolition threat from Tony Byrne’s vision for Everton park: a “magnificent park on traditional Victorian lines” by way of clearing “unsatisfactory post-war housing” (URS document, quoted in (Mars, 1987). Some of this housing was deeply unpopular – decaying high rise flats pockmarked the area – but a collection of two-storey four-bed parlour houses built in the 1950s were in high local demand; and the community resisted their planned demolition. The community had a strong identity unusually united by the involvement of both Anglican Protestants and Catholics in churches that spanned sectarian divides, garnering a strong culture of working together, evident in the active influence of the West Everton Community Council since 1965 (interview, A3).

As the council began decanting tenants and demolishing houses, the community resorted to desperate measures – deciding to squat in the last house left standing on Arkwright Street, and establishing the Langrove Street Action Group (LSAG) in 1986 (Corbett, 2012). A 24-hour occupation commenced, protesting residents barricaded in against demolition. LSAG made sure to “learn the rules” of the game, and got Shelter and CDS involved to advise on campaign strategy, who ran a crash course on non-violent direct action, inspired by Martin...
Luther King, using Paulo Friere’s (1970) radical ideas on critical pedagogy and community development (interview, A3). The resulting mix of radical secular politics and deep Christian faith is reflected in the banners displayed on the occupied house (figure 5.6).

While squatting in the houses, LSAG set a legal battle in motion, mobilising a local sympathetic barrister in a court case against the Militant decision. As this progressed, the political situation in Liverpool was about to change dramatically. The battle between Militant and Thatcher came to a head and 47 Labour councillors were disqualified from office, with surcharges against them, leaving the council to be run by a ‘caretaker’ Liberal administration for just six weeks until the forthcoming elections in 1987 (Frost and North, 2013). In May 1987 Labour was re-elected: despite opposition from countless community groups and cooperatives, the URS had been broadly popular with voters for attempting to tackle the deep socioeconomic and environmental challenges facing Liverpool. Interestingly, the Weller Streets co-op treasurer, Phil Hughes, who had been politicised by the co-op campaign into becoming a Labour councillor, was elected as the new Chair of Housing, to replace Tony Byrne. Hughes was upfront about his only qualification for the job being membership of the Weller Streets co-op, and Tony Byrne asserted that “Labour fought and won the local election on the Urban Regeneration Strategy, so it seems strange to choose Phil Hughes as a chair of housing” (quoted in Mars, 1987: 25). This was especially odd considering that there was no outward change of policy – Hughes admitting that “it can’t be stopped” – but he nonetheless vowed to ‘humanise’ the URS and make it compatible with co-ops (ibid). Hughes agreed to sell the remaining 30 Langrove houses to the community co-op, and in fact amended the URS plan so that the park would be developed around the community, as a green urban village. In a strange twist of fate, the early pioneers of the co-op movement in Liverpool directly influenced positive outcomes for future cooperative schemes, such as Langrove, through the political empowerment of co-op members to powerful positions on the council. Indeed, the leading Langrove activist, Jane Corbett, was herself politicised by the campaign, becoming a Labour councillor, now Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equalities.

Langrove have since capitalised on their experience with community development to pursue a far-reaching vision for neighbourhood regeneration, aspiring to build in other improvements – eco-homes, park café, new shops, self-sufficiency in energy and food, allotments – and are now working in partnership on the latest regeneration plans for Everton Park (interview, A3). Moreover, since their initial success in saving the four-beds, they have developed further phases of co-op housing, attracting CDS to develop their own scheme locally, and developers
of private houses. They have sought partnerships with other housing associations, most recently with Riverside – previously MIH – on the first new housing co-op development in the city in over a decade (interview, H1). Riverside are converting a block of flats into five homes for rent, and negotiated with Langrove to transfer at a pre-agreed price rather than sell on the open market. These homes have been pre-allocated to new Langrove co-op members, who are involved in some of the design work. Coming full circle from their roots in co-op development, Riverside are transferring the properties to Langrove at cost, driven forward by staff who were often involved personally in the cooperative movement, either through CDS or MIH, as part of a strategy of giving something back to the local area, and potentially rejuvenating the co-op movement after decades of dormancy (interview, H1). In the meantime a different model of mutual housing and community-led regeneration was being developed by the Eldonians: a more far-reaching form of collective ownership over the entire neighbourhood. Like Langrove, they pushed for a more holistic and comprehensive form of local economic redevelopment than just housing alone, but went much further. The second part of this chapter tells their story.
The story of the Eldonians is an epic struggle against adversity, and has been told comprehensively elsewhere, notably by Jack McBane (2008), the MIH co-op development officer who worked very closely with the Eldonians, and whose excellent account of the social and political history of the Eldonians I draw on here. For these reasons, I will sketch only a brief history of the early campaign process before analysing my findings in more depth. Like most other co-op communities in Liverpool, the Eldonians are a homogenous white working class community, but unlike many of the co-ops in the south end, rooted in Protestantism, the Eldonians are staunchly Catholic, descendants of Irish migrants who came to Liverpool to escape the Potato Famine of 1845-7. Of the hundreds of thousands of migrants that fled the famine for Liverpool, over half were designated by the authorities as ‘paupers’, and tens of thousands stayed, many settling in slums in the north end of the inner-city, built behind the docks that provided the employment fuelled by this massive influx of cheap labour (McBane, 2008). Most of these back-to-back tenements were concentrated around the north docks in areas like Vauxhall, close to the employment opportunities and away from much of the wealthy merchant and artisan housing further inland and in the south end, in areas like Granby. Vauxhall became increasingly overcrowded, and housing conditions worsened as new terraces were thrown up by speculative builders, from which the phrase ‘Jerry-built houses’ is said to have originated (Cowan et al., 1988).

Amidst these terrible conditions, people turned to each other and to the church for solace and support. The Catholic Church was a central component of people’s lives and a powerful presence in what has been described as the “parish politics” of Vauxhall, which alone had around 14 parish churches (Cowan et al., 1988). The Catholic migrants displaced the existing Protestant communities further up the ridge that surrounds Liverpool, away from the docks, heightening sectarian resentments (McBane, 2008). An ex-council housing officer describes these communities as “really old well-established communities” with strong communal identities, in which “families know each other”; explaining that “you didn’t cross parishes really, you didn’t go to St Marys, coz although you could spit that far it felt like you needed a passport to go there” (interview, H2). But this was not a sectarian issue, for all these parishes were Catholic, with fiercely loyal – or “parochial” – internal attachments (interview, H2). Another participant describes Liverpool as “city of a thousand villages”, each failing to interact or communicate across so many imagined boundaries (interview, N7). The depth of such attachments can be seen in the very name of the Eldonians, derived from Eldon Street, where the local parish church, Our Lady of Reconciliation, was located, defining the centre of
the community, as well as the church social club, in which the campaign meetings were held (Cowan et al., 1988). Another explanation is the name of the football team that Paul Orr, the local Labour councillor and Eldonian ally, played for as a youngster (Kilfoyle, 2000). Football and religion are indeed often conflated.

Figure 5.7: Gildarts Gardens, old court-style tenement block built in 1897, in which Tony McGann lived before being displaced by the Kingsway Mersey Tunnel (source: Municipal Dreams, 2013)

Despite the obvious challenges for bridging social capital and civic cohesion (DeFilippis, 2001), strong parish-based communities had the advantage of internal solidarity, communality and togetherness, which would prove invaluable in keeping the Eldonians unified in their campaign for better housing. In a recent popular history of the north end, an edited collection of “the people’s memories” prior to slum clearances, the author, Rogers (2012: 174), addresses his audience directly:

You speak with one voice. It’s as if you all come from the same group, the same family, dare I say it, the same TRIBE (sic).

Written to express the feelings of residents, the book laments the 1960s slum clearance policies for displacing and breaking up communities, even if supportive of the need to improve the terrible tenement housing conditions. One such episode in this history was
particularly disruptive and became an important lesson in the formation of the Eldonians. Described by Rogers (2012: 177) as the “biggest hole in the ground ever dug in Liverpool”, the Kingsway Mersey Tunnel constructed 1968-71 required the demolition of most housing in the immediate area, including 500 dwellings built just five years earlier by the council to rehouse people from the slums (see figure 5.7 above). Tony McGann, who would become the community leader of the Eldonians, describes how “we lived in really bad conditions, ten of us in two rooms…and we had no running water” and so urban renewal was welcomed, but that

Thousands of people were put out their homes and sent all over the place…people had no say. And what went down that hole was my home, my home and thousands of others and all the small firms went down that hole in the ground, and people were scattered to the four winds... (interview, McGann)

Not only did countless small family-run businesses and local jobs ‘go down the hole’ of the Mersey tunnel, but the community itself was broken up, leaving the community “heartbroken”. This was the principal motivation behind the Eldonians’ campaign for a co-op. In 1978 the council decided to demolish the tenement blocks around Eldon and Burlington Streets, affecting 1,500 people in the heart of the parish, as part of the Liberals’ Tenement Rehousing Programme and the 57 slum clearance areas, which had also targeted Weller Streets in the south end. McGann – who had managed to secure a new tenancy in the Eldon Street area – quickly became the community contact for housing issues – a ‘go to man’ or an ‘unpaid councillor’ (McBane, 2008); and, inspired by his personal experience of displacement, used his leadership role to rally tenants around opposing the plans. An infamous meeting called by the council planners was attended by local councillors, the priesthood and 250 local residents. Parish priest Father O’Reilly questioned for the first time, the authority of the planners to dictate tenement demolition. This sparked dissent from the community, and local councillor, Paul Orr, suggested a survey of residents’ views should be conducted, which McGann led on implementation, discovering that some 90% did not want to move away but accepted demolition or improvement (McBane, 2008). This was the first time the people of Vauxhall had ever been asked what they wanted, providing a community mandate for an alternative to council rehousing which led to the formation of the Eldonian Community Association in the early 1980s, with McGann elected as chair.

The Eldonians then began negotiating with city councillors and housing officers, leading to contact with Chris Davies, the council’s chair of housing, who explains the proactive attitude
of the Eldonians compared with other groups fighting displacement:

The thing about the Eldonians was they were always so positive!...other people would come in and whinge and say ‘this should be done for us’...and Tony would come along with his people and say ‘look, we know you’re doing your best, and you’re facing difficulties, now what if we were to do this...could you do that?’...just positive and good feedback, and you wanted to work with them, I did anyway (interview, Davies)

The Eldonians had heard about other groups facing similar challenges establishing co-ops as a way to fight displacement, and it was during these negotiations with Davies that the Eldonians first learned how to run a co-op campaign (interview, Davies). Among the 500 or so families from the various 1930s tenement campaign blocks around Eldon Street who became involved in the Eldonian Community Association, it was agreed in 1982 that Portland Gardens was the priority; and of those tenants 140 opted to stay with the council, in a conversion scheme around the old blocks, whilst 326 voted for a co-op (Cowan et al., 1988). The council agreed to a ‘top-downing’ improvement scheme, reducing Portland Gardens from four to two-storeys. At this point, the Eldonians sought the advice of the leading co-op development agencies and Chris Davies put them in touch with Jack McBane at MIH. McBane describes how upon first meeting the Eldonians, he fell “instantly in love” with the people and Tony’s “mix of aggression with humour with charm”, and was asked to interview along with CDS and NHS:

So the interview panel was like 30 people, and I'll never forget it. They had a big social hall...they had an organisation, and they were used to running things...and I said ‘I don’t think you’re thinking big enough...This place is a shithole, you know that, why don’t you take on the whole neighbourhood?’ And at this, McGann’s eyes began to light up...and I said ‘...nobody else cares for this place...it’s been abandoned by the council, the businesses have already left town, housing associations aren’t even active here...the only thing that’s alive and well here is you...what’s the point in doing a housing co-op surrounded by this?...because you’re gonna waste a huge amount of resources and my time, and the architect’s time doing a co-op – why don’t we just change the whole thing and gear it up?’ (Interview, McBane)

McBane got the job on the back of a personal ‘click’ with the Eldonians and for his ambitious ideas for local economic development beyond just housing. This was the genesis of the bigger vision for a ‘self-regenerating community’ which would transform the project into a larger-scale neighbourhood-based community-led social enterprise. This early inspiration for self-government was reflected in the aspirational tone of the tagline for the first exhibition and
brochures presenting the Portland Gardens Co-op – ‘We’ll do a better job ourselves!’ (McBane, 2008). With the help of McBane and MIH, the co-op appointed two architects for four smaller and one larger site – to inspire some “creative competition” (interview, C2). For the former, Bill Halsall, and for the latter, Vernon Gracie, who had worked on Byker Wall in Newcastle, an exemplar of participatory design and community architecture (Towers, 1995). Halsall employed the principles of the Weller Way, and four months of intensive weekly participatory design meetings between the architects, MIH and resident representatives then proceeded from January 1983.

5.4.1 Fighting Militant
This process was suddenly cut short, however, by the election of the Militants in May. Whatever Militant’s justification for opposing the co-ops – fiscal, political, ethical – their decision to municipalise was disastrous for Portland Gardens’ tenants. The co-op was registered with the Housing Corporation but the land had yet to be transferred by the council, who were also the main funders. Portland Gardens Co-op rejected the offer made to them that would mean the council receiving full nomination rights with the Works Department being guaranteed the maintenance work (Cowan et al., 1988). Eventually the council agreed that co-op members would be able to move into their houses, only to later withdraw this agreement and demand that houses go onto the council waiting list. The original design, too, had to be changed, with the more communal elements removed in favour of a more traditional design as dictated by the new URS guidelines. MIH was dismissed without compensation for the work already completed – amounting to £10,000s in losses – but MIH Chief Exec, Barry Natton continued to support McBane’s involvement despite the uncertainty and with no payment forthcoming. McBane describes Natton as “willing to stick his neck out in a very big way” for the satisfaction and prestige of supporting the development of what was the biggest housing cooperative in Western Europe, and the prospect of getting “one up on Catherine”, CDS’s Chief Exec (interview).

During this process, residents hoping to move into the first 11 completed homes were forcibly prevented by council officers. An ex-council officer explained how “being an officer, stuck in the middle of that…you sort of had to make sure you didn’t get caught in the crossfire…it was a deliberate intention of my own to get to know Tony McGann…and to work with the local councillors there, in the north Vauxhall area” (interview, H2). Sympathy from the officers was not enough to secure tenants their houses, and so the Eldonians took more radical measures. McGann describes how
The next day the tenant turned up with the council, but in the meantime, we'd moved our one in, put all her furniture in...and we had a big Alsatian there and we had all the neighbours around, and I said 'go on then get past us, this is her house'...so he said, 'oh you're just squatting!'...you've got 28 days’ notice.'...The following week...they were ready...the council...they put security in and everything now, and the lad who was the vice chairman [Billy Little] great fella...he went round [with] a camera...said 'I'm from a magazine', went on the site...and he started taking photos, looking at all the locks, and we got keys to some of the houses...and then we moved some more in, and we were running rings round them! (interview, McGann)

The Eldonians successfully squatted 37 of the 55 dwellings on the larger site, and occupied 45 of the 51 on the smaller sites (Cowan et al., 1988). This enabled those residents who had designed them to move into their new homes, and bought time until the judicial review eventually ruled in their favour. Their successful legal challenge against Militant mirrors other campaigns in similar tenements, as another ex-council officer explains:

We had to take possession proceedings against those people, because they wouldn't move...a number of the groups took action against not allocating the properties on other sites, and the judge effectively supported those groups (interview, H3)

Setting the Eldonians apart was their use of direct action, squatting and legal victories as stepping stones to more ambitious political ends. The local ward Labour Party was dominated by Militant, who held meetings in an old school down a back alley to discourage attendance. McGann realised that the best way to challenge municipalisation was to join the Labour Party, fight them from the inside and take control of the ward. First, the Eldonians mobilised their members in large numbers to attend the local party meetings – some 150 – but it quickly transpired that it would be difficult to sustain those numbers. The next tactic was to move the meetings onto ‘home territory’ – and the Eldonians have effectively controlled the local Labour Party since (interview, McGann).

Local politics in Liverpool in the 1970s was marked by this rift: between the “two Labour parties of Liverpool at the time, one of which was...the old Catholic mafia”; the other, Militant (interview, P2). Both saw the other side as not truly representative of Labour politics. These internal differences reflected the sectarianism that divided Liverpool in general (Sheppard and Worlock, 1988). The Tories were traditionally the party of the Protestants, and Labour: Catholic. The incursion of Militant, as a broadly non-religious, secularly socialist faction, was a break with this tradition, upsetting the established working order of the ‘Catholic mafia’, associated with the long tradition of ‘boss politics’ in Liverpool (Lane, 1997).
This traditionalist right-wing Catholic wing of the local Labour Party was rooted in Vauxhall. When Militant were eventually removed in 1987 – whereby 47 Labour councillors were disbarred from public office and fined for voting for an illegal budget – six Labour councillors escaped disqualification in voting against their party, known as the ‘scabby’ or ‘sensible six’ (Cowan et al., 1988). Three of these six were councillors for Vauxhall, including Paul Orr and an Eldonians resident, John Livingstone, whose traditional views, such as anti-abortion, placed them in almost polar opposition to Militant.

Embedded in his tight-knit Catholic community as the principal community organiser, Tony McGann has in many respects become a ‘boss’. Indeed, some see Tony as a “tribal leader” (interview, H9). This is reflected in the main office building being named after him (see figure 5.8 below). Such a tribal loyalty and reverence for leaders may seem incongruous next to the egalitarianism of cooperative principles, yet has nonetheless enabled the Eldonians to establish a successful community housing scheme, against political opposition, through trust in strong leadership, an established hierarchy, internal cohesion and commitment to a common cause. Many accounts acknowledge that the Eldonians could not have achieved what they did without the “pragmatic alliances, their politics, their chauvinism or their macho style” (Cowan et al., 1988: 43).

Figure 5.8: Tony McGann Centre (left), and the Eldonian Village Hall (right), where Tony still works as the bar manager, the centre of social life in the community (source: author’s own, 2015)

Tony McGann played a pivotal role in driving forward the Eldonian campaign, attracting loyal partners and building crucial alliances with powerful elites who would support their cause against the Militants – much like Billy Floyd for Weller Streets. Two central figures in the campaign and future development were recruited from MIH: Jack McBane to work on co-op development and George Evans as housing manager. An outsider like Jack, George likewise describes how he “just got an affinity for the people, and then they asked me if I’d be their
first housing manager, and I agreed and I’ve been here ever since” (interview, Evans). One co-op development worker distinguishes the difference between CDS’s work in the south-end, from MIH’s for the Eldonians:

Jack McBane was more a vanguardist if that makes sense, and I don’t think Jack necessarily distinguishes his own role from that of the Eldonians…[who] were very kind of – I use this word in a very loose way – more Stalinist…we’ll decide, and the rest will follow.’ The leadership…were very effective, though it was very kind of centrally directed, and I think Jack was more a part of that than a servant (interview, C5)

Jack and George supported Tony in the unofficial Eldonians leadership. But it was Tony’s exceptional capability to attract people to their cause that was so crucial in the eventual success of the campaign. Bill Halsall puts it like this:

Tony McGann is a very persuasive man, you can’t take the individual factor out of it…he has an ability – a unique ability in my experience – he can go in all guns blazing to have a big argument with somebody and come out with a lifelong friend. Max [Steinberg] is his best mate, and the number of times he’s stormed into Max’s office…I’m sure Max will say he’s a very hard man to say no to (interview)

Tony used these skills to make friends in high places, not just Max Steinberg and the Bishops in Liverpool, but also Margaret Thatcher, with whom he had dinner at Downing Street and lobbied for funding against the advice of her aides; as well as Prince Charles – “a good friend of ours” (interview, McGann) – who visited the Eldonians and later officially opened the village; and Neil Kinnock, then Leader of the Labour Party, who personally advised Tony to “stay in the trenches son” (interview, McGann) around the time of his famous Labour Party Conference speech in October 1985, which railed against Militant.

5.4.2 Friends in high places

With strong leadership in place, the Eldonians were able to capitalise on the tumultuous events of the early 1980s. Deep structural shifts in the British economy left Liverpool’s maritime industries in a state of terminal decline, with severe impacts for Vauxhall, with unemployment reaching 36% by the end of the 1970s, twice the Liverpool average (Couch, 2003: 75). Then in 1981, the biggest local employer, Tate & Lyle sugar refinery, closed causing a further 1,700 job losses, leaving many of the Eldonians without work (McBane, 2008). This was exacerbated by the closure of the British American Tobacco factory in 1984, with knock-on closures of local feeder firms (Cowan et al., 1988). The site was just outside MDC
boundaries but Heseltine’s Task Force secured the transfer of the Tate & Lyle site to English Estates, a quasi-governmental agency for industrial property development, and opened an ideas competition for the site in 1982. The Eldonians’ bid, entitled the ‘Self-Regenerating Community’, built on the previous work of Bill Halsall and MIH for a vision of self-sustaining economic development, with new housing, jobs, training, social enterprises, community facilities and the revitalised heritage of the Leeds-Liverpool canal – all managed by a community-owned development trust (McBane, 2008). The main aim was to house the 145 remaining families who were not part of the Portland Gardens scheme. The Eldonians’ bid was disqualified for being leaked to the press by Tony, but English Estates were impressed and sought to explore it further.

Figure 5.9: the Tate & Lyle factory during its heyday (top); after closure (bottom left); and following decommission with first phase of Eldonian Village being built (bottom right). (Source: Eldonians, 1993).
The Eldonian campaign leadership – McGann, Orr, McBane, and Halsall – met with the Task Force, English Estates, the DoE and the Housing Corporation over 18 months to negotiate an option on the site (Cowan et al., 1988). Through their lobbying, and the political support of Thatcher, the Eldonians managed to secure the site and the funding required for remediation (see figure 5.9 above). McGann was critical in this process in personally persuading British Waterways, who owned the ‘ransom strip’ of the canal part of the site, to sell their land at a reasonable price to make it viable. Due to centuries of heavy industrial use the land was highly contaminated, requiring £2.1 million of Derelict Land Grant, signed off by Heseltine’s Task Force. Max Steinberg secured the rest of the funding through the Housing Corporation in 1984 (McBane, 2008). The process of site acquisition and remediation alone took over five years and £2.2 million of public investment (Cowan et al., 1988). The total cost of just the first phase of the village was £6.6 million (Mars, 1987). The scheme was wholly reliant on government and would fail the usual viability test of leveraging at least match funding from private sector investment (Cowan et al., 1988). This was an incredibly high price to pay for just 145 households in a city in which thousands were in need of better housing, suggesting that the project was of political as well as socioeconomic value to its funders, which were all arms of central government.

The true political worth of the project is revealed by the wider political context. Whilst Militant were in negotiations with the Tory government to secure a budget allocation for URS expenditure, the Eldonians were likewise visiting key politicians to secure their own ends. In July 1984, Tony McGann visited Patrick Jenkin, then Secretary of State for Environment, at the DoE, to lobby for government funding – the day after the “infamous confrontation” between Militant and Jenkin, in which the ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ of government funding for the £130 million shortfall to complete the URS was used by Militant as political ammunition, made public to embarrass and effectively blackmail central government into acquiescence (Cowan et al., 1988). Jenkin then visited Liverpool to witness the work of the URS in tackling the housing situation – stating his shock at “families living in conditions the like I have never seen before…they are very grim indeed…[and] beggar description” (Frost & North, 2013: 81) – but, angered by Militant’s manoeuvring, cut his tour short to visit the Eldonians on Tony’s offer instead. Jenkin was impressed and pledged his support for the scheme, signing off in October 1984 on the £6.5 million of Housing Corporation funding which Max Steinberg had made available (Cowan et al., 1988). The Eldonian Housing Cooperative was established in the same year, with McGann as chairman, and a representative committee drawn from the 145
families, appointing Bill Halsall as architect, who led a participatory design process with a core
design committee of 15 (McBane, 2008).

It seemed the final hurdle had been crossed for the Eldonians to begin development onsite,
but the Militants had one last chip to play. Despite bypassing council control, with
government ownership and funding of the land, the council still retained power over the
planning process. An application for ‘change of use’ from industrial to residential was required
before the development could commence, but the submission in early 1985 was refused by
planning officers, under effective command of Militant, on grounds of health risk from
noxious smells from nearby factories (McBane, 2008). The Eldonians appealed and requested
a planning inquiry; English Estates advised the hiring of the best planning QC in the country –
and paid the £35,000 fee (Cowan et al., 1988). The council’s defence collapsed upon the
Eldonians’ barrister pointing out that the map – purportedly showing the transmission of
noxious factory fumes into the planned site according to prevailing winds – was actually
upside down. The depth of support and common feeling felt for the Eldonians by the public
and powerful allies alike, is captured by Archbishop Derek Worlock’s populist words in the
inquiry: “if you move these people on against their will, I’m going to stand shoulder to
shoulder with them in the street” (quoted in Rogers, 2012: 185).

Upon winning the public inquiry, the Eldonians celebrated in the traditional way: a huge street
party and brass band procession to the Eldonian village site, with the street banner, ‘we did it
better together’ (McBane, 2008). This morphed into the new Eldonian motto, ‘we do it better
together’, which softens their earlier more autonomous slogan, ‘we’ll do a better job
ourselves’. This discursive shift signals a subtle change in the Eldonian mindset from a more
independent and embattled stance against the council towards a realisation that collaborative
partnerships are the only way to make things happen. ‘We do it better together’ not only
captures the collective nature of the campaign and tight internal togetherness of the
community, but also appropriately expresses their new partnership-style way of working; their
forging of pragmatic alliances; and promiscuous seeking of support from whoever would offer
it, even those they would normally count as ideological enemies. The two bishops of
Liverpool – Catholic Archbishop Worlock and Anglican Bishop Shepherd, who were very
active in bridging denominational divides across Liverpool – have celebrated the Eldonians’
motto, by titling their joint-authored book on healing sectarianism ‘Better Together’
(Sheppard and Worlock, 1988). Likewise, the Eldonians have memorialised their political
support, by naming two roads in the Eldonian village after them. In fact, they have honoured
all their significant partners, allies and supporters in this way, with many of the cul-de-sacs ‘courts’ adjoining Eldonian Way given such prefixes as Jack McBane, Paul Orr, O’Reilly, Steinberg, as well as Bishop Shepherd Court and Archbishop Worlock Court. Such cultic veneration does not, however, extend so far as to Jenkin Drive or Thatcher Close.

This is not to say that the Eldonians are unaware of the debt they owe to Thatcher – or indeed Militant, in a roundabout way for provoking the Tories into uncharacteristic policy moves. George Evans puts it like this:

Right, £6.4million, £2.1million derelict land grants for a piece of land which was highly contaminated and had been valued at just over a quarter of a million – you’re not telling me that there wasn’t some politics in that!…we then get within a couple of weeks…an appeal set up…a top barrister from London representing us…and we get a finding within a month! Well, there’s gotta be some political pressure hasn’t there otherwise you gotta be so naïve…I mean if Margaret Thatcher wanted it done it was gonna get done (interview, Evans)

In the context of the intensifying battle between Militant-controlled Liverpool council and central government over the city’s budget, Thatcher was looking for ways to undermine their authority and reassert central control, and the Eldonians were the perfect pawn to play. By using arms-length instruments and innovative regeneration programmes, such as the MDC and Task Force, central government was able to effectively bypass the city council, who not only stood in opposition to the scheme, but also presented a very real risk to the government’s credibility and the stability of centre-local state relations. In 1988, as a final tactical move, MDC boundaries were extended to include the Tate & Lyle site within its remit, as a means of guaranteeing planning permission for housing (Roberts, 2008). By around 1990, the site had been cleared and remediated, 145 houses built, and the first tenants moving in. This was the first time any substantial community-led or residential development had been incorporated within an urban development corporation zone (Meegan, 1999). The counterintuitive support offered by the Conservative government to a Labour-voting, socialist-leaning community housing cooperative can be explained as a political tactic to “drive a wedge between a municipal housing authority and the people who would normally have been its natural constituency” (Cowan, 1986: 22). In Bill Halsall’s phrasing, the “Eldonians became a bit of a political football – but they got what they wanted” (interview).

The Eldonians are adamant, however, that they would have succeeded in redeveloping their neighbourhood with or without Thatcher’s support; just on a more incremental and piecemeal
scale, with Portland Gardens as the first of many smaller federated co-ops, had it not been so suddenly municipalised. What the political battle with Militant enabled was much larger levels of political support for the costly redevelopment of the Tate & Lyle site, and the wholesale transformation of an area that may have remained derelict and contaminated ex-industrial land for decades. Such a unique set of circumstances casts doubt on whether such a process of local economic development and regeneration of declining industrial areas is a sustainable or replicable model, at least within conventional parameters of what is an acceptable cost; and highlights the necessity of state funding where private investment is non-existent.

5.4.3 Materialising the vision: towards a ‘Self-Regenerating Community’

The Eldonians have since built on their initial successes to pursue a more holistic neighbourhood planning approach, exercising their proactive partnership approach to further develop the Eldonian Village and the surrounding urban area (see figure 5.10 below). Phase 2 was complete in 1994, involving 150 more homes, and the decontamination and landscaping of the Leeds-Liverpool canal that flows through the site and later extended into the city centre docks, financed by another Housing Corporation grant of £5.5 million and a £1.5 million loan from Cooperative Bank; and the village now has over 2,500 residents and employs over 100 staff (McBane, 2008). In the early 1990s, shortly after the completion of phase 1, the Eldonian Housing Cooperative was reconstituted as the Eldonian Community-based Housing Association (ECBHA) and registered with the Housing Corporation as a social landlord, but still controlled directly by the community through an overarching charitable body, the Eldonian Community Trust, whose board directors are democratically elected by the community (Roberts, 2008). George Evans describes the trust as the “charitable arm…a registered charity…that looks after the social aspects within the area – looking after the elderly, arranging activities, summer activities for the children, community transport, we’ve got the mini-bus out there which helps people whenever they need it” (interview, Evans).
The original vision for a development trust to manage a ‘Self-Regenerating Community’ has materialised as the Eldonian Development Trust, established in 1987 by the community trust as a community-based social enterprise and business arm of the Eldonians, since renamed the Eldonian Group Ltd (EGL) (Eldonians, 1996). EGL’s remit is broad local socioeconomic development and the provision and management of various services and facilities, including the Tony McGann centre, the village hall, onsite sports centre, a day nursery, extra-care facility, a residential elderly care home and the several community enterprises (Roberts, 2008).

It remains directly accountable to the Community Trust, governed by a board originally comprising of four selected local businessmen and seven Eldonian residents – a ratio later altered to 5/6, such that the Eldonians need to vote together to retain overall control over board decisions (Cowan et al., 1988).
Indeed, residents hold EGL to account more through informal networks. EGL is located in an old school next to the Eldonian Village, and EGL staff are often met after work, or confronted in the street, by Eldonian residents asking about future plans and particular programmes (interview, H5). The Community Trust board regularly provides feedback in formal meetings with the EGL board, and “inform us what is happening on the street, what’s the needs on the street” (interview, H4). George Evans explains how “there’s a common denominator in that some board members are on both… and they have the same name. Other than that we’re totally separate structures, but we try to help each other” (interview). Through EGL’s economic development work, the Eldonians are fast becoming self-sufficient in most public services and basic needs. Housing has always been the lynchpin and the driving factor of the project, but as Tony McGann remarks, “you can’t just look at housing in isolation!” (interview). What separates the Eldonians from the other co-ops in Liverpool is their ambition to look at more than just housing – at training, jobs, enterprise, energy, transport, social care, and community activities – as means to create a truly self-regenerating community.

The Eldonians have become powerful economic players on Merseyside. EGL are in negotiation with various local and multinational companies to forge new partnerships for ambitious development projects. They now have a partnership agreement with Peel Holdings for various redevelopment projects, connected to Peel’s Atlantic Gateway vision for the Merseyside-Manchester conurbation corridor – Europe’s first private-led regional spatial strategy (Dembski, 2015; Harrison, 2014). EGL’s decision to explore the prospects for local energy production in a combined heat and power (CHP) system led them to consider retrofitting the ECBHA housing, because “if we’re gonna produce our own energy, we can’t put it into houses that are sieves” (interview, H5). They have set up a non-profit energy service company, the Eldonian Energy Partnership, with Peel Holdings as junior partner and E.ON, the massive multinational European energy provider, and are now developing a CHP energy centre and district heating network (DHN) – the first of its kind to be delivered by a social enterprise. This will create 180 local jobs, with apprenticeship opportunities for young people, as well as “generate heating and power that can then be sold on to the community at an advantageous rate” (interview, C4). The Eldonians were partners in developing the Strategic Regeneration Framework for north Liverpool with the council, and the CHP-DHN centre is the flagship project of a larger strategic plan to transform north Liverpool into a leading centre for green industry, through the creation of an eco-park and an environmental technologies zone, which Liverpool Mayor, Joe Anderson, has stated as a Mayoral pledge (interview, H4/H5). Too this end, EGL have been talking with the locally-based international
scrap metal company, S. Norton, on ways to consolidate the city’s recycling industry in the area; as well as another local firm, Centriforce, innovative in recycling plastics into cables, about the possibility of creating a prototype cable for the DHN which includes cutting-edge fibre-optics for broadband connections (interviews, H4). EGL are also very active in developing spin-off social enterprises – “we have used seed grants to start companies up, we’ve got 23 businesses under this Group” – as well as supporting other local start-ups through local enterprise programmes (interview, H5).

In housing too, the Eldonians are involved in several development projects locally, working with companies such as Barratt and Wimpey to deliver new homes. Although losing the ‘Eldonian’ in the name helped EGL in gaining the professional credibility in their dealings with larger commercial companies, the opposite is true for attracting homeowners. Private developers have piggybacked on the success and reputation of the Eldonians by naming nearby streets with new homes for sale after them (see figure 5.11 below): “it’s got ‘Eldon’ on it, it’s called ‘Eldon Way’ or ‘Eldon Grove’ or something like that, but they’ve used the name Eldon as a selling point; as did the people who built the houses for sale just in the corner of the village.” (interview, Evans) Shrewd branding is a big part of the success: “the cleverest thing we ever done was to call this a ‘village’. It’s a dead simple word but it gives you a picture – as opposed to the ‘Eldonian Estate’…of burnt out cars and kids running all over the place – of a village green, trees all over the place, and a nice place to live” (ibid).

The Eldonians, in the form of the ECBHA, have become more of a facilitator or expert development agent opening up possibilities for profitable sites as ways to attract economic development and redevelop some of the local residential sites (see figure 5.11). They are keen to point out that their role is to ensure the local community benefits from any such deals with private investors. For instance, a nearby plot of land owned by the Eldonians is being sold to the same American investor working on Eldon Grove, planning to redevelop the site into 22 apartments and four shops, which the local community – currently located in a ‘food desert’ – desperately needs (interview, McGann). The Eldonians only take a down-payment for the land and retain the right to withdraw the offer unless the development is built within two years, in order to insure against land banking in the interests of delivering community benefit.
Likewise, EGL lock their activities directly back into community benefit. They are upfront about making profits from contracts with big business and consultancy work delivered around the country – recycling these surpluses back into the Eldonian community:

Profit’s not a dirty word to us, but we make profit, we bring it back here and we then use that money to subsidise services we want to provide here, so ‘Dad’s and Lad’s Clubs’… costing us 50 grand each a year…after school clubs, things like that where the local authority will fund to a level, but we want it to be a decent level (interview, H4).

Such a high degree of self-provision suggests that the Eldonians have in many ways seceded from local authority control, or at least partly replaced the council as primary provider of basic services. Amongst EGL staff there is an

In-joke in here – and we do laugh…because I’ve done it for God knows how many presentations, and people go ‘how would you describe the Eldonians?’, and I go ‘listen, you go down through the wardrobe, down to the back of Narnia and there’s another wardrobe, you go through that wardrobe, and you end up in Eldonia’ (interview, H4).

Asked whether ‘Eldonia’ is an alternative model to local government, another EGL manager replied:

It probably would be. We would always work with the powers that be, we’ve not got a problem with that…we’re not going to declare UDI
[unilateral declaration of independence]; we’re not an independent state. I think some of them would love to be but we’re not (interview, H5).

The mere suggestion of UDI – however comically intended – amply demonstrates the perceived separation of the Eldonians from their surrounds. The Eldonians work very closely with the council now, especially with the new Labour administration since Joe Anderson took office as Liverpool’s first Mayor, yet partnership arrangements, as with economic contracts, are sought primarily to serve the needs of the village. This sometimes provokes local hostility, despite claims of positive spill-over effects and benefits for surrounding residents. One such partnership is with the police, who the Eldonians pay a fee per year for extra services: including a direct private phone line to the local station for residents to call in case of crime or nuisance; and daily/nightly patrols around the village, signing in to the Tony McGann Centre as in a police station (interview, McGann). Tony assures that this is neither creating a “shortfall anywhere else” in the city nor “depriving anyone else”, as they do their Eldonian rounds on overtime; and in fact increases safety for the surrounding areas, often added into the patrols (ibid). Tony is adamant that “you can’t live on an island”; yet the perception nonetheless exists that the Eldonians receive special treatment and isolate themselves from their neighbours’ problems. An ex-council housing manager recalls a common perception that if you moved into the Eldonians you were fine: there’s no anti-social behaviour coz they won’t tolerate it, but there’s a perception from the people who lived the other side of the road that the kids from the Eldonians used to do their anti-social behaviour elsewhere…because they couldn’t do anything on their own doorsteps, so they’d go and, for wont of a better phrase, shit on someone else’s (interview, H2).

A large part of this perception may be a reaction to the urban design (see figure 5.12 below). Such defensive urbanism is intentional. An interview with the policy community liaison officer published by the Eldonians explains the deliberate logic of protecting against crime “in the context of a ‘Them and Us’ situation, with incidents of petty burglary, car theft, and vandalism being amongst the highest in Liverpool” (Eldonians, 1996: 6–7). The design chosen, therefore, aimed purposefully to minimise crime by deterring outsiders from coming in (ibid):

Cul-de-sacs were created with only one entry/exit leading onto the main road through the village. Houses overlook one another offering natural surveillance. Further features include symbolic barriers, such as change of road surfaces, promoting safety and close territory.
In sum, this went much further than the URS in incorporating defensible space principles associated with Alice Coleman (Jacobs and Lees, 2013). In fact, the Eldonians in many ways anticipated and influenced emerging trends in ‘sustainable’ urbanism towards secured-by-design, home zones, and other neighbourhood safety initiatives (Halsall, 2015). In 2004, the Eldonian Village was recognised as an international exemplar of sustainable development with a World Habitat Award (Roberts, 2008). Not all this is positive. Take secured-by-design, for instance: it is now a legal requirement that planning documents for all new social housing are
submitted to the police, who make sure they accord with defensible space principles to reduce the potential for crime (Hatherley, 2012). Writing about Belfast’s similar, if more extreme, sectarian urbanism, Hatherley (2012: 321) claims the “military roots of contemporary urban planning”, particularly secured-by-design, can be traced back to the anti-terrorist design strategies in Northern Ireland – where “the open plan of streets, hard to police and easy to riot, were made into something controllable and enclosed” – but also, remarkably, to Liverpool:

In Liverpool in the 1980s a Trotskyist council replaced towers and tenements with a strikingly similar pattern of brick cul-de-sacs separated by perimeter walls; the suggestion of the ur-postmodernist Essex Design Guide in the mid-1970s enshrined the notion of ‘Defensible Space’ in speculative and public housing.

Hatherley’s suggestion that secured-by-design was a deliberate, coordinated state strategy to make working class estates easier to police seems too close to conspiracy; and although Militant development was commended by Alice Coleman, the URS design guidelines intentionally prohibited cul-de-sacs separated by perimeter walls, partly because this was precisely what co-ops were building, and none better than the Eldonians. But if Hatherley is onto something here, it suggests that one of the less obvious legacies of the co-ops, as exemplars of defensible space, is their inadvertent contribution to the rise of secured-by-design as planning policy, with potentially oppressive functions for easy control by the police and military, as well as more positive purposes in preventing crime, and providing a feeling of communal safety.

This of course, was far from co-ops’ intentions. In addition to the threat of crime, the Eldonians’ defensive design was a spatial manifestation of conflict with the council, also reflecting, perhaps, tribal hostilities towards neighbouring parishes. Despite working closely with the other local social enterprises, CDTs and co-ops – Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council (VNC), Athol Village Co-op, Everton Development Trust, and Centec – EGL is careful not to publicise to Eldonian residents that they are helping or even visiting any one of them, and vice versa. Rivalries between these organisations are rooted in parish politics, deeply divided by clan. One EGL manager believes “they’re jealous” of the Eldonians for their comparative success in securing long-term contracts with companies over mere grants from government – generating stable and growing income with greater long-term security and economic self-sufficiency than one-off grants provide (interview, H4). VNC, in particular, has a rivalry going back a long way, as an organisation that precedes the Eldonians, having emerged out of the
Vauxhall CDP of 1967-72 (Couch, 2003). VNC have imitated the Eldonians by establishing their own nearby housing cooperative, Athol Village, completed in 1994 also by MIH (CDS, 1994). An ex-housing manager remembers “when the first member of the Eldonian staff went – ever went – into VNC premises, and it was like the end of the Cold War!” (interview, C7). With these historical tribalisms in place it is understandable why the Eldonians have prioritised supporting their own even if this means turning inward, their backs to the city; yet by the same token, it is even more extraordinary just how proactive and collaborative they have been in developing partnerships with other organisations to deliver socioeconomic change not just in their neighbourhood but across the entire city.

5.4.5 Cooperative by name if not by nature

Another related indictment – but perhaps contributory to their success – is the relative lack of resident participation or internal democracy compared with other co-ops (interviews, C6/H9). The sheer size of the village alone – 160 families – is enough to make direct participation near-impossible, and representative democracy favourable over participatory. The Eldonians are upfront about not being a co-op, but rather a community-based housing association and trust, having changed their legal structure as soon as the houses were built. It is questionable whether the Eldonians were ever seriously interested in cooperative principles, or simply saw the co-op model more as a useful tool with funding opportunities and political support attached, which could get them where they wanted to go. During the 1970s there was a broad consensus in the cooperative movement that the upper functional limit to co-op membership size was around 40 families in 40 houses (interviews, C2/C4). Most co-ops were indeed around this size (see Appendix E). Weller Streets breached that theory with 60 households and seemed to work relatively successfully as an integrated, cohesive, participatory co-op, but beyond this it was doubted whether a co-op could sustain or even manage in a practical sense the active involvements of all members.

Originally at 150 families, the Eldonians received much criticism from the movement for being too big to really constitute a co-op. George Evans describes how initially they were looking at splitting the tenements into three smaller co-ops, which could then be federated into an overall management group, to which members elect representatives to manage the housing, taking advantage of pooling resources through economies of scale. When it came down to it, however, “our thinking was that naturally by demolishing a tenement, which sometimes had 300 units in, you couldn’t split an estate in half just because of numbers” (interview, Evans). Jack McBane was one of the renegade voices that questioned this “magical
figure” of 50, or even the resulting 112, daring the community to think bigger. Bill Halsall reveals a little known fact:

They started off not as a co-op at all, and the original scheme was part homeownership and part housing association…[but that] collapsed because unemployment was astronomical…so there weren’t enough people in employment to get mortgages to do the for-sale element of the scheme, so it was suggested, ‘why not be a co-op?’ (interview)

Although Portland Gardens had originally been planned as a co-op, after its municipalisation, the Eldonians were not necessarily out to form another one, but rather find the best way to regenerate their neighbourhood and provide decent housing for all their people. Once built, the inclusion of democratic decision-making in the management process was not so important, so long as it effectively met needs. This approach raises questions over the democratic legitimacy of the Eldonians as a community trust. Members of the ECBHA have a nominal £1 share and get a vote in the general meetings, and elect tenant representatives annually to the Trust board; but there has been a relatively “static board for over 10 years”, perhaps more attributable to their success at meeting needs rather than any democratic deficiency (interview, C4). This might partly be explained by the incredibly strong leadership of Tony McGann and his ‘lieutenants’, notably George Evans – who together still exercise a tight grip on the Eldonians long after the campaign required it. There is a fear that if the unofficial central committee do not relinquish some control then there will be no-one coming through to take their place. The Eldonian Village is perhaps more akin to a “community dictatorship” than a community-based cooperative (interview, H9).

Nonetheless, many efforts have been made over the years to ensure parity and transparency between the leadership and community. In the bingo ballot impartially adjudicated by the parish priest that decided the order of choice in the original allocations, Tony’s ball came up last – perhaps not by accident – and he was the very final resident to move out of his decaying flat into his new home in the village. He took great personal pains to ruthlessly ensure fair treatment when his own son was found dealing drugs on the village, and was consequently thrown out of his home (interview, C3). Moreover, the centrally-directed structure seems to work very effectively for most residents. Indeed, it is so responsive to local needs that EGL managers warn of Eldonia becoming a “nanny state”: complaining they sometimes have to act like the “nasty stepfather” with some residents, who expect help with all sorts of everyday issues, like schooling for their children (interview, H5). Another has had to say to residents “I’m not your dad!” (interview, H4). Such a paternalistic dependency culture is the other side
of the coin to the Eldonians’ infamous strength, pride and extraordinary self-belief, as a
community that fought a successful campaign against all odds. Whilst a testament to the
success of the Eldonian structure in delivering local services, this might also stem from a
peculiar sense of entitlement that has arisen on the back of ‘winning the war’. Many Eldonians
are still very proud of their achievements in fighting Militant:

We had a presentation once of how ‘we won the war’…I was looking at this
person and was thinking ‘you weren’t around in the war!…and what they
actually meant was the war for the Eldonians…guerrilla tactics and all this
sort of thing…quite revolutionary…and they see themselves like guerrilla
fighters…There’s a lot of them there that think because they’ve done that,
they deserve everything, somebody should be doing it for them, even
though you still got to live your own life…and you go ‘do revolutionaries
ever retire?’ (interview, H4)
5.5 Aftermath: singing the ‘post-development blues’

This shift is not unique to the Eldonians, and cannot easily be attributed to an effective if authoritarian leadership making free-riding easy. CDS workers and co-op activist alike talk of the phenomenon of ‘post-development blues’, the anti-climactic exhaustion of winning the war, after which the revolutionaries do indeed generally retire. Bill Taylor, a CDS manager, puts it like this:

There was always a bit that was called the ‘post-development blues’ when…you’d been working for four years towards this thing, and…finally ‘bloody hell, practical completion, move in’…and then the people who have really led the co-op through that gestation period and the delivery period go ‘pbbbbbheeeeeeeewwww, right I just want a break now, I’m going to resign’…It’s almost like post-natal depression…you’ve been looking forward to this thing for so long, it comes along and actually then you’ve got a whole set of different challenges because you’ve got something that’s alive and squawking…things like collecting rent, and tackling people who’ve been your friends and neighbours and who live next door about their rent arrears (interview, Taylor).

Most of the co-op ‘war leaders’ did retire to let peacetime managers take over the different tasks of day-to-day management – described by McDonald (1986: 203) as the “transition from…the ‘military’ administration to the ‘civil’ one.” This, however, created its own difficulties for both parties. The old guard would often become bitter and critical of their successors, who they saw as untested or unaware of the challenges of campaigning; whilst the new committee members would struggle with the thankless and unromantic tasks of long-term financial and regulatory assessments as well as the tricky job of allocations. It is little surprise, therefore, to find that many co-ops contracted out most of their administration and housing management tasks to a secondary co-op, principally CDS, which later became North West Housing Services (NWHS). Today the majority of the remaining 50 or so Liverpool co-ops are managed by NWHS, in ways which make it difficult for tenants to feel part of the project of housing themselves.

Motivations tend to weaken with each transition from one generation to the next. As new members necessarily replace old, they come to the project with very different attitudes, expectations and perceptions. Having not lived through or personally experienced the intense political campaigning to establish the co-op, new generations are often more dismissive of the value of cooperative governance and do not share the same commitments in keeping the enterprise alive (interview, A2/A3/C6). There is perhaps an inevitable trade-off over time between, on the one hand, the kind of radical political energy and collective commitment to
the cooperative cause that first animated resistance; and on the other, the successful persistence of collectively managed housing over time – as maintenance costs rise, new technologies are introduced, regulatory and policy environments change – requiring professional expertise and management procedures to maintain consistency as generations come and go, with varying personal commitments.

5.5.1 Post-1988 Housing Act: the final death knell for cooperative housing?

Following the largest movement of new-build housing cooperative development in the country, Liverpool experienced several decades of relative inactivity in collective housing activism. Much of this can be attributed to post-development blues, but the primary constraint was legislative reforms enacted in the 1988 Housing Act, making it almost impossible for housing co-ops to develop anew (CDS, 1994; Malpass & Victory, 2010). First, the generous funding system of grants paid directly from the Housing Corporation to co-ops to finance development and even ongoing revenue deficits was replaced by one increasingly geared towards private finance, requiring housing associations to borrow capital on private markets to finance development. Second, the 1988 Act introduced new requirements for new housing providers to demonstrate a successful track record of management before being registered with the Housing Corporation as a registered provider of social housing. Together, these changes forced small community-led co-ops, reliant on state support but otherwise relatively autonomous, to seek formal development and management agreements with larger housing associations in order to demonstrate competency and make it at all economic to develop expensive new housing – thereby threatening their independence.

Another effect of the 1988 Housing Act was to strengthen the role of housing associations in public provision, which in many ways helped Liverpool council meet its housing challenges (Malpass, 2000). Conditions have improved since the days when the council was the single largest landlord and struggled to physically maintain its 55,000 stock or manage this in a socially responsive way (interviews, C7/H6/H2). Partly these improvements can be attributed to Militant’s URS, which – despite criticism of ‘Hatton houses’ and the huge damage done to future fiscal viability – had also done much to address the severe problems of the 1970s, by demolishing tower blocks, building relatively decent semi-detached houses amenable to upkeep, and investing in parks and leisure centres. But they can also be attributed to the Liverpool Housing Action Trust (HAT), an innovative government-funded scheme, for which the 1988 Act had laid the policy foundations (Holmes, 2005). Liverpool’s was the largest of six HATs rolled out across the country, running from 1993 to 2008, with £260 million of
investment to demolish or refurbish a total of 5,000 dwellings in 67 blocks of flats, which were transferred for this time-limited period over to the trust (Cole, 2012). Liverpool HAT – a relatively independent organisation answerable to an appointed board, with resident representation, worked closely with tenants to refurbish 13 block and demolish 54 – replacing these with 1536 low rise dwellings according to tenant preferences (Couch and Cocks, 2013). Some aspects of participatory design and training were incorporated from the co-op experience – described by Couch (2008: 701) as “not so much bottom-up community activism but a more altruistic state machine choosing to work with the community” – thereby circumventing the translation of housing needs into activism for alternatives.

However, perhaps more causally influential was the transfer and decentralisation of public stock to a multitudinous group of housing associations, empowered by the 1988 Act to access private capital markets, cross-subsidise expensive rehabilitation work and invest in new social housing and maintenance of old in ways which the local authority was increasingly incapable. The pressure on local authorities – from both government legislation and tenant demands – to transfer their remaining stock into the hands of the growing third sector is evident in Liverpool council’s last and largest stock transfer in 2008 of its 15,000 remaining properties to newly-created Liverpool Mutual Homes (LMH), thereby becoming the newest and one of the largest housing associations in the city. Tenants voted overwhelmingly in favour of the transfer into LMH management, which is now a tenant-led organisation priding itself on tenant participation and a generally high level of tenant satisfaction, at least compared with the ‘Corpy’ (interviews, H2/H3/P4). One of the officers managing the transfer process remembers that among all the tenant groups consulted

> There was an application for them to do something cooperative that was already on the books, but anyway it didn’t come off, so all those people voted to go into LMH housing association, so there was no drive really for independence (interview, P4).

The fact that conditions have improved through professionalised services is perhaps explanation enough for the lack of collective housing activism: there simply was no longer the need. This perspective is supported by the housing managers interviewed – some of whom had worked in Liverpool through the cooperative movement, others working for the council to implement Militants’ URS, and now all for some of the city’s leading housing associations (H1/H2/H3/C7/P4/P5) – who believe the lack of interest in or emergence of collective housing alternatives to public housing is explicable as placation by better housing conditions delivered by more responsive, socially accountable and community-based housing
associations, which tend to have resident representation on their boards and certainly have more effective mechanisms for responding to tenant demands than did the council during the darkest days of the late 1970s.

After the 1990s, these same organisations became so successful so as to rival the local authority in the scale of their operations, and arguably increasingly distanced from and unaccountable to the tenants they were meant to serve. By the turn of the millennium, the city’s leading housing associations were engaged in a process of growth and expansion through mergers, acquisitions and stock transfer. For instance, CDS merged with another small association, Hornby Homes, to become Plus, and then later with Cheshire-based Dane, to become Plus Dane Group, which now owns and manages 18,000 homes not just in Merseyside but across Cheshire (interview, H7). This logic of expansion and commercialisation increasingly marginalised the co-op side of the business within the Group and led to it splitting and seeking independence as North West Housing Services (NWHS), which today still manages the maintenance and finance services for some 50 co-ops across Merseyside. A leading figure within NWHS explains:

> When I joined [in 1987] they had 300 properties that belonged to CDS and 600 properties that belonged to co-ops, then they got tempted and...put down a transfer and they got 900 units out of that so it suddenly became 1400 unit organisation...and then there was a transfer of local authority stock...so they became 6,000 units, and then they wanted to build an empire... (interview, H6).

This process started for CDS when it registered with the Housing Corporation as a Registered Provider, which allowed the organisation to utilise the new housing association powers, granted in the 1988 Act, to borrow capital, build houses and administer social housing – moving away from its more modest role as a cooperative development agency. This more commercially-oriented role has certainly separated the Liverpool housing associations from their original activist purposes of helping people house themselves. The founder of NWHS sees this as the root of the problem:

> I didn’t register North West with HCA because I didn’t want the temptation of saying ‘oh we’ll buy two houses in our own name...’ and then we become a straightforward housing association (interview, H6).

Such a process of expansion is accompanied by a geographical decoupling from place, reflected in the change of company identity: from names identified with a specific place to increasingly abstracted and placeless regional brands. MIH is an interesting example of this
trend: starting out in 1928 as a small charitable trust called Liverpool Improved Homes, expanding its remit to become Merseyside Improved Houses, and now operating as Riverside, having dropped reference to the Mersey, managing some 50,000 properties across the Midlands and the Northwest (Holmes, 2005). A Housing Corporation manager reasons that:

It’s also a better way of attracting partners, and moving into other areas…Riverside stopped being Merseyside Improved Houses because it wanted to go beyond Merseyside and when you go and partnership with people they don’t want the Merseyside tag (interview, P4).

There are now fears among the smaller community-based housing associations and co-op sector that these housing associations have mutated into the same monoliths as the councils they replaced, repeating many of the same mistakes:

If you take Riverside it had 50,000 houses; if you go and ask any officer how many voids they have they don’t even sometimes know, because it’s so big and it’s become so impersonal…the board manages properties from London to Newcastle to Wales…they’ve become so big that very few agenda items are what is needed for the tenants, it’s become like a local authority (interview, H6).

This phenomenon is not restricted to large associations: even the Eldonian Development Trust, which grew out of a grassroots campaign, has shed much of its community connection to become Eldonian Group Ltd, and now just EGL. According to one EGL employee, this makes it more amenable to work with large multinationals without the “weight of history around your shoulders” or the “baggage” of the Eldonian affiliation:

It’s good for us to use the Eldonians when…we need it, but when we don’t, we’re EGL…But occasionally…you think they’ll appreciate the Eldonian brand, and we’ll turn around and we’ll say ‘well, as the Eldonians’, and you’re not lying coz we are still the bloody Eldonians…and you can see the seismic change in their attitude to us (interview, H4).

The new name, bleached of place identity and history, reflects EGL’s increasingly independent, inter-regional and dynamic business culture. The only thing preventing EGL from flying the nest is the unique trust structure, which embeds the Eldonian organisations – including ECBHA – in place and makes them directly accountable to the democratically-elected community trust.

However, there are recent signs that EGL has overreached itself, that its business model is unsustainable, that this poses a threat to the viability of the Eldonians as a whole, and that the Eldonian trust structure has been unable to prevent the associated risks. Following an
application for a consumer credit license, under the category of ‘Consumer credit, Consumer hire and Credit brokerage’ – which would grant EGL the ability to offer credit, loans or debt service to their customers, possibly targeted at Eldonian Village residents – EGL have been issued several warning notices by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the newly-reconstituted regulatory organisation that was known as the Financial Services Authority up until April 2013, when the Financial Services Act 2012 came into force (FCA, 2015). In April 2014 the FCA assumed responsibility for regulating the consumer credit industry, taking over the role from the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). Upon reviewing the original application made to the OFT, the FCA had concerns over the viability of EGL business practices, and asked for further information. After no responses were received to repeated requests, the FCA refused the application and conducted an audit, issuing a Final Notice stating that

On the basis of the information contained in the Application, the Authority [FCA] has concerns over whether Eldonian Group Ltd can be effectively supervised, has appropriate resources, is suitable and has a suitable business model having regard to all the circumstances. (FCA, 2015: 2)

Since the FCA audit began, the Chief Exec and most of the staff, including at least one of those interviewed for this study, have resigned from EGL; many of its project partners, including those in the University of Liverpool, have not heard from them since. This raises grave doubts over just how viable and sustainable the self-assertively ‘dynamic’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ approach of EGL really is. It also places question marks over the relationship with the Eldonians: the extent to which the Eldonian Community Trust is implicated. Is the failure of the model attributable to the wider Community Development Trust structure innovated by the Eldonians, or rather confined to the distinct business culture of EGL, which had become increasingly detached from the ethos of not-for-profit social enterprise and its roots in a place-based community? Was EGL allowed to stray too far from its mother organisation? The recent turn of events certainly suggests so. Such questions, however, are in need of further research as the story continues to unfold.
5.6 Summary

The 1980s were a tumultuous time for Liverpool, struggling to deal with the housing crisis hanging over from the ‘lost decade’ of the 1970s, and reeling from growing social unrest, with the Toxteth Riots in 1981. Militant came to power on the back of promises to reinvest in council-housing and other public services, funded by an ‘illegal’ budget, resulting in direct conflict with central government. Fearing a Tory/Liberal plot to privatise and undermine municipal housing, Militant opposed the development of co-ops, actively municipalising those still in development phase, and creating enemies of many, not least the Eldonians. The latter were fortunate enough to be in “the right place at the right time” (Meegan, 1999: 79) – but clever enough to be able to exploit the political battle going on around them – to attract unprecedented levels of government funding and support for a community project. The Eldonians were funded to the tune of some £6 million of central government funds, an unprecedented amount of money for a small community-based organisation to regenerate derelict land in an era when local authority budgets were being slashed.

This reveals several things. First, that the Eldonians were the product of a unique local history and set of political circumstances – suggesting historical ‘place effects’ greatly determine the ability of mutual housing alternatives to embed in place or indeed inspire urban change. Structural forces do not operate everywhere the same; general processes have very distinctive effects based on the way they coalesce with other place-based factors with different results according to local conditions and path-dependencies. Second, with the requisite will and resources, huge progress can be made by relatively small-scale localist interventions to challenge and partly reverse the economic fortunes of places confronted by economic restructuring. The Eldonians have been the most successful of all the Liverpool co-op campaigns in achieving radical urban transformation. However – the third point – this poses problems for the possibility of replication of the Eldonian model, which remains financially unsustainable in terms of conventional regeneration costs, and which is a product of politics unlikely to be repeated.

In many ways, the Eldonians anticipated and benefited from the emerging era of ‘urban entrepreneurialism’ (Harvey, 1989). Despite socialist aspirations towards collective self-government through community ownership of land and housing, the Eldonian model resonated with the enterprising and entrepreneurial culture of self-help and resilience then being promoted by the Conservatives and which has since become a hallmark of neoliberal ideology and urban governance. This was a period in which the concepts of innovation,
enterprise and entrepreneurialism entered the lexicon of the political Left as much as it did the Right. Community and social enterprise became the new leitmotif in local economic development, helping secure the death of the modernist dream of municipal-socialism and the last residues of the Fordist consensus embodied in the Militant-led council.

What set the Eldonians apart from neoliberal urban policy – and that which counterintuitively united Militant’s municipal-socialism with Conservative urban policy, despite deep ideological differences – was the way in which it approached the housing and neighbourhood questions. Both Militant’s URS and the emerging neoliberal regeneration policy were property-led – that is, fixated on the physical material condition of the housing itself rather than the processes which go into producing it as a lived space. Tony Byrne’s URS was predicated on a kind of design determinism, which resonated strangely with Thatcher’s policies through the shared reference point of Alice Coleman’s (1984) work on design disadvantagement. Inverting John FC Turner’s (1972) dictum, this amounts to treating dwelling erroneously as just a noun rather than a verb. Taken together, such housing-led approaches to the housing question are – as I argue below in the Conclusion, Chapter Seven – best understood as a form of housing fetishism, which therefore fails to get at the root of the problem. The Eldonians, like the co-op movement in general, understood the benefits of engaging in the process of designing housing as much as the overall design itself. Unlike the other co-ops, they also aimed at more than just housing, incorporating elements of economic development into their vision for a Self-Regenerating Community. To get there, the Eldonians had to secure partnerships with a whole range of local, regional and national agencies – showing how a partnership-based approach to regeneration can take different guises.

However, at the same time, the Eldonians – and Langrove too – employed political tactics which reflected anarchist strands in earlier cycles of contention. Both campaigns used insurgency, illegal occupation, and fought fierce battles with the council in securing what they perceived as their ‘right to stay put’ (Hartman, 1984). This shows how successful campaigns for common right to place – whose success depends on actively engaging with the state and other professional partners at a later date – must first be forcefully claimed by grassroots groups through insurgent methods which challenge the law (Blomley, 2004b). Unlike earlier co-op campaigns, which had often been motivated to protect their moral rights to the accommodative use values of amenity in Davis’ (1990) schema, these later campaigns were driven more by a desire to protect their security of tenure and right to place, against the threat of displacement by the council. Whereas much of the co-op movement was pro-demolition
and in favour of better housing conditions – securing their right to amenity – Langrove in particular set off a trend for anti-demolition campaigns that would culminate in the emerging CLT movement several decades later. By this point, housing conditions were much better, or at least were being sorted out more effectively by the growing housing association sector, having taken over most municipal management, and so communities’ motivations increasingly turned towards autonomy and choice over the location and design of housing, rather than its quality per se.

During the period of Militant municipalisation, in order to grow the co-op movement effectively fled the city of Liverpool proper into the neighbouring borough of Knowsley. The successful transmission of the co-op model into a new jurisdiction allowed it to continue its growth just as political conditions locally in Liverpool prevented further expansion. The transfer agent in this process was CDS, illustrating the importance of secondary professional networks in the replication of social innovation, for the growth of urban social movements. Through this process of policy mobility, we can see the importance of ‘place effects’ in the development of social innovation. Kirkby was in many ways ripe for co-op experimentation owing to the residual cultural practices of community organising embedded in place by such recent and major campaigns as the 1972 Kirkby Rent Strike, which, as Chapter Three discussed, mobilised some 3,000 tenants in the area. Just as the Rent Strike was organised predominantly by women, so too were the co-ops a principally women-led initiative, mostly driven by single mothers who wanted better housing conditions for their children than the deteriorating and alienating tenements and tower blocks thrown up to house the ‘overspill’ from Liverpool. The co-op model developed in different ways, however, shaped by the particular urban and social context: smaller in size than the Liverpool co-ops and less defined by existing place-based communities.

In contrast to the Kirkby co-ops, the Eldonians show how far the mutual model can be stretched. Unlike other co-ops, which were small enough – no more than 60 households – to maintain a meaningful level of participation from members, and which fitted their needs around the co-op model then being offered by CDS and MIH as a solution to their problems, the Eldonians did it the other way around: twisting and reinventing the model to fit their needs, for a much larger structure of community ownership. Ultimately, they needed a vehicle for regeneration of an entire inner-city area and not just for housing, and so the Community Development Trust (CDT) model suggested itself over a co-op. Although democratic involvement in the Eldonians appears to have waned over the years, the mutual ownership of
land and assets under a community trust umbrella structure has enabled recycling of surpluses for community benefit. This distinguishes the Eldonians from the co-ops and other housing associations, which – despite delivering better housing conditions than the Corpy – have stopped short of the challenge of ongoing community-led urban renewal.

The special strength – and weakness – of the Eldonian trust structure was to allow the separation of functions into a housing arm, ECBHA, and a business development arm, EGL. The latter has been able to pursue real economic empowerment for local residents above and beyond the modest gains made in property ownership and circuitous routes to employment, by providing employment directly for some 100 local residents, and supporting the development of countless other social enterprises and community businesses. However, a fatal flaw in the model has recently been revealed with the FCA audit, suggesting that EGL is no longer accountable to the community and fixated on commercial over social ends.

This story is not unique to the Eldonians, however, and the majority of cooperative development agencies and housing associations on Merseyside, which started out as small charitable trusts, have since, following the effects of the 1988 Housing Act, morphed into huge commercial organisations, losing their ties to place. This reflects the privatisation and commercialisation of the social housing sector in general (Malpass, 2000). The full implications of this transition are considered in the next chapter, where I explain how these very same housing associations that started the co-op movement in the 1970s became centrally involved in HMR, the latest round of demolition-and-rebuild. This placed them in conflict with grassroots campaigns for CLTs – a model distinct from co-ops, yet similar to the Eldonian community trust – and whose origins I trace back to the pioneering work of SNAP.
6. Liverpool’s urban community land trust movement

Since the turn of the millennium, Liverpool has witnessed a resurgence in community activism for housing alternatives, this time centring on CLTs; a model, unlike co-ops, capable of developing in the new political and legal climate. No fewer than five campaigns for CLTs emerged in the late 2000s across the Liverpool city-region: three failed attempts, in Anfield, Kensington, and Sefton MBC; and two successful campaigns, Homebaked, also in Anfield, and Granby Four Streets in the southern heartland of the rehab co-ops. Motivating the CLTs are very different concerns to the co-ops: located in mixed-tenure housing of fragmented ownership rather than purely council-housing, and originating mostly out of anti-demolition campaigns in response to a very specific regeneration programme, HMR, which sought to refurbish or rebuild the original Victorian terraced housing that had survived various preceding redevelopment. In this final empirical chapter, I narrate a history of neighbourhood change in Granby, and argue that the deadlock in decision-making brought about by anti-demolition campaigns contributed to the genesis of HMR in Liverpool as a whole, as well as providing the seedbed the Granby CLT project. I then compare the Granby case with other less successful CLT campaigns, before considering how Homebaked has emerged out of a very different context in the north end of Liverpool.
6.1 The structural issue of failing housing markets

We have already seen – in the Introduction to this thesis – how Liverpool’s dramatic ‘fall from grace’ combined with public policy decisions, notably the slum clearance programme, to create a vicious downward spiral of decline for inner-city neighbourhoods: a wicked problem I have described as the ‘neighbourhood question’. Much of this loss can be attributed to slum clearances, which are estimated to have decanted, by the 1970s, some 160,000 people out of the city into outer estates and new towns at the periphery of the Merseyside conurbation (Sykes et al., 2013). Even with this internal migration taken into account, the population of the overall Merseyside conurbation nonetheless fell from 1.8 million to 1.3 million (Cocks and Couch, 2012), pushing the core population below 500,000 and unemployment over 40% in some inner-city neighbourhoods (Nevin, 2010). This situation was not helped by Militant’s URS, which spent so much on house-building and racked up long-term debt just at the point when resources were needed for economic development and demand for housing was dropping due to falling population, surplus council stock and the priority need to renovate existing old terraced stock.

The spread of spatially-concentrated deprivation, housing vacancy and neighbourhood abandonment in mixed-tenure terraced areas was an issue brewing in the background while more immediate concerns of municipal housing improvements were being addressed through the 1980s and 1990s. The series of area-based initiatives focused on addressing social exclusion in the 1990s – City Challenge, NDC, SRB, and EU Objective One Structural Fund ‘Pathways to Integration’ – created a complex mosaic of grant-dependent partnerships, community-based organisations and time-limited projects, often duplicating and overlapping (Couch, 2003; Meegan and Mitchell, 2001). Despite gains in community engagement, local quality of life, education and training, these regeneration programmes could not address deeper structural issues with the economy and failing inner-city housing markets.

By the time the problem of ‘housing market failure’ was diagnosed by Anne Power (Power and Mumford, 1999), Liverpool neighbourhoods such as Granby and Kensington had been experiencing such trends for over a decade. Suffering with problems distinct from those of council estates and tower blocks tackled by such programmes as HAT, these inner-city Victorian terraces had historically high levels of private-renting and some owner-occupation, harder to deal with by the council. As properties became increasingly expensive to maintain and unpopular, causing owners to move on to escape the blight, this stock was increasingly
acquired by housing associations, using the powers set out in the 1969 Act, GIAs and HAAs. According to one ex-council/housing association manager:

Liverpool has always had a huge private-sector housing problem. Arguably in some cases it's bigger than the public sector problem…Liverpool has got a predominance of terraced property and markets are very fragile (interview, P5).

6.1.1 Granby: a history of decline and resistance
Granby is an indicative, if extreme, illustration of the problem. Largely composed of transient tenants of private ‘slum landlords’, the ward has long suffered with social problems, only partly resolved by the pioneering work of SNAP in the late 1960s. However, SNAP operated only in a small corner of the Granby Planning Action Area, with the remainder still earmarked for clearance and redevelopment as part of the slum clearance programme, still in operation despite the introduction of the rehab approach following the 1969 Act (McConaghy, 1972). The top end of Granby Street was built over in the early 1970s, in order to build a new housing estate (see figure 6.1). This cut the street short at Selbourne Street, disconnecting it from the major arterial road, Upper Parliament Street, and the city-centre, creating a dead-end road without the through-flow – either pedestrian, bus or car – that had once sustained it as a vibrant regional shopping artery (see figure 6.2 below).
Yet SNAP’s participatory planning process also contributed to this problem. As Chapter Four explains, one of the SNAP Task Forces designed to encourage resident control over the planning process was tasked with transportation and traffic. Before SNAP arrived, the council had committed to a plan for the construction of a major distributor road to connect the southern suburbs with the city centre, running right through the heart of Granby yet leaving Princes Avenue as a pedestrian walkway (see figure 6.3 below). Plan A entailed the demolition of many properties, dividing Granby in two, and displacing residents to new-build council estates. The SNAP Task Force opposed the road scheme, and successfully campaigned for a compromise solution that saved many streets from clearance (McConaghy, 1972).
However, the experience of being threatened by increased traffic through-flow stimulated fears that their neighbourhood would be overrun by traffic. Granby was already a locus for prostitution, kerb-crawling and petty crime (Cornelius, 1982; Hook, 1970b). Residents wanted to stem this flow of unwanted activity and so Task Force representatives decided on a traffic management scheme that blocked off the ends of most streets at their connections with Princes Avenue. Residents certainly got a much quieter and safer street in the short-term, in voting for cul-de-sacs, but by the late 1980s, as Andy Merrifield reports (1996, 2002), the area had once again become a hotspot for crime, paradoxically encouraged by the cul-de-sac street bollards, preventing a healthy through-flow of passers-by.
Merrifield recalls Jane Jacobs’ (1961) prescription of an active and busy ‘street ballet’ in which many eyes-on-the-street provide the best form of safety and self-policing in his assessment of area. Granby Street was finally opened up at the junction with Princes Avenue in 1993, but the violence had already been done:

Until then, the street had been blocked off, and the social isolation seemed to be perpetuated by its physical isolation and fortress-like quality (Merrifield, 2002: 58).

The once bustling central shopping avenue is now almost entirely vacant and derelict, its Post Office closing in 1994 owing to successive hold-ups. According to the 1981 census, 39.6% of men in Granby ward were jobless (Beckett, 2015), which for black teenagers was as high as 90% (Merrifield, 2002: 59). By the early 1980s, Granby had effectively become “Liverpool’s ghetto” (Beckett, 2015). The coincidence of unemployment and poverty with certain ethnic and demographic groups, notably young black men, had severe repercussions when in 1981 rioting erupted in response to police brutality and racial discrimination against the local black
community, the most established in the UK (Frost and Phillips, 2011). Ironically, the bollarding had another function unforeseen by the SNAP Task Force: they not only helped keep crime and kerb-crawling out – though not resolving it entirely, only displacing it elsewhere – but also helped police contain urban unrest as an anti-riot tool for ‘kettling’, along with the so-called ‘riot hills’, installed on some of the cleared housing sites (Hatherley, 2012; Hughes, 2015).

Since then, Granby has been marked by territorial stigma, dissuading prospective tenants and contributing to the growing problem of depopulation and low demand, with increasingly prevalent ‘hard-to-let’ properties, falling into disrepair. Informal economic activity, minor criminality, street gangs and drug dealing became common responses to the sheer lack of formal economic opportunities (Merrifield, 2002). Basic public services such as street lighting, cleaning and rubbish collection have been neglected by the council (interviews, A7/A8). Local residents have long believed that the actions – or rather, inaction – of the city council in response to the riots has been an intentional policy of wilful neglect or ‘managed decline’:

So after the riots you’d have thought that a huge investment would be made to kind of patch things over wouldn’t you? But…nobody gave a shit actually. You’d have thought that a lot of effort – government, council – would have gone into putting an ‘elastoplast’ over, cleaning it up, making it at least look OK, and the exact opposite was done: absolutely nothing happened except 20 years of boarded up housing and filthy, really incredibly degraded environment…you can see why people would deduce punishment…because what happened – or didn’t happen – was quite extraordinary (interview, A7).

Since 1981, however, the council has been fighting a losing battle. The initial private-sector grants recommended by SNAP were written into HAAs in the 1970s, in which the council offered generous funding to private landlords and owner-occupiers to refurbish their properties. As a secondary move, the council would use its CPO powers to buy up any under-maintained property and transfer to the growing housing association sector; a dual approach described by an ex-council officer as

Offering the carrot – which was a grant to the landlord – and the stick was CPO if they didn’t take that up, and the ultimate sanction was that the properties were CPO’d and transferred to co-ops or housing associations. (Interview, P5)

Despite worsening local socioeconomic conditions and accusations of neglect from local residents, the housing stock was effectively sustained by this dual system: council grants to
private landlords/owners, and also government grants, via the Housing Corporation, to co-ops and housing associations. In this way, housing associations would become the largest landlords in the area through a process of council CPO and stock transfer of those properties failing to be maintained by private owners. However, the 1988 Housing Act radically restructured public housing provision, virtually removing the grant system, thereby leaving associations without these additional state funding streams to deal with worsening housing conditions, having to fund any improvements out of rent revenues alone. This came at a time when the original private rehab work completed in the 1970s was coming to the end of its proposed lifespan; long after pre-1919 speculative ‘Jerry-built houses’ were ever intended to last (Cowan et al., 1988). An ex-council officer explains that the rehab grant system was never intended to be “a forever solution; it was a sticking plaster, and it was 20 year life standards we talked about, and that was going back to the ‘70s” (interview, P5).

Twenty years on, terraces saved from clearance through the private-sector grant rehab programme were unsurprisingly in poor condition; made worse by a context of rising unemployment and falling population leading to housing vacancies, dereliction and abandonment. Housing associations were faced with severe structural maintenance problems and tenants with dwindling employment prospects who, for instance, wanted smaller modern flats with lower heating bills (interview, P5). As a result, many of Granby’s grander Georgian and Victorian properties became vacant; housing associations began boarding up the area (figure 6.4). This only contributed to the general perception of decline, dissuading any prospective tenants or buyers from investing their lives in the area. A ‘Granby Housing Condition Survey’ conducted in 1992 by the council found that 25% of the wards’ properties were vacant, 5% derelict and boarded up, and another 50% ‘unfit’ or ‘seriously unfit’ for human habitation (Merrifield, 2002: 61). This was indeed a ‘wicked’ problem for all those involve – requiring radical solutions.
Without the necessary state funding to finance refurbishment, the council took action by declaring Granby a Renewal Area in 1992, and successfully lobbied for £9.4 million funding, mostly as government subsidy from the Merseyside Special Allocation (MSA) set up by Heseltine alongside MDC (Merrifield, 2002). Following initial consultation exercises with local housing associations and residents the latter formed Granby Residents Association (GRA). The council planned to demolish and rebuild and began strategically buying up private properties and requesting that housing associations transfer their properties back into council ownership, emptying the area of residents to prepare for redevelopment. A council officer working on the project explains that
The council decided the best way of dealing with that area – I’m not saying they were right – was to try and get control of the properties, so that at least then they would have the ability to make a decision about the long term future, whether it be improving them all or demolishing them all…But it was doing it on a voluntary basis and you can’t ever get control like that on a voluntary basis: you need some kind of CPO action if you’re gonna be successful (interview, P5).

Meanwhile the GRA – increasingly composed of stalwart homeowners, as public tenants were being evicted from their homes – began to resist council plans, and started the Granby Residents Against Demolition (GRAD) campaign. With house prices bottoming out at between £20,000 and £8,000 (Merrifield, 1996), homeowners were forced to either sell up fast, absorbing a loss, or, trapped in negative equity, stick it out until the market regained strength. Initial resistance to council-led demolition was driven by a minority of remaining homeowners seeking to protect their investments. Not just financial, they had invested their lives in the area, developed attachments to community and place, only to see it get run down. Place attachment grew all the stronger as the decline deepened; an embattled, belligerent, stubborn loyalty in response to what many perceived as ‘punishment’ dished out by the council (interviews, A7/A8). Anger still simmered over from the 1981 Uprising and police and council treatment of the local black community, many of whom had been evicted out of the area. Other residents, however, in surrounding streets not immediately earmarked for demolition, were supportive of council plans, relieved something was finally happening to arrest decline (Merrifield, 1996)

Figure 6.5: suburban housing built to replace terraces, most recently by HMR (bottom right). (Source: author’s own, 2014)
The GRAD campaign was successful in preventing demolition and bringing the council to public inquiry in 1997, yet this ruled in favour of a CPO for all units along Granby Street; private-sector housing was bought by the council at an average price of £17,000, not enough to buy a similar property elsewhere in Liverpool (Merrifield, 2002). Having replaced most of the terraces with lower density estates (figure 6.5), this left intact only four original streets – the ‘Granby Triangle’ – in which the council had to contend with fierce resistance from a small minority of remaining homeowners organised as the GRA. In 2013, there were 128 vacant boarded-up houses and shops, leaving only around 60 households still lived in (figure 6.6). These four streets map precisely onto SNAP’s original boundaries, suggesting that early rehabilitation efforts had secured a longer life for the buildings and empowered the community to be able to fight for their neighbourhood several decades later. Described by an ex-council as the “final battleground” (interview, P5), they became centre-stage to a bitter process of fraught negotiations, direct action, occupations, street demos, and innovative community activism that helped pave the way for the recently successful CLT campaign. The resistance attracted the support of national lobby organisations, Empty Homes Agency and SAVE Britain’s Heritage, helping raise the media profile of efforts to rehabilitate rather than demolish empty terraces.

The deadlock in decision-making over the area was a testament to the collective power and successful community organising of a small group of passionate homeowners who wanted to see something different than demolition; but it also reflected the lack of overall control, coordination or direction offered by any one competing agency and the messy disorganisation of a range of stakeholders, housing associations and council departments. A council report from the mid-1990s stated that

If no clear programme is put in place for the whole area this resource will be lost...it is felt that the loss of the MSA funding would be disastrous for the area without which any solution would be impossible (quoted in Merrifield, 2002: 61).
6.1.2 LIFE in a ZOO

It was the council’s difficult experience of working in neighbourhoods like Granby that led to a game-changing policy for bringing clearer leadership and greater coordination in addressing such complicated regeneration dilemmas. The Liberal Democrats took council control in 1998 and initiated a new Housing Strategy and the Liverpool Strategic Housing Partnership to bring about more coordinated collaboration between council, housing association, developer and community group plans for each neighbourhood; creating more joined-up strategic regeneration in contexts where multiple tenures, owners and interests overlap, collide, and conflict to produce stalemate (Inside Housing Awards, 2004). First, stock transfer to housing associations was promoted as the “only realistic option” (Richard Kemp, then Executive
Member for Housing, quoted in Holmes, 2005: 131). Second, the ‘LIFE model’ rationalised inner-city neighbourhoods into five distinct zones, or “areas of opportunity”, and assigned one lead housing association to each (Inside Housing Awards, 2004). This was a response to the confusion of too many agencies operating in one area duplicating processes (Holmes, 2005). Under the LIFE model, each housing association would assign itself a clearly defined role within each area, following L-I-F-E: Lead in an area; Influence what happens; Follow by collaborating with others; or Exit where presence is minimal (Holmes, 2005). In Granby, as for the entire L8 district, Plus Dane became the Lead association, and began developing plans for holistic neighbourhood management, working more closely with the council to plan redevelopment. Winning an Inside Housing award in 2004, the logic of the LIFE model was such that

Without the LIFE model, the council, private developers and other partners would have had to consult, negotiate and collaborate with around 40 associations operating across the market renewal pathfinder area. Residents and other stakeholders would be confused by the range of partners and effective delivery of the programme could be hampered (Liverpool Council’s group manager for neighbourhood services quoted in Inside Housing Awards, 2004)

This is where the logic behind Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinders seemed to derive. The impetus for strategic demolition-and-rebuild schemes in particular zones of empty homes was already beginning to emerge in Liverpool council thinking as far back as the early 1970s, with the creation of monopoly regeneration zones for housing associations in GIAs and HAAs; later given coherence as a joined-up policy initiative in the Liverpool Strategic Housing Partnership and the LIFE model. This constructed the operational muscle tissue ready to be fully flexed once HMR funding was secured. Liverpool led a group of city councils, including Manchester/Salford, to lobby central government for funding intervention in failing housing markets (interview, P7/P3). Early reports commissioned by Liverpool council recommended that Liverpool’s inner-city could be a pilot for government funding of housing market restructuring, becoming one of the largest recipients of funding when HMR Pathfinders were launched in 2002 (Cocks and Couch, 2012).

The rationale for HMR was radical in its multi-scalar focus on regional market restructuring, bringing together and rationalising the confusing number of previous and ongoing projects, as Liverpool council’s HMR manager explains:
We’d been before, we just keep coming back…General Action Areas, Housing Improvement Areas in these areas years ago, all these government-funded regen’ schemes back in the ‘70s and ‘80s, then Neighbourhood Renewal Areas…New Deal for Communities…ERDF [European Regional Development Fund] – there were all sorts of regeneration schemes, all looking at their own little bits, but there was never this massive comprehensive approach to dealing with a whole area…looking at doing something quite radical in terms of transforming areas (interview, P7).

Once given the green light, Liverpool was in the perfect position to capitalise on funding and hit the ground running. The ‘areas of opportunity’ formatted by the LIFE model were simply translated into Zones of Opportunity (ZOOs) for the Liverpool’s ‘NewHeartlands’ Pathfinder. Unfortunately, the architects of HMR had unwittingly created a problematic metaphor in the acronym ZOO, within which many people still lived. Following the logic of the existing Strategic Housing Partnership, NewHeartlands appointed a single preferred housing association and developer for each ZOO to carry out refurbishment and rebuild plans in specific renewal areas (Liverpool City Council, 2003b), as depicted in figure 6.6.

Figure 6.7. City Centre South ZOO (source: Liverpool City Council 2003: 31-32). Granby Triangle’s four streets are located within the central yellow triangle surrounded by red.

Key: “Within the four zones of intervention, there are 3 different levels of activity envisaged and these are illustrated on the maps overleaf”
- Yellow = “Areas containing the most potential for redevelopment and where comprehensive intervention through clearance is envisaged”
- Pink = “Comprehensive intervention areas containing a smaller proportion of redevelopment opportunities but needing intensive neighbourhood and housing management”
- Blue = “Improved management areas containing few developments opportunities and needing less intensive neighbourhood management”
As figure 6.6 illustrates, these individual renewal areas – or ‘regeneration zones’ – covered large areas of land, encompassing large residential blocks, including housing worth saving, in order to create large enough ‘land banks’ and economies of scale for profitable redevelopment by the grant regime partners. The centralised systematic and large-scale approach of the British housing development industry means that developers will only take on land for redevelopment above a certain spatial scale, which when combined with the LIFE model in Liverpool HMR delivery, leads to a questionable approach akin to

Pulling out all teeth and replacing them with dentures even if only a few teeth show signs of caries, rather than keeping and repairing all teeth as long as possible by fillings or root canal treatments (Schulze Bäing, 2014)

Indeed, assets of architectural and social value remaining in these cordoned off areas have been described as “collateral damage” by a politically prominent proponent of HMR (interview, P1). These are treated not as lived spaces but as abstract sites in a “chessboard” of strategic land parcels, to be stripped bare of residents and packaged up for redevelopment, so the HMR partnership may “shift pieces around” to be activated at different stages according to changing dynamics of market profitability and resident opposition (interview, N7). This was the start of the abstract monolithic one-size-fits-all approach that characterised HMR (figure 6.8). Despite, the promise of radical transformation, it was to have violent impacts on neighbourhoods like Granby – inspiring passionate counteractions.

Figure 6.8: standardised regeneration zone signs across the city, with Liverpool FC in background in Anfield, opposite Homebaked CLT (left). All signs read ‘creating neighbourhoods for the future’. (Source: author’s own, 2014)
In Granby, the council had for several years tried to buy out defiant homeowners and evict remaining tenants with arguments about the structural condition of properties, deemed unsafe to live in. One common argument was that the bay windows – striking architectural features of larger properties – were ‘structurally unsound’ and coming away from the wall, therefore a danger to passers-by and inhabitants (interviews, A7/A8). Official surveys recommended that these bays be pulled down and bricked in, but residents challenged this and sought an independent assessment, which advised the bays could indeed be ‘tied-in’, thereby saving the houses and confirming suspicions that the council were bent on demolition. One of the most dramatic confrontations came when residents engaged in picketing and direct action to blockade Cairns Street with cars against approaching bulldozers (interviews, A4/A7). They alerted the local press so that the resulting stand-off was reported (Duffy, 2011a); a successful strategy that further galvanised the spirit of resistance. The council eventually earmarked the end two houses, 67 and 69 Cairns Street, to be demolished and rebuilt. Residents organised a peaceful protest outside the buildings as they were scaffolded. Together, these represented the first ever instances of direct action to challenge demolition in the Granby Triangle:

That’s when it dawned on me that hundreds and hundreds of houses had been demolished in our area and there hadn’t been one bloody demonstration against it! We weren’t flooded out by people joining, which you’d think you would have been for the last four [streets] (interview, A7).

Despite modest numbers, around 20 residents, their sustained picketing using megaphones, banners and placards successfully prevented contractors from entering the houses and carrying out demolition; attracting good coverage in the Liverpool Echo (Duffy, 2011a, 2011b; Stewart, 2011). Some activists super-glued locks shut and painted scaffolding with ‘anti-vandal paint’: an ironic signifier of “civic vandalism” (interviews, A4/A7/A8/N5). But the builders ultimately beat them to it, arriving before sunrise to begin stripping out interiors, and in the process, causing structural damage to adjoining property, 65, scheduled for refurbishment. A council spokesperson dismissed it as “unfortunate” collateral damage (Stewart, 2011). Residents accused the builders of intentionally damaging the structure to leave no choice but demolition. This reflects concerns about how private contractors employed by the council and housing associations treated the terraces they were tasked with securing against crime and weathering for possible future refurbishment. Activists witnessed workmen throwing bricks through wooden floors – to “test their strength” – collapsing into cellars, thereby helping bring about the very degradation they were employed to prevent; strengthening one thing
only: the case for demolition (interviews, A6). This put paid to their efforts to save 65-69 (figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9: The end terraces replaced by small-windowed semi-detached houses (left) out of scale with the original grand terraces (right). (Source: author’s own, 2015)

Yet this is a trend repeated by private contractors for the remaining unoccupied terraces:

As soon as people left they bricked them up from the inside – so if you looked from the street they had all this oozing kind of concrete – then they walked outside and smashed all the windows, leaving you with jaggy bits of glass (interview, A7).

By bricking up the windows, the contractors were able to secure – against crime, squatting and the elements – houses which were already in a dangerous state of disrepair through wilful neglect (figure 6.10 below). But to remaining residents it revealed the assumptions made about their neighbourhood, left in a visually vandalised condition as a scar for the community to daily endure:

I think it shows that you actually despise the people who are living there, that you don’t even rate them as…fully human; because it’s what you’d do if there was nobody there isn’t it? It’s what you’d do if it was like an old military site say, or somewhere that nobody lived (interview, A7).
This approach to securing empty properties nonetheless appears in accordance with guidelines in the council’s ‘Living Through Change’ programme for HMR delivery. This aimed “to make clearance areas and their surrounding area, safe, secure, clean and well managed”, through what was called ‘Target Hardening’, “fitting extra security measures (i.e. doors, locks, etc.) to occupied properties and around the clearance areas”; and ‘Enhanced Void Security’, “ensuring that empty properties are appropriately secured to reduce the risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour” (Liverpool City Council, 2007: 28). Such language impersonal and technocratic language in helping residents ‘live through change’, emphasises bureaucratic rationalisation, safety and security in preparing areas for demolition, disregarding aesthetic and adverse effects on existing residents, who, unsurprisingly, refer to the programme as ‘living through Hell’ (interviews, N7/A7). In some sense, this is a ‘concrete abstraction’ (Lefebvre, 1991) – the abstract space of HMR logic made concrete in the grey homogeneity of breeze-blocked windows and in psycho-social impacts on residents daily confronted with it. The violence enacted was most acute in instances where – particularly reported in Anfield and Breckfield – the bricking up of houses was initiated on the same day residents moved their belongings out (interview, A5/A6). In direct response to the bricking up of voids, residents subverted these images of violence through artistic expression (see figures 6.10, and 6.11 below).
Residents boarded over some of the more prominent window infills and emblazoned them with creative messages of hope, resilience, and festivity: 'never give up!' (Source: author’s own, 2015 and 2014)
6.2 Growing Granby CLT from the grassroots

Granby residents’ reactive anti-demolition campaigning evolved gradually into more proactive ‘imagined’ claims of ownership over the neglected, disinvested and largely vacant streets, eventually manifesting in the CLT campaign. During anti-demolition campaigning, an Empty Homes Agency campaigner was invited to present ideas about potential rehabilitation solutions (interview, N6). He helped establish in 2007, as its chair, the Granby Community Partnership, the first formal communication channel between council and community since the 1981 Uprising. GRA entered into agreement with the council and Lovells to build 70 new homes and remodel 165 existing homes – angering other residents. The council agreed to fund community activities by £10,000 funding per year, which residents used to explore their own neighbourhood vision through fact-finding site visits and conferences, as well as to fund various projects such as a regular local newsletter, the Jangler, street gardening and a monthly market, which attracted the attention of local groups (interview, N6). Recently established Northern Alliance Housing Co-operative (NAHC) – a small group of idealistic young professionals living locally and looking for empty homes to retrofit for an ecologically sustainable mutualised co-op – tried to convince Granby residents of their co-op idea (interview, A4).

It was into this fray that the CLT idea was first introduced by leading GRA members and the empty homes campaigner who, through his work with Granby, was to become a technical advisory consultant for the National CLT Network, the umbrella organisation representing all UK-based CLTs (interview, N6/N4). This created a decisive split in the community between co-op and CLT factions, leading to the dissolution of the GRA. The Community Partnership was also officially disbanded, in 2010, after residents had become increasingly frustrated with the council’s broken promises and inaction over considering alternatives, whilst empty homes were literally falling in (interview, N6). But the CLT idea stuck and a small group of more committed activists became its key proponents, eventually establishing the official body of the Granby Four Streets CLT in November 2011 (interview, C7/A7).
Long before HMR withdrawal, Granby’s remaining residents had already begun to resist its adverse effects through grassroots guerrilla gardening. Out of a state of despair and blight, activist residents have set about cleaning streets, clearing rubbish, seeding wildflower meadows on vacant plots, painting house frontages with colourful artistic murals and bringing potted plants and garden furniture out onto pavements (figure 6.12). At around this time, a council-funded adult education programme on ecology and gardening called ‘Growing Granby’ entrusted a nearby vacant plot to local residents via a short-term lease from LMH, for a community garden; inspiring more radical ideas for a ‘DIY People Plan’ reimagining Granby.
as a ‘backyard commons’ (Grant, 2011). Yet the insurgent acts of guerrilla gardening that have transformed the Granby Triangle into the so-called ‘Green Triangle’ sprang forth more spontaneously from residents themselves, distinguishing themselves from ‘Growing Granby’, Because we work in public space, not behind railings on private land…We never asked for any and I think that’s why ours is so good…They’re behind a 10 foot perimeter fence…it’s fine what they do but it’s nothing at all to do with reclaiming space and creating public space…recreating a pleasant or a great place to live…They’re growing veg and it’s guarded space for the people who want to be involved in it…it’s quite different (interview, A7).

Working without permission from the council, these guerrilla gardeners perform an ‘imagined proprietorship’ (Blomley, 2004a) over an ‘un-real estate’ through active ‘doing’ rather than abstract entitlement (Rose, 1994). They engage in everyday acts of ‘commoning’ to bring the domestic, intimate spaces of their homes out into the public streetscape, sharing it with others, and creating a distinctive hybrid community garden that mixes domesticity, privacy, communality, and public openness; bearing hallmarks of an ‘actually existing commons’ (Eizenberg, 2012a). Green Triangle commoning cuts across political and social distinctions among residents, who have forged common bonds despite diverse worldviews through communal cleaning, planting, and tending; describing the Green Triangle not simply as a project but a “state of mind” (interviews, A7/A8). However, these practices are largely confined to a small number of remaining homeowners, almost exclusively women linked to the city’s artistic and creative milieu – potentially enacting a kind of eco-gentrification. There is therefore a need for the Granby CLT to seek greater inclusion of wider publics and more direct participation of other residents for democratic legitimacy.

Cairns Street activist-residents have also established a very popular street market, kick-started with the £10,000 council funding but organised voluntarily. Since its inception the market has become a symbol of resistance, community hub for small-scale economic and cultural activity, and something of a local legend attracting people from all over Liverpool and beyond (figure 6.13). On the first Saturday of every month, local residents set up their stalls selling everything from second-hand books to daily essentials, with live music and diverse dishes cooked onsite in a mini-festival environment. This DIY experiment is a tentative move towards regenerating Granby through community control over the means of social reproduction.
Figure 6.13: Granby Four Streets Market, on Cairns Street where it has been traditionally held (top four photos), and on Ducie Street, its new location since April 2015 owing to the refurbishment work going on in Cairns Street (bottom four). (Source: author’s own, 2014 and 2015)
6.2.1 Attracting support

It is difficult to overemphasise how important these insurgent creative acts and informal economic practices have been to the formal CLT campaign for common ownership. An influential regeneration consultant in the city, and now CLT Board Member, explains what drew her to the project:

The thing that most impressed me was...they stopped going...they stopped going to the engagement meetings, they stopped being consulted; they started sweeping their street, painting the tinned up houses so they had something nicer to look at, planting flowers and the like...then the market kind of started as a one-off, and now attracts 200 people a time over the course of a day – you know the idea that you can get 200 people in the middle of a derelict street in Liverpool on a wet afternoon running up to Christmas is pretty phenomenal – and none of that is about what will happen to their houses: that is all about people in a locality having a relationship with each other and making something happen for the better. So that’s what I’m supporting. (interview, H8).

NAHC founder – a committed co-operator who currently lives only a few streets away in one of the remaining 1970s co-ops – speaks of why he first approached the four streets with his co-op idea:

People saying ‘yeah we’re not going anywhere and we’re still here...you don’t care [but] we still care about the area’. I mean that’s one of the reasons why I was taken with it – chanced upon it one day as I was cycling round...all trees were like out and it was a beautiful sunny day...with the flowers everywhere – it was such a beautiful, beautiful thing (interview, A4).

Indeed, NAHC was established specifically to acquire empty homes in the Granby Triangle; inspired by the creative endeavour evident in the four streets to explore the idea of a co-op and present it to residents (interview, A4/A6). Likewise, the community developer who helped broker the common vision was also seduced by the green activism:

I first sort of got snagged by the thought that I might be able to do something when, even before I wrote the blog, I used to walk around Liverpool, deliberately inspecting how it was doing, and on one of these walk...I came upon a Granby street market, by pure accident, and I found out that the women there had planted the street up, they’d painted the shutters on the houses with curtains and cats... (interview, C7).

Perhaps the most vital support came from a private social finance company, HD Social Investments (HDSI) personally backed by what CLT members describe as “the mystery millionaire” (interviews, A7/A8). This former stockbroker from Jersey had sent his researcher
out around the country searching for socially worthwhile projects in which to invest finance capital for a small return – described by CLT activists as “philanthropy at 5%” (interview, A8), recalling the early housing trusts in the 19th century, such as Peabody, known as ‘5% philanthropy orgs’ (Malpass, 2000). The researcher came across Granby through auspicious links with SAVE Britain’s Heritage – interest piqued by the residents’ entrepreneurial spirit breathing life back into the faded Victorian grandeur around them.

Conflicts of interest between community and private investor may well play out in due course, but so far HDSI have provided crucial financial support: considerable low interest loans and funding and expertise required to successfully apply for several grants, such as the Nationwide Foundation’s and government’s Empty Homes Funds, each worth £125,000. HDSI – recently rebranded Steinbeck Studios – have used their contacts to source appropriate architects for the CLT project: an innovative London-based architecture and design collective renowned for their do-it-yourself approach to regeneration called Assemble (Wainwright, 2015). HDSI have commissioned a persuasive design statement from Assemble, setting out a practical plan to acquire and refurbish 27 of the 128 vacant, boarded-up properties as a mix of affordable homes, as part of a long-term vision to rehabilitate the 113 other empty homes and revive the neighbourhood’s economic backbone, Granby Street (Assemble, 2013). It has proven critical in persuading the council to consider the scheme as an attractive, even viable option (interviews, H8).

Gaining council support, as the principal landowner and gatekeeper, is essential for successful acquisition. Yet securing the recent deal with the council has not been easy, in the context of historically fractious relations. From the council perspective, the burden of proof lies firmly on the CLT to demonstrate its social responsibility to manage assets, to convince local government of the merits of transferring public assets to an untested community-owned organisation. A local architect/activist states the problem thus:

We have to prove that we can do something before people trust, because that issue of trust goes both ways…local residents don’t trust the city council, the city council don’t trust local residents to do anything other than kick up a fuss…Hopefully that would get easier…breaking down the barriers that have been built up over the last ten years with HMR…and a certain fear at the council level…just trusting people to do the best for the neighbourhood doesn’t really seem to be there. I think it’s there now with some of the members but it’s still not there with all of the officers; that’s an institutional culture thing, which I expect takes decades to change (interview, A5).
6.2.2 Putting the ‘T’ into CLT

Trust is the magic ingredient holding the entire CLT endeavour together. It relies on trust that the council will not take advantage of community aspirations for self-governance to cynically off-load public service responsibilities, on trust of local people, who need to feel included in order to give consent and democratic legitimacy, on trust between members engaging in collective governance, on trust placed in CLT Board members to represent the interests of other members fairly, and ultimately trust in the community trust itself, as responsible ‘steward’ of public assets for future generations. Yet there is a long complicated history of mutual mistrust between council and community, first flaring in the 1981 Uprising, now threatening to paralyse collaborative decision-making. Residents feel a powerful sense of resentment and injustice about the council’s demolition plans:

People past and present who live here…feel that their property has been stolen from them, I mean really quite powerfully feel that…the area has been stolen from quite a tight-knit community, so actually a CLT is quite symbolic in returning ownership to the community (interview, A8).

The moral vocabulary of theft is used in two senses: individual homes ‘stolen’ by CPO and forced eviction, and a more collective sense of loss of shared history and community ties. The CLT is seen as a symbolic re-appropriation of place: reclaiming personal homes and community space ‘stolen’ by the council and protecting against future demolition threats. Such an oppositional position poses additional barriers to negotiating a mutually satisfactory solution.

The absence of trust is evident in the council’s decision, in the wake of HMR’s cancellation, to tender the four streets for ‘best value’ bids, entering into year-long negotiations with a private development company, Leader One, whilst CLT campaigners found it difficult getting their ideas taken seriously (interview, A4/A7). Such a competitive winner-takes-all logic – formalised in the 1980s by compulsory competitive tendering policies (Hodkinson, 2011) – remains attractive to councils for settling a definite contract with one single responsible and liable owner, a benefit of the ‘ownership model’ (Blomley, 2004b). But this imposes severe entry barriers for smaller community-led projects without the resources or expertise of private companies. It is also risky: the Leader One deal collapsed under unreasonable demands for the council to underwrite any losses, the admirable refusal to effectively privatise profit and socialise risk.
During this process, activists approached Leader One to propose a partnership, which the company briefly entertained. The bias against collective forms of property relations is visible in NAHC’s decision to adopt the Mutual Home Ownership Society (MHOS) model as a more palatable mutual solution than conventional co-op. The MHOS model has been developed by CDS Co-operatives – the London-based secondary organisation from which Liverpool’s CDS originated – to circumvent the problem of leaseholder enfranchisement (Conaty et al., 2008). Designed to work as a key complementary component, MHOS lease buildings from CLTs, which ultimately protects the land from private buy-outs. The UK’s pioneering MHOS development is LILAC (Low Impact Living Affordable Community) in Leeds, in which activist-scholar Paul Chatterton lives, documenting its progress as the community develops (Chatterton, 2013). LILAC is, however, not coupled with a CLT – which makes Granby the UK’s first demonstration project of the CLT-MHOS model. However, NAHC reveals how it was Leader One during council negotiations, as opposed to LILAC, who suggested the efficacy of MHOS:

I think they were just messing with us to be honest…Leader One said ‘oh the council isn’t interested in having a cooperative there because’ – when a council look at a cooperative they think ‘ahh, that’s social housing’ – so they were like ‘if you can make it like some kind of ownership thing, then we might be a bit more interested’; so we said ‘OK, we could look at making it a homeownership, mutual homeownership thing’, and again that worked very well with the CLT (interview, A4).

The preference for mutual homeownership over a traditional co-op is as much about the perceived fear and mistrust of common property regimes that sit outside the familiar categories of the ownership model – assuaged by the semantic association with individual ‘homeownership’ – as it is with the actual workings of the MHOS model itself, more akin to a co-op than its name suggests (Chatterton, 2013). This is where its power lies in playing the language game of private property rights, and potentially using this brand advantage as a way to leverage support from otherwise sceptical gatekeepers.

Without other successful CLT-MHOS examples to evidence – and lacking the legal clarity of private freehold – it is a difficult case to make to any public body under the ideological sway of the ownership model, evident in the actions of Liverpool council following HMR. It was only the austerity-driven failure of Leader One that turned attention towards the CLT vision. A change in council mindset was already evident in its self-help ‘homesteading’ plan. Empty Homes funding has been made available to sell empties for £1 to individuals with local connections to rehabilitate through do-it-yourself labour and investments to match a state-
backed low interest loan – on the proviso that certain conditions are met, such as living in the house for at least five years without sub-letting (Crookes and Greenhalgh, 2013). Such a piecemeal approach is perhaps too individualised to effectively tackle a large area of empties, having only been tested with a handful of properties in Granby. Yet it signals a break with the dominant large-scale development model.

In the early days of community discussion, just as the CLT was mooted as an idea, residents talked about a “chink of light” emerging as conventional redevelopment plans each collapsed in turn (interview, C7). With guerrilla gardening and street markets already demonstrating the potential of the spatial project envisaged in the CLT, a key move towards gaining the council’s attention was made with a letter drafted by activists and sent to

Key members of the council, about eight of them, arguing for…a more creative way of moving forward that didn’t just replicate…one big developer…or one housing association, but tried to sort of say there was room for a more complicated model, that there could be different players (interview, A7).

This was the first written statement of an alternative vision that would later be developed into a more cohesive and convincing socio-spatial project. As the emerging era of austerity made the CLT vision look increasingly favourable as the only viable option left on the table, some leading activists began to position the CLT as the historical heir to SNAP, having begun reading the original SNAP report (McConaghy, 1972). With such an obvious spatial connection between the two projects – SNAP mapping directly onto CLT boundaries – it is little wonder that CLT activists perceive themselves as “finishing the work that SNAP started!” (interview, C7).

The parallels are striking. Just as SNAP activists had inspired the development of Britain’s first rehab co-ops – Granby and Canning Co-ops in 1972-3 – the CLT has forged an alliance with a local eco-housing co-op. SNAP imagined a holistic approach to regeneration – integrating building rehab and environmental improvements with social, health, education and employment programmes – and likewise the CLT sees regeneration as an interrelated process of empowering local people, developing their skills through training programmes, improving more than just housing by providing new employment opportunities in the street market and community buildings, and enhanced green public spaces (figure 6.14). The vision set out in the neighbourhood masterplan brochure produced by HDSI and Assemble, presents their strategy as
Bound together by a hands-on approach for delivery that builds on the enterprise, initiative and commitment that the community had shown over the last twenty years… We seek to maximise local employment and involvement in the construction process. Our approaches are based around simple, accessible methods of construction that can be delivered locally – where the physical act of rebuilding is not only a way of boosting the local economy but a public act that offers residents a direct hand in shaping the area’s development. (Assemble, 2013).

Figure 6.14: the CLT umbrella and community homesteading model. (Source: Assemble, 2013)

6.2.3 Assembling hope as well as houses

After years of difficult negotiations with the council and housing associations, this vision eventually captivated its intended audience, and a deal was finally struck in late 2014, offering the CLT 10 properties to provide affordable housing for local people in need as well as four corner buildings for community enterprise, and further properties for NAHC and HDSI (figure 6.15). Together, the CLT, HDSI, and NAHC are working as joint partners with Assemble to realise this vision, each hoping to take on properties and manage them as
different tenures, but with the CLT as the ultimate umbrella institution under which all partners and legal ownership of the land are organised (figure 6.14). This is part of an overarching CLT-led plan for refurbishing the entire four streets, coordinated with more extensive rehabilitation work by the lead housing associations Plus Dane and LMH, as well as ‘Homes for £1’ (figure 6.15). Although some activists feel this has diluted the original community vision, the CLT has nonetheless been pivotal in saving the four streets from demolition and bringing together more powerful development actors around the shared goal of refurbishment for a mixed-tenure neighbourhood.

Figure 6.15: Map of new ownership structure under CLT vision. (Source: CLT community consultation event, 2014)

NAHC co-op: 5 houses, which they plan to retrofit as cutting-edge eco-homes, as Terrace 21 – ‘terraced housing for the 21st century’.

HDSI: redeveloping and internally redesigning Ducie Street terrace as mixed tenure houses and apartments, then selling land back to the CLT.

Plus Dane/LMH: renovating majority of remaining homes as ‘affordable rent’ and shared ownership (Beaconsfield Street: already refurbished by Plus Dane)
Following recent council approval of community asset transfer, the partners have begun ‘Our First 10 Homes’ project – delivered via their innovative ‘community homesteading’ model. Inspired by Assemble’s ethos, this expands upon the logic of the do-it-yourself homesteading approach utilised in the council’s parallel ‘Homes for £1’ project but applies it more socially to bring together accumulated skills and wisdom of the community through collective action (Thompson, 2015). The CLT has sought partnerships with COSPA and Ambition: two organisations helping use the renovations as an opportunity for local 16-24 year olds to gain apprenticeship-style training through mentoring by local professional tradespeople towards achieving vocational qualifications – thereby strengthening financial viability and embedding development in the local economy.

Figure 6.16: Jermyn Street before and after refurbishment (Source: author’s own, October 2014 and September 2015)

Throughout this process, three of Assemble’s 18-strong London-based collective have relocated to Granby, living onsite in an empty house on Cairns Street, so as to be fully immersed in the regeneration process and get to know the place and residents they are working with. This builds upon SNAP’s original innovation for a dedicated onsite office for their staff, taking it further as architects-in-residence. Where possible, Assemble have worked with residents and apprentices to carry out refurbishment work, but this has proven impossible for some of the more structurally damaged properties, in which professional
contractors have been brought in for several months. Community homesteading appears to have limits. Yet this has enabled the most structurally damaged properties to be brought back to life in a matter of months rather than years (figure 6.16).

Figure 6.17: the Assemble workshop on Granby Street. Young people making designs for potential new products (left); one of the new members of staff explaining how they are recycling materials from the derelict houses to make a variety of architectural fixtures and furniture (top right), such as rubble from some of the most derelict properties being broken down for cement to cast new fireplaces, and door knobs and cupboard handles carved out of wooden features unable to be restored. Much of this will be fitted in the new homes in Granby, the first five of which have already been completed, with already tenants moving in. Bottom right is Lewis, from Assemble, being interviewed by a German TV crew for a documentary on the project, which he described as a “surreal” experience. The CLT has received intense media interest since being nominated for the Turner prize. (Source: author’s own, 2015)
In May 2015, Assemble were shortlisted for the 2015 Turner Prize, specifically for their work with Granby CLT – the first time an architectural design studio has ever been nominated (Wainwright, 2015). In December, the Turner Prize was announced and it was discovered – to the shock of much of the art world – that Assemble and Granby Four Streets had won, the first ever community-led housing and neighbourhood regeneration project to have done so (Foster, 2015). As the usual ‘but is it art?’ debates and controversies ensued, with many artists feeling bewildered that their discipline of visual art had been usurped by what did not even fit neatly into architecture, the result nonetheless brought a huge amount of unexpected attention and publicity to Granby – showcasing nationally and across the world the innovative responses being made to the housing crisis in Liverpool.

Assemble and CLT activists have capitalised upon the coup, starting a pilot project for a social enterprise specialising in designing and making furniture, housing fixtures and architectural features, using reclaimed materials recycled from the CLT houses. The long-term plan is to set up a community enterprise specialising in such products to sell locally and perhaps internationally, using the Turner Prize exhibition as a platform to showcase designs. Assemble have set up an onsite workshop in a disused corner building on Granby Street, which already employs six paid workers along with four volunteers (figure 6.17). All these positions are for local residents, so that once Assemble move onto their next brief, this project may become self-sustaining; training up local people who can then use their skills and products for do-it-yourself refurbishment of the remaining houses. There is potential to provide more local jobs as the project expands – a great example of how mutual housing alternatives can help kick-start economic regeneration. The four corner buildings will also be regenerated using this labour – once Big Lottery funding is finally secured – to become home to community-based enterprise, although some will have to be rebuilt entirely owing to structural collapse (interviews, A7/A8). There are already signs of economic recovery, with new businesses opening up for the first time in decades on Granby Street (figure 6.18); the first step in the long-term plan for its regeneration as a shopping and leisure artery, and permanent fixture of the market.
However, there are still great challenges facing Granby CLT. Just as there are severe structural fault-lines in some of the properties, requiring expensive repair work, so too are cracks appearing in the social fabric. One of the principal reasons for adopting the CLT over the co-op model is its institutional capacity to bring diverse people together from across traditional cleavages of class, race, religion and other social identities to produce what is arguably a ‘politics of space’ – where a common spatial vision overcomes class politics and unites in broad consensus otherwise divergent property interests (Purcell, 2001). The CLT democratic trust governance structure incorporates wider stakeholder participation for long-term place stewardship for community benefit over resident-member benefit. Granby CLT membership extends throughout the L8 postal district, beyond the immediate Granby Triangle, and so the CLT recognises its scalar contributory relationship with surrounding urban areas. Members meet regularly to discuss CLT affairs and democratically elect representatives onto the trust management board, whose membership of 12 periodically rotates, with tripartite representation of: member residents; the wider local community; and key stakeholders.

The latter third includes representatives from Plus Dane, LMH, and the council, as well as in financial and technical expertise in development. The diverse black community are actively engaged as stakeholders: the Men and Women’s Somali Groups each have board representation; as does Steve Biko HA, established in 1982 to provide the local black community access to social housing in the context of racial discrimination, now helping develop and deliver the CLT housing allocations policy. Social housing tenants displaced by HMR are represented in the wider community third, and are to be afforded a ‘right to return’
in CLT housing allocations, as a countermeasure to losing their ‘right to stay put’: Hartman’s (1984) call for a legal right afforded to tenants and other dwellers without the security of tenure enjoyed by homeowners. However, it remains unclear how evicted tenants will be able to exercise their right to return in light of the very limited number of houses to be made available and the continued requirements for needs-based allocations. The allocations policy has the problematic task of somehow mediating emerging tensions within the community over competing rights to housing.

Indeed, this apparently inclusive ‘politics of space’ is not without its own internal conflicts: the CLT is marked by what many describe as tense politics (interviews, A4/A5/A6/A8). Divisions between different groups are emerging along lines of perceived rights to place. The local black community has a long historical attachment to Granby, which, coupled with perceived injustices of persecution, produces a strong sense of place entitlement. Emerging conflicts between long-standing resident homeowners and NAHC newcomers, who have nonetheless lived in the surrounding area for many years, reflect opposing ethical perspectives on rights to place: personal historical attachments versus productive contribution through active improvement. NAHC co-operators claim inclusion on the basis of bringing professional skills in ecology, architecture and planning to the campaign process, critical in persuading the council to even consider the CLT idea. Despite their importance to the project’s success, some see the co-operators as opportunists (interview, N7). Moreover, their claims to expertise may also act to exclude – just as Granby’s guerrilla gardening creates a certain cultural space – and efforts need to be made to engage other residents in a more mutual learning process.
6.3 From success to failure: the tragic case of Little Klondyke

Little Klondyke in Bootle is a very different place to Anfield and Granby. Located in Sefton MBC, several miles north of Liverpool citycentre, the area suffers from economic isolation far more visibly (figure 6.19). Like Welsh Streets in Toxteth over the road from Granby, Little Klondyke was built by Welsh economic migrants, with roads named after Edith, Eleanor, and Marion. And like the Welsh Streets, it became one of the most notoriously contested neighbourhoods in NewHeartlands Pathfinder, and whose small community fought back against extreme measures to evict them (Waddington, 2012). Likewise, Little Klondyke became one of the main featured communities in the various television documentaries about HMR, notably Channel 4’s *Great British Property Scandal*, in which celebrity architect George Clarke filmed in the area in February 2012. He then became involved in the anti-demolition campaign by local activists that for some years successfully stalled demolition, with support from Empty Homes Agency and SAVE Britain’s Heritage (interviews, A9/N5/N7). With the involvement of these expert interests, it evolved into a more forward-looking campaign for a CLT alternative. The Empty Homes Agency had experience with developing the do-it-yourself homesteading model in Stoke-on-Trent, and SAVE were connected to events in Granby, so the idea for a CLT came together just in time to put in a bid for the government’s Empty Homes Fund Community Grants Programme in April 2012 (MCDA, 2012a, 2012b). This was a detailed plan for refurbishment of 121 homes and a Welsh Presbyterian Church (figure 6.19).

The application was written with the help of the Maritime Community Development Agency (MCDA), established in 1993 as the only organisation dedicated to community development in Sefton, and since 2003 involved in anti-HMR campaigning. Unlike Granby, local anti-HMR sentiments were much more about socioeconomic survival than architectural heritage.
Household income in Bootle is amongst the lowest in the UK, and residents are unable to afford the ‘affordable rents’ of the new HMR-built properties – some increasing by as much as 100% (MCDA, 2012b). Owner-occupiers compensation for losing their homes often equates to only 50% of a new-build; many owner-occupiers have become RSL tenants. The CLT plan therefore aimed to provide truly affordable housing for local people, and was closely related with other campaigns against austerity, welfare reform and the ‘bedroom tax’ (interview, A9). It was primarily driven by one particular well-known local activist, who also recently stood as an anti-bedroom tax councillor candidate in the local elections. She was the central lynchpin pulling in all the partners, writing the application, and making things happen (interviews, A9/N5/N7).

Figure 6.20: the Little Klondyke vision, with a social space as community anchor in the church. Conventional costs of refurbishment – estimated at over £50,000 per property – were to be reduced by 50%, in developing a local apprenticeship scheme not unlike Granby’s. (Source: MCDA, 2012b)

Their fully costed scheme included visuals of their vision (figure 6.20), and detailed architect drawings of proposed layouts and redesigns, with internal remodelling of housing to suit diverse local needs (MCDA, 2012b). The initial proposal was for refurbishment of ‘Little Wall’, with long-term plans to take on the entire area as Little Klondyke CLT (figure 6.21). In June 2012, they received a positive response from DCLG regarding their application, which amounted to over £5 million of government grant to kick-start the project (interview, A9). The only task now was to convince the council and galvanise the wider community.

The next step was a scoping day funded by the NCLTN Fund – providing £5,000 seed-funding per project – was organised in the area, with a fete and info stall (interview, N4). This was run by the same Empty Homes and NCLTN Advisor who had worked with Granby in the early stages to set up Granby Community Partnership. Bad weather, however, prevented many residents from attending, and the campaign has since struggled to attract community
support. The advisor also helped organise a conference trip in Preston for activists to learn more about the model (interview, A9). However, as he recalls, there were simply not enough local people involved to run the project from the grassroots:

I don’t think they’ve got the staff, as you might call it…the 12 volunteers to do it. It fell on stony ground…when I said ‘right you need 12…I’ll give you a month to think about that’, and they came back to me and said ‘we don’t think we’ve got the numbers.’ (interview, N6).

The project was driven through the passion of the principal activist with too little input from others, which even she acknowledges: “We need to ensure there’s a market [demand] there, and we haven’t done that yet, we haven’t had time to do it” (interview, A9). Part of the problem is that by this point, almost all the houses had been emptied of residents, scattered across the borough, and difficult to reconnect. Granby was lucky enough to have a solid core of homeowners to push the project through; Little Klondyke lacked this crucial tenure group. Another part is the sheer lack of resources compared with Granby and Homebaked, which came off the back of a well-funded Liverpool Biennial public arts project.

Figure 6.21: ownership map of Little Klondyke; Little Wall is the triangle of properties at the north-eastern edge bounded by and including housing along Springwell Road. (Source: MCDA, 2012b)
However, activists were slowly building connections with people moved into new houses, who said they would like to return and get involved in the CLT (interview, A9). Moreover, discussion had begun with Bellway – the preferred ZOO developer – potentially interested to become a partner in the project as the development agent for refurbishment (interview, N7). The real barrier was the council. Not only did the DCLG £5million grant require their final approval but also more sustained municipal support for an area facing severe blight, as the Empty Homes Agency recognises:

I think they would have needed more support than just simply an approval letter – a helping hand from the council…Approval is not just a letter saying ‘OK yeah you can’…the support is how they release land to them…all sorts of resources, not just financial (interview, N5)

Before the Empty Homes Fund bid went in, activists tried to contact Sefton MBC several times to arrange a meeting to discuss the CLT possibility, now that HMR had withdrawn from the area. Yet they were confronted by a hostile attitude; asked to produce comprehensive documentation of their business plan and 20 year strategy before the council were willing to even speak with them (interviews, A9/N5). But this was just an early feasibility discussion to gauge interest. The council eventually sent a formal response, which activists and their partners alike thought “troubling” for being so “incredibly dismissive” of the idea (interview, N5).

I asked Alan Lunt, Strategic Director for the Built Environment at Sefton MBC and author of the letter, to participate in this study, or at least comment, but I was likewise met with refusal. Participants believe that the council was firmly set on “something bigger” and more lucrative than a community refurb project (interviews, N5/N7/A9). Their real intentions are obvious in the tactics employed in acquiring and securing local properties. The council acquired the chapel – then derelict and badly damaged by arson attacks – following its last church service with the diminishing local Presbyterian congregation in March 2008 (Liverpool Echo, 2013). It was in the council’s interests to demolish the chapel to make way for large-scale redevelopment, but prior approval submissions were legally required before any demolition could commence (interview, A9). CLT activists made regular check-ups of the area to make sure no unlawful demolition occurred (interview, A9). One evening they discovered contractors were already pulling down the Victorian church building before they had been made aware of prior approval. SAVE Britain’s Heritage were called in and had their lawyers serve “legal papers on Friday night on the demolition contractor and Sefton council”
We served on the Friday; they continued with the demolition on the Saturday, I think it was by 1 o'clock Monday the council agreed to stop...Guess what happened on Monday night? Huge fire in some of the properties: coincidence? So since the day that we filed that legal action, I think it was Monday 29th January [2013] until something like mid-August, there were fires all the time. I was constantly getting phone calls...we were just documenting the lot of them, and that was part of the evidence that was presented at the High Court. So I do blame them, absolutely, this is the battleground...it’s a war...I mean all that time, there’d never been any fires, or very little (interview, A9).
SAVE lawyers took the council to court in a high profile Judicial Review over the demolition of the church, arguing against the ‘salami-slicing’ of the chapel – or indeed any of the houses – from its historic neighbourhood context as if it were separable (SAVE, 2013). Sefton insisted that retaining the chapel was part of its original plan, but that had to change due the health and safety implications of its derelict condition and partially collapsed roof (Liverpool Echo, 2013). Ultimately, SAVE lost the court case. Without the chapel as a community anchor – and with many of the properties structurally unsound from fire damage – all hopes of establishing a rehab CLT were lost.
6.4 Bringing the state back in…and out again

Prior to grassroots experimentation with the CLT model in Granby and Little Klondyke, the idea first took root in Liverpool as a more formal state-led proposal: a potential succession vehicle for the NDC partnership in Kensington, and a knowledge transfer partnership (KTP) with a housing association in Anfield. These are explored in turn below. The potential of the CLT model for regeneration of declining neighbourhoods had caught the attention of various agencies and regeneration partnerships in the early 2000s, just as HMR was getting formulated (interview, S3/P7). As NDC partnerships were being wrapped up, regeneration professionals were searching for ways to sustain the gains made and keep communities engaged once the funding dried up, such as Shoreditch NDC’s scoping study for a ‘Community Equity Trust’ (Saulter et al., 2008). At the same time, Charlie Baker, a Manchester-based co-op activist and regeneration consultant with URBED, was thinking about ways to adapt the UK-specific CLT model – first formulated by Bob Paterson at Community Finance Solutions (CFS) in Salford University – to work in an HMR Pathfinder context (interview, S3). In their masterplan for the Werneth-Freehold HMR area commission by Oldham Local Strategic Partnership in Greater Manchester, URBED first introduced the notion of a CLT as a viable vehicle for delivery of refurbishment within HMR Pathfinders (URBED, 2004). This alternative route to regeneration through HMR was then incorporated as a potential option in a CLT practitioner’s guide published by CFS (2007).

The CLT idea was gaining currency and fast becoming fashionable as an option considered by HMR partnerships looking for new ideas. A Liverpool HMR manager recalls how when she worked for Salford council the HMR team seriously explored the CLT option in Pendleton – “a way of trying to leverage some more money into that area” as an alternative to the planned Private Finance Initiative (PFI) bid which “was really hard to make it stack up financially” (interview, P7). The plan was included as a case-study in a CFS (2008) guide on urban CLTs, but ultimately never taken forward. Yet such scoping studies helped create a “buzz” around the concept as well as lay some preliminary groundwork for seeing CLTs delivered as operational institutional vehicles (interview, P7/S3). The same HMR manager explains how her experience with the Salford project and exposure to URBED ideas helped seed the CLT idea in Liverpool, putting the council in touch with the consultant who would be invited to pitch the CLT idea in Kensington (interview, P7).
6.4.1 Kensington CLT: the grant regime strikes again

Kensington Regeneration was the body set up in 2000 – the largest of 39 partnerships across the country in New Labour’s NDC programme (Kensington Regeneration, 2015; Lawless, 2011). The NDC came to an end in 2010 but regeneration work was continued by its successor body, a Community Interest Company (CIC). An independent regeneration consultant was brought in by the council, through their connections with other HMR Pathfinders which had commissioned CLT options studies, and asked to work with Kensington CIC on exploring the prospects for a CLT succession vehicle (interview, H9/P7). Interest came from four council officers from different departments, whose motivations are described by the consultant thus:

It was buzzy; they were looking for a vehicle to go forward; they were thinking ahead to succession vehicles because they knew the thing was going; and they…wanted a forum to actually be able to grab everything, pull it together (interview, H9).

Employed by Kensington CIC with an initial budget of £10,000, the consultant ran a series of workshops, focus groups and presentations with the community about the theory behind a CLT, receiving a generally warm reception:

I floated the idea several times that if you can, early on in the regeneration process, do a sort of like red line around the finally agreed geography of the place, and then set up a CLT and move all the publicly available land…and allow anything that’s compulsory purchase or voluntary purchase, to move into the CLT; you then put a sort of asset lock on, where…any money that is made – whether the profit is real or not – gets locked in, and the residents have got a lot of collective control over the whole of the regeneration process, over what to build and the mix of properties and the rest of it; and residents have often shown a lot of interest in this (interview, H9).

The initial proposal presented as a report (GM1, 2008) to the board of Kensington Regeneration would be for Kensington CLT to be incorporated as a legacy body, covering an area delineated by the NDC boundaries, to take over assets currently held by the CIC, to meet requirements for legacy funding opportunities. A total of 21 sites or properties were identified in the scoping study as suitable for inclusion in the CLT, including an estimated 180 new homes to be built on land that had already been cleared by HMR (GM1, 2008). Membership of the CLT was envisaged as being open to a variety of groups (figure 6.22).

Figure 6.23. Kensington CLT membership criteria (Source: GM1, 2008)

“Membership of KCLT would be open, on purchase of £1 share, to:

- All Kensington residents who have relocated and taken up an equity loan to help purchase their new homes
- All residents of Kensington CLT properties (once completed)
- All applicants for accommodation provided by Kensington CLT, and who have demonstrated eligibility for, and appropriate commitment to, their future home
The Kensington Regeneration Board – a small group of stakeholders and experts overseeing the process – were generally receptive; the real challenge came in convincing the much larger community stakeholder group (interview, H9). This resident-facing group of about 30 was intended to represent the community in the NDC area and effectively controlled the process; their prior approval was required to sign anything off in the Kensington Regeneration Board. Early on in the participatory process, the consultant encountered

A resistance to let me loose…to meet individual residents’ groups…It had to be brokered by members of this sort of central steering committee, who always wanted to be there and always wanted to explain on my behalf; and the narrative would shift slightly…and I thought there’s a degree of manipulation of the process going on, and I didn’t have the opportunity to do as much embedding as I would normally do (interview, H9).

This central steering committee was composed of vocal activists – “heads above the parapet” people (interview, H9) – not necessarily speaking for the entire community but with real commitment to the area and strong political ideologies driving their volunteering. The first hurdle was a negative experience of a CLT conference in London in April 2008, to which the community reps were sent, on the suggestion of the council officers (interview, H9). Organised by CFS, the conference was aimed broadly at the professional class of architects, planners, lawyers, social investors, housing managers, and campaigners who were there to discuss the technicalities and challenges of developing CLTs in changing regulatory and political climates. The resident delegation thought they were going to “meet 50 or 100 other residents in similar situations, so they could exchange notes”, but came away daunted by the technical language, “quite freaked out by the industrial size of the intelligentsia…so that was a negative experience, which definitely gave us an unexpected headwind” (interview, H9).

As the process progressed, it was clear that the council was getting cold feet too. Whilst the initial invitation to explore a CLT came from
Senior-ish middle-management as opposed to executive level...it was the director level people that were coming in and starting to mess things up because they... really did not want to be giving up control and loss of budgets, and they wanted to recycle some of the profits they were going to make into other places...thinking ‘Liverpool big pot’ rather than Kensington… (interview, H9).

Had the homeowners not reneged on their initial enthusiasm, the CLT may well have been killed off anyway by the territorialism of some high-ranking council officers, seeing the CLT as “taking part of their empire”. The official council offer of support “of the principle” of the CLT was nonetheless

Caveated by the need to ensure the existing legal agreements with its partners are not infringed and the proposal does not delay the existing delivery mechanisms for Phases 2 and 2A and the proposed CPO for Phase 3 and 3A. (quoted in GM1, 2008: 10)

This legal caveat alludes to the lucrative development agreements in place between the council and its preferred ZOO developer, Bellway, to redevelop failing housing markets in line with HMR guidelines. The independent consultant had conversations with Bellway, who were relatively amenable to the possibility of a CLT, on the proviso that they maintain development contracts for refurbishment work (interview, H9). The report to the Kensington Regeneration Board explicitly stated that “Kensington CLT would be able (subject to funding) to purchase completed properties, but not to act as development agent in its own right” (GM1, 2008: 10); thereby assuring the council and developer that the development agreements would remain unthreatened.

Figure 6.24: a familiar sign of asset-stripping in HMR areas – left in Anfield, right in Granby – stating ‘all items of value have been removed from this property.’ (source: author’s own, 2014)
A major point of contention, then, was the loss of potential revenue from redevelopment for developer, council and housing association alike; each standing to make a ‘profit’ from the government grant investment into HMR for CPO acquisition, demolition and reconstruction: the council from the sale of land to the developer and higher tax receipts from more affluent housing; the developer from the sale of new homes; and housing associations from higher rent revenue streams and higher value stock against which to leverage further private capital. This is one rationale behind the formation of ‘grant regimes’ or coalitions in shrinking cities: to profit from ‘land banking’, the cost differentials secured through CPO acquisition at deflated market prices and resale at post-regeneration revalorised prices (Cocks and Couch, 2012; Macleod and Johnstone, 2012). It is difficult to demonstrate incontrovertibly that such a regime materialised in Liverpool. Yet there is an unconscious recognition of the asset-stripping at play in the standardised signs put up on CPO’d property to dissuade thieves and squatters (figure 6.24).

From the perspective of the independent consultant looking in, the Kensington CLT campaign ultimately failed to get off the ground due to fractious internal politics between the three main tenure groupings. The homeowners – or “ownership caucus” – were the driving force behind the CLT, or indeed any, plan; these residents had deep stakes in the area; many are lifelong inhabitants (interview, H9). Only they had the time and motivation to get fully involved in the regeneration process and, just as in Granby, help defend their houses from HMR demolition threats. This was the area that created perhaps the most critical academic and media attention in terms of anti-demolition campaigning highlighting the controversial
The fundamental barrier to the further development of the CLT came when the leaders and shakers of the homeowners, the ‘parapet people’, suddenly realised ‘whoops! Membership is open to everybody, not just us’; and although I was able to sort of shape the support to give the homeowners a little bit of preferential representation, it was when they suddenly realised that vote for vote at the AGM all the private tenants, all the housing association tenants – and they particularly hated the short term, private-sector tenants...What killed it in the end was the different resident constituents (interview, H9).

According to the consultant, who sat in countless homeownership forums as part of his engagement exercises, these residents saw the other two tenure groupings as differentially deserving or capable of participation and inclusion in the CLT scheme, as a kind of “tribal elitism”. In these debates, housing association tenants were favoured as ‘proper residents’ over private tenants on the basis of longevity and permanence of residence (interview, H9). The lead housing association in the area was a subsidiary of Riverside called ‘Community Seven’, “because [the tenants] all hated Riverside…so Kensington Riverside rebranded as Community Seven just to give themselves a bit of branding protection” (interview, H9). The tenants were generally sceptical of Riverside and would have supported the CLT transfer. Although Riverside could lose potential revenue, it had a history of co-op development behind it as MIH, and ambitions to support future mutual housing, demonstrated most recently by their seeding of new-build co-op housing over to Langrove Co-op at cost (interviews, H1/C3/A3).

The real barrier was presented by homeowners’ perceptions of private-sector tenants. Kensington had experienced a similar trajectory to Granby: deteriorating Victorian terraces and falling property prices with short-term speculators and ‘slum’ landlords moving into the area to make a profit on the difference between purchase/maintenance costs and rents accrual through housing benefits (Minton, 2012). The gap in the rental market filled by these landlords tended to be for those people who for whatever reason could not secure a tenancy with a registered provider: recently-arrived immigrants who needed a cheap short-term tenancy at short notice; those evicted from housing association tenancies, often with a history of anti-social behaviour or minor criminality. Established homeowners felt threatened and “swamped out by newcomers that they at best did not relate to”, and had their reasons for “believing that some of the tenants of the private rented sector were not the best neighbours” (interview, H9). They were unhappy about the prospect of regularly negotiating with people they saw as undeserving outsider transients, and worried they may realise their power in
numbers to take control of the democratic decision-making process that governed CLT land. The dominance of the ‘heads above the parapet’ people in the consultation exercises, coupled with their control of the community stakeholder group which ultimately decided outcomes, meant that the voices of other tenure groups — and indeed other homeowners below the parapet — were excluded from the discussion. The independent consultant is adamant that “if Kensington had been emptied of all except for the homeowners, there’d be a community land trust there today” (interview, H9). Such a perspective, albeit only one side to the story, does suggest one of the main factors for success in Granby was the relative absence of private sector tenants and the consequent opportunity for remaining homeowners to control the process as a relatively coherent domestic property class.

6.4.2 Anfield KTP: third sector experimentation

Like Granby, Anfield had in the early 20th century been a relatively prosperous, at least “more appealing suburb” benefitting from Liverpool’s economic pre-eminence — but from the late 1970s began to suffer from the knock-on effects of decline of the docks, with a weakening local economy, falling population, and rising housing vacancies and dilapidation (Southern, 2014: 202). By the end of the 20th century the ward was in worse condition than Granby, at least in terms of socioeconomic metrics: 60% of the ward is within the most deprived 10% of areas in the country, according to Indices of Multiple Deprivation; consistently the highest or second-highest ranked local authority in the country since 2000 (Ellis and Henderson, 2013). Any hope of recovery has been seemingly dashed by the actions of Liverpool FC, who since 2000 have developed a series of plans for the redevelopment of their stadium in the heart of Anfield (Southern, 2014a). The indecision of the football club to settle on any one scheme and their failure to consult with surrounding property-owners has led to much local hostility and hesitation from businesses to invest in the area, causing general blight to streets immediately surrounding the stadium (figure 6.25). These remain under threat of demolition for stadium expansion; subject to aggressive acquisition practices from the football club (Ellis and Henderson, 2013; Southern, 2014a).
Figure 6.25: Scenes of dereliction and empty streets in the Renewal Area directly around the stadium, with open land where terraces have been cleared (bottom right) surrounded by railings to stop potential squatters, a common sight across HMR ZOOs. (Source: author’s own, 2014)

Despite various local community groups and initiatives being recipients of previous regeneration programmes – notably EU Pathways to Integration (Meegan and Mitchell, 2001) – by far the most significant intervention to arrest decline has been the Anfield/Breckfield HMR initiative, designated in 2002, aiming to inject £40-50 million of public money to lever in a further £300 million of private-sector investment (Ellis and Henderson, 2013). Contrary to the popular media image of HMR as universally despised by the local communities it foists redevelopment upon without due consultation (Clover, 2005; Doughty and Hull, 2007; Hatherley, 2013; Moore, 2012), plans for demolition in Anfield have been widely welcomed, with some 95% of local residents reportedly supportive (Ellis and Henderson, 2013). Pro-demolition popular opinion is evident even before HMR was rolled out in Anfield. In 1999, the Anfield Breckfield Community Steering Group formed as an alliance between two neighbourhood councils involved in EU Pathways to Integration, and worked with the city council and football club to produce a report in 2002 that advocated the demolition of over 2,000 homes (Engelsman et al., 2015). The 2002 community plan led to the formal
Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment that would form the basis for securing HMR funding and official declaration of the Renewal Area in 2005, after which the Community Steering Group was replaced by the Anfield Breckfield Partnership Forum, which sought to place the community at the centre of regeneration decisions (Bevington, 2008).

During this process, an alternative plan was being developed by Arena Housing, which since 1999 has been the single largest housing association in Anfield – gaining Lead LIFE and preferred HMR partner status. Arena are another example of commercial expansion entailing disconnection from place, having formerly been Liver Housing Association, merging with Grosvenor Housing Association in 2002 (Bevington, 2008). At an early stage of the community planning process with the Anfield Breckfield Partnership Forum, Arena floated an idea of seeding some of their housing stock as a kind of ‘community endowment’, over which a resident-led subsidiary of Arena would have overall control, including use of revenues for community benefits and capacity-building (Engelsman et al., 2015).

Arena’s interest in finding ways of utilising assets for self-sustaining community benefit led to its application to the Department of Trade and Industry for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with the University of Liverpool Business School as its formal partner (Bevington, 2008). In 2006, the KTP successfully secured funding for an Associate, a dedicated worker based in both partner organisations to explore solutions with local tenants. A study visit to the USA occurred in October 2007, to learn about the more established American CLT model and bring back ideas for transfer to the Liverpool context. This was attended by 11 delegates from Arena Housing, tenant associations, and universities, including a researcher from Salford University’s CFS. The findings of the visit were disseminated to the wider community as a report (Bevington, 2008: 3), seeking to “form part of the narrative of the story of Anfield and Breckfield which began in 1999 and is among other things the story of a quest for social justice in regeneration.” The report records the revelatory moments shared by professional and community representatives alike over the radical potential of the CLT model for securing long-term community control:

It was during a workshop discussion at the conference about what we mean by “perpetuity”…on the concept of a 99-year lease…on the implications for CLTs of having to expand to survive – what might this mean over 200 years? Then one of the delegates said, “When I think about perpetuity, I think about churches”. This wasn’t meant in an evangelical sense…but that the CLT estate…has the potential to endure down the centuries, capturing and preserving community heritage on community land. (Bevington, 2008: 6)
Despite the way in which the site visit captured the imaginations of some of the delegates, this unusual experiment in housing association-led CLT development ultimately failed. According to critical assessments published by some of the academics involved in the study visit – notably Alan Southern (Engelsman and Southern, 2010; Engelsman et al., 2015) – this failure is attributed to the top-down nature of the project, too constrained by formal processes and organisational agendas to find its ‘soul’ in the community. The driving seat of the project had been filled by Arena from the beginning; their motivations were to develop a prototype housing management scheme that would reduce organisational operating costs and eventually enable the community to manage stock in a way that would be self-financing (Engelsman and Southern, 2010). The KTP Associate was then contracted to ‘sell’ the idea to the community through extensive consultation, as a mutually beneficial proposal with many potential gains for both parties. Initially, tenants keen on the idea of local control of assets and generation of revenues for community use; but appetite was less than expected (Engelsman and Southern, 2010). Independent of the council, HMR and Arena, the Associate’s role was to bring these interests together for the co-construction of knowledge in CLT innovation. However, the council, though willing to negotiate over the possibility, were ultimately reluctant to be associated with the project; whilst Arena Housing were internally divided over the benefits of shedding properties to community ownership (Engelsman et al., 2015).

Through this process, the community became fatigued and alienated by years of seemingly purposeless and overtly bureaucratic consultation. Housing officials became more interested in the CLT idea as a way to cut costs and produce efficiencies in their organisation rather than for radical redistribution of land and power, keeping residents at arms-length in decision-making, regarding them “mainly as a means to secure resources, for their own organisational agendas” (Engelsman et al., 2015: 20). As a result, the community became increasingly reticent to get involved in what they saw as a managerial operation. This case-study highlights the limits of top-down, state-led community asset ownership – the housing association being a local arm of the state – in “exploring new ways to deploy capital more efficiently” and “prevent further degradation of an asset base”; yet it also “opened up new opportunities for political agitation” (Engelsman et al., 2015).

The KTP did not achieve any socio-spatial transformation of Anfield, but it proved critical in transforming the terms of debate and conditions of the possible. There were practical benefits for Arena, which changed its management structure as a result, devolving stock management to a more independent entity with increased community involvement in decision-making;
whilst the community gained valuable knowledge and awareness of the regeneration process, a heightened political consciousness, and greater expectations for community-led regeneration and investment in things like local training (Engelsman and Southern, 2010). Importantly, it also made vital connections and established new networks of knowledge transfer between successful CLT initiatives in the US – such as Dudley Street in Boston and Cooper Square in New York – and the emerging CLT campaigns in Liverpool. Alan Southern, for instance, became a key conduit between the KTP CLT study and Granby Four Streets CLT. The seed of the CLT idea grew through a meeting with a Granby activist wanting to know more about this unfamiliar American model (interview, A4). The KTP project also laid the social foundations for the successful uptake of the Homebaked CLT in Anfield several years later.
6.5 Homebaked: brick by brick, loaf by loaf, we build ourselves

Right from the outset Homebaked had a powerful political agenda. It began as a public art project commissioned by the 2010 Liverpool Biennial, whose organisers invited internationally acclaimed Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk to visit Anfield in 2009 and work with local residents on an art initiative to address the effects of HMR on lived experience (Liverpool Biennial, 2015). Out of her initial interactions with residents and artists, Jeanne created ‘2Up2Down’, a community-led participatory design project to re-imagine the future of Anfield as constructed through small-scale community-led alternatives to top-down planning programmes like HMR; to be, as their website suggests, “a way for local people to ‘take matters into their own hands’ and make real social and physical change in their neighbourhood” (Homebaked CLT, 2012).

2Up2Down is an explicitly radical and politically-motivated project that takes public arts funding and pursues something more akin to action-research or community activism aiming for radical redistribution of power to traditionally marginalised communities. Discourses like the urban commons, co-production and participatory democracy are central to the design philosophy of Jeanne van Heeswijk, who believes “communities should co-produce their own futures” and who

Embeds herself, for years at a time, in communities from Rotterdam to Liverpool, working with them to improve their neighbourhoods and empowering them to take matters into their own hands, creating an alternative to the urban planning schemes which rarely take embedded culture into account, that are often foisted upon by local authorities. Her work often attempts to unravel invisible legislation, governmental codes, and social institutions, gradually enabling areas to take control over their future. She calls it “radicalising the local” by empowering communities to become their own antidote. (author bio in Heeswijk & Jurgensen, 2014a)

Jeanne is part of a network of artists, activists and researchers linked together through Cohabitation Strategies (CohStra, 2015) – a non-profit cooperative for socially-empowering research, design and development; founded, in response to the 2008 global financial crash, in Rotterdam, where Jeanne lives and does most of her work. This network is inspired by Lefebvre’s Right to the City and “seeks to assist municipalities, provinces, regions, non-profit, cultural, neighbourhood and community organisations that wish to generate socially just and environmentally responsible urban projects by designing and developing diverse socio-spatial strategies” (CohStra, 2015). 2Up2Down – influenced by CohStra through Jeanne’s connections, if not officially supported by them – certainly falls into this category.
This radical political agenda is augmented by a distinctive artistic approach that utilises performative, participatory and interactive methods to create a very different kind of socially-engaged, co-produced artwork (Jeeves, 2014). Central to this effort were various other international artists and cultural producers, now local residents, directing and co-scripting early artistic initiatives, some of whom have become main contributors to the CLT campaign (interviews, A5/A10). These initiatives include ‘The Anfield Home Tour’ in the 2012 Biennial, an intensive urban tour of the area with narration by longstanding residents, and a performative conversation as part of the Future City exhibition in 2013 (Heeswijk and Jurgensen, 2014b). Such events set the tone for 2Up2Down – as much about the learning process of experiencing, remembering and narrating change as the urban change itself (interviews, A5/A10). Storytelling has indeed been valuable to the CLT project, helping build a national reputation and media platform. The team have continued to use media – particularly social media – to their advantage, becoming a recognised success story in community-led housing and arts-led regeneration (Bell Yank, 2014; Moore, 2014). These innovative approaches and sources of support also set the project apart as a uniquely well-resourced CLT campaign led by highly-mobile and ideologically-motivated creative professionals, who have come to the area from other contexts, steeped in cultural capital and the ability to leverage economic capital – raising questions over just how ‘community-led’ the process actually is (interviews, A9/N5).

The project gained momentum towards becoming ‘Homebaked’ through a participatory design process with 40 young people from the area, gradually expanding to include local adults affected by HMR and whose housing needs and desires were expressed in the evolution of the project, much like community architecture (figure 6.26) (Moore, 2014). The slogan at this
juncture was: ‘Housing is the battlefield of our time and the house is its monument’ (Heeswijk & Jurgensen, 2014a: 3). The process was facilitated by a young architect from URBED, the very same urban design and sustainability consultancy that first experimented with the idea of an urban CLT within HMR Pathfinders (Heaslip et al., 2012). The architect had never used participatory techniques before this project, but adapted URBED’s ‘Building for Change’ modelling toolkit, used to get adults to remodel their neighbourhoods – a contemporary equivalent of the ‘Planning for Real’ exercises used by CDS for new build co-ops. She also explains that “for my previous diploma thesis I did a case study on the Eldonians and the design process…and community architecture…a comparison between that and Byker, and Homes for Change in Hulme” (interview, A5). There is thus a direct lineage from the design democracy infusing the 1970s new-build co-op and community architecture movements to the social engagement going on in 2Up2Down. As well as an historical link, there is also a spatial connection, with the other side of Liverpool where the URBED architect is also an NAHC member and activist campaigning for Granby CLT.

During this initial community engagement period, the 2Up2Down project team were looking for a terraced block for residents to redesign as community-controlled affordable housing, but negotiations with the council and development companies failed to produce results: “They’re all charmed by the idea but don’t seem to want to give an inch of territory back to the community” (Heeswijk and Jurgensen, 2014a: 4). 2Up2Down eventually became grounded in the neighbourhood in 2011 when they took over the lease of a newly-vacant bakery in the heart of Anfield, which then became a base for community meetings and participatory design activities (Heaslip et al., 2012). Mitchell’s Bakery – founded in 1903 and known as ‘The Pie Shop’ by football fans from all over the world (Heeswijk and Jurgensen, 2014b) – is located literally over the road opposite the stadium main entrance (figure 6.27 below). However, Mitchell’s was earmarked for demolition as part of HMR, and began to lose custom as the residents were emptied from the surrounding streets, such that eventually its custodians – who were in their seventies – accepted the council CPO to buy them out. Shortly after, HMR was prematurely cancelled, but the designation for demolition remained in the council’s effective continuation of redevelopment plans (interviews, A10/P6). As a result the owners retired without compensation, closing the bakery, which became vacant.
Symbolically the bakery is a cornerstone of the community, and 2Up2Down has capitalised on this cultural history to create hype around the project. Although the bakery was initially used as a meeting place for workshops, it quickly became the central focus of community efforts to re-imagine their neighbourhood, as Jeanne explains:

The young people begin redesigning the actual site. And people drop in daily, asking when they can buy bread again. This sparks the desire to reopen the bakery…the block of which the bakery was at the head becomes the ground of our struggles. (Heeswijk & Jurgensen, 2014a: 4)

With a temporary lease, the 2Up2Down team set about rehabilitating the bakery and selling bread again to locals. Initially financed through some of the Biennial funding, they later ran a successful online crowd-sourcing campaign through Kickstarter, called ‘An Oven at the Heart of Anfield’, to raise the capital for a new bread oven and renovate the kitchen and café area;
renaming the bakery ‘Homebaked’ (interviews, A10). This clever piece of branding conjured up new slogans that would prove to be very marketable, such as the most famous one emblazoned across the building itself: ‘brick by brick, loaf by loaf, we build ourselves’ (figure 6.2). By this point, residents and art-activists had already been having discussions about different organisational forms for incorporating the project as a legal entity. It was eventually decided – after “a steep learning curve…trying to find out about alternative models of co-owning and managing land and houses” – that the CLT model was best suited to community asset acquisition in the context of the 2011 Localism Act and emerging social investment opportunities, but also “because it allows genuine community ownership of the organisation.” (Heeswijk & Jurgensen, 2014a: 4).

**6.5.1 A Recipe for Revolution?**

Homebaked have been excellent at publicising their successes – winning the National CLT Network Award for Community Engagement in 2012 (NCLTN, 2016) – and disseminating their work to various audiences from housing, academic, and art worlds. In the latest special edition of the recently-launched Liverpool Biennial online journal, *Stages*, Homebaked have commissioned articles from various residents, activists and academics – including Don Mitchell (2014: 5), who situates the project in the radical tradition of class struggle, urban occupation and anti-capitalist protest, alongside May 1968 and Occupy:

> Homebaked Community Land Trust and Co-operative Bakery Anfield are just as thrilling as...the neighbourhood park forums that developed across Turkey after Taksim Square was cleared out. They show that urban space can be collectively taken and collectively remade, that use can dominate exchange, that our fate is not necessarily a fate written by the tendency towards abstract space in capitalism.

This reads perhaps rather awkwardly next to another recent publication which plays on a baking metaphor to suggest the right “recipe for a revolution”; with ingredients listed under step-by-step points like ‘Find the Correct Oven’, ‘Set the Right Temperature’, ‘Use Locally Sourced Ingredients’, ‘Kneed with Care’, and ‘Understand your Customer’ (Potts, 2014). Some observers have heard the radical endeavour of the project be described as ‘half-baked’ (interview, N7). However, despite this somewhat self-conscious cutesy form of radical activism, Homebaked have realised early on that half the battle is winning over the hearts and minds of gatekeepers, potential allies and foes alike; that it is valuable to have an easily-recognisable brand in our increasingly mediatised age, as another contributor to the special edition makes clear:
It is very difficult to give up control of the symbolic media narrative in favour of the actual on-the-ground work, because it seems that one may determine the other...A symbolic counterattack on prevailing narratives, carefully calibrated through self-branding and actualisation, can shift understanding and pave the way for progress, as surely as baking bread or laying down brick (Bell Yank, 2014: 6).

It is more likely that the council will open doors to asset acquisition once they are convinced of the narrative; sources of funding and support are likewise more easily attracted through publicising a positive message. Nonetheless, this is not to say that the project has not encountered barriers. Like Granby, the biggest resides in gaining the crucial support of the council. Although a senior council officer suggests they were “quite taken by integration with the community and the way in which the residents from the area saw this as a place to drop in, have a chat, get something to eat and to use it as a place for social gathering”, and by “the success of the bakery...on particular football match days...doing a roaring trade” – they were nonetheless initially reticent to approve Homebaked’s acquisition and refurbishment of the terraced row, for a number of reasons (interview, P6). The officer explains:

There was a worry on our part that...Homebaked were looking...to keep an old historic building on a corridor that we wanted to completely change. We wanted new investment; we wanted it to look different, and to blend in with the wider regeneration plans; and we were worried on two fronts: one...by entertaining a building of age or in some need of repair, on quite a gateway location, would probably stick out like a sore thumb...; [two,] we were looking to bring forward compulsory purchase in the area and to entertain the retention of this building might provide us with a challenge on the compulsory purchase front (interview, P6).

This is not a deal breaker: Homebaked have been invited to present new plans for the redesign of the terraced row to fit in with the wider regeneration masterplan for ‘Anfield Village’ (interview, P6/A10). However, it imposes additional costs for the campaign, and changes the nature of the project from restoring historic assets for community use as an anchor for more expansive radical land redistribution, to one of clinging onto a residual amount of community-owned space within an otherwise conventional regeneration strategy. Activists believe the council are not interested in the Victorian terraced frontages due to lower potential for generating surpluses; preferring commercial premises as ground-floor street frontages with flats above (interview, A5). It will be difficult to marry this financial interest with the political principles of the CLT. The council are currently in the process of acquiring the bakery with the intention of then transferring it to Homebaked, but also “because the CLT may disappear tomorrow; if they disappear tomorrow we need to acquire it anyway” (interview, P6). Even if
the transfer does go through, it will not mean fully freehold collective ownership: the council intend to grant a long leasehold rather than outright ownership, as this retains some element of public control over the assets, and gives the council power to shape how the scheme develops; because

That’s the way we prefer to do business as a council. Obviously it gives us that greater level of security, but it also means we can work with these people to bring forward deliverable regeneration schemes…so quite keen to progress on that basis; rental possibly will be peppercorn, but that will be subject to them delivering on the scheme (interview, P6).

Success for Homebaked – as for Granby – cannot mean radical autonomy from the council through common property rights: they are both too implicated within existing urban governance regimes to gain full control over urban land. A long lease – up to 200 years – is effectively freehold, but it comes with strings attached. Project performance and “deliverability” – as the council officer puts it (P6) – will be constantly assessed, becoming determinants in realising collective dweller control and rights to place. This highly conditional form of collective self-government is perhaps all activists can hope for in a context in which the council maintains a tight grip on regeneration processes and remains beholden to economistic logics of property-led development. These issues, and their implications for mutual housing development, are discussed in more detail in the following final chapter, which compares the co-op and CLT movements and situates them in a broader historical and political context.
6.6 Summary

The emerging CLT movement in Liverpool followed a period of relative inactivity for mutual housing experimentation through the late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. This suggests that, in line with the literature (Maccallum et al., 2009; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010), social innovation tends to occur in particular periods of intensive experimentation, often stimulated by political-economic crisis moments, where needs have been left unmet for too long, where there is an upswell of demands for change from communities, and windows of opportunity open up for new ideas to be tried out. This can be said to have occurred with the sudden emergence of the CLT movement in Liverpool in the late 2000s. However, such periods of experimentation are highly contextual and dependent on local factors, for in Liverpool, we see innovation continuing into the 1980s, as a response to particular political conditions, long after the second cycle of contention faded elsewhere. The historical contingencies of particular places are highly pertinent to the development of mutual housing alternatives.

In Liverpool’s latest round of neighbourhood-based collective action, the CLT idea arrived into the city from international origins – specifically from the US – imported through the activities of early experiments by state and third sector organisations, notably Arena’s KTP project. This suggests that, first, social innovation is increasingly produced through processes of global exchange and transmission, mirroring trends towards fast-policy mobility for more conventional urban programmes (Peck, 2011); and, again, that social innovation is the product of multiple agents, both state and civil society, coming into creative contact. Interestingly, both of the more formal attempts at CLT innovation in Liverpool – Kensington and Arena – were thwarted, ultimately, by the lack of grassroots support, suggesting to the contrary that social innovation needs to be rooted in collective action, as opposed to technocratic plans, for it to gain traction.

Indeed, the most successful CLT campaigns – Homebaked and Granby – were the result of sustained grassroots activity, albeit mobilised by external activists. The main motivations for mutual housing in this recent period have fundamentally shifted from the need for better housing conditions to the desire to protect existing architectural and community assets from demolition, threatened by the HMR programme. Likewise, reflecting the third cycle of contention, the CLT campaigns were driven more by interested outsiders, conscience constituents, than by residents themselves. This is certainly the case for Homebaked, established by activists and artists as arts-led regeneration; and whilst Granby is led by incumbent homeowners, a large proportion of those involved are activists without a direct
stake in the project, and whose aims are to secure a ‘right to return’ for some of those residents displaced out of the neighbourhood by HMR. These campaigns may represent the creative class asserting ‘the right to the (creative) city’ (Novy and Colomb, 2013) and may, ironically, given similar arguments against HMR, instil a process of gentrification – showing how mutual models can be used by some groups to colonise an urban area to the exclusion of others. This is a far cry from the homogenous and cohesive communities comprising the 1970s co-ops – illustrating just how much neighbourhood-based collective action has changed through the post-Fordist period. There are many differences between the co-op and CLT movement, which reflect broader shifts – not least in the latter’s new focus on the right to difference in Lefebvre’s Right to the City, largely absent in the former. These differences, along with all other theoretical implications of this chapter, are explored in greater detail in the following, concluding chapter. Here, I draw out comparisons between the two periods of experimentation, both in the varying efficacy of the different models to effect social empowerment and urban transformation, and in the way in which they have variously arisen, developed and become embedded in place as practical alternatives to conventional approaches.
7. Conclusion

An unequal struggle, sometimes furious, sometimes more low key, takes place between the Logos and the Anti-Logos, these terms being taken in their broadest possible sense – the sense in which Nietzsche used them. The Logos makes inventories, classifies, arranges: it cultivates knowledge and presses it into the service of power. Nietzsche’s Grand Desire, by contrast, seeks to overcome divisions – divisions between work and product, between repetitive and differential, or between needs and desires. On the side of the Logos is rationality, constantly being refined and constantly asserting itself in the shape of organizational forms, structural aspects of industry, systems and efforts to systematize everything, and so forth. On this side of things are ranged the forces that aspire to dominate and control space: business and the state…the established order, corporate and constituted bodies…In the opposite camp are the forces that seek to appropriate space: various forms of self-management or workers’ control of territorial and industrial entities, communities and communes, elite groups striving to change life and to transcend political institutions and parties. (Lefebvre, 1991: 391-2)

The history of conflicting interventions in Liverpool’s ongoing housing crisis in many ways evokes such a Lefebvrean struggle between Logos and Anti-Logos: abstract and social space. From this perspective, we can identify two broad tendencies in approaches to Liverpool’s housing and neighbourhood questions: top-down, evidence-based, market-oriented, monolithic, property-led forms of state urban and regeneration policy; and more grassroots, participatory, experimental, self-sustaining forms of social innovation. We see the hallmarks of the former in successive council rehousing programmes – Slum Clearance Programme from 1955-73; Militant’s 1983-87 Urban Regeneration Strategy (URS); and HMR from 2002-11 – all essentially property- or housing-led approaches, seeking to resolve complex, multi-faceted structurally-inscribed socio-spatial issues by improving the material environment. Early post-war urban renewal programmes not only failed to address Liverpool’s housing crisis, but also compounded the emerging phenomenon of spatially-concentrated poverty in inner-city neighbourhoods – removing thousands of the city’s active working-age population from docklands communities out to peripheral estates (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980; Sykes et al., 2013).

Continuing this line of thought, in the latter camp, associated with social space, we can identify facets of various innovative alternatives: SNAP and the rehab co-ops; the new-build co-op movement; Eldonians’ Self-Regenerating Community; and contemporary CLT campaigns. These experiments emerged out of resistance to the displacement, neglectful public-landlordism, bureaucratic paternalism and alienation inquiring in council programmes
for upgrading ‘slums’ – to protect lived space from the violence of abstract space (Wilson, 2013a). Oppositional politics formed the first step in a process of creative experimentation for alternatives, in mutual housing ownership, democratic design, and participatory neighbourhood regeneration. Taken together, such techniques appear diametrically opposed to the logic of housing-led approaches: engaging residents from the outset in a process of mutual learning with professional experts; designing in fulfilment of needs and desires into development outcomes; providing opportunities for people to get involved in improving their housing and neighbourhoods; and by doing so, forging new routes to socioeconomic and political empowerment. The spirit of Lefebvre’s (1991: 391) Anti-Logos is infused in these ‘experimental utopias’: seeking to “overcome divisions…between work and product, between repetitive and differential, or between needs and desires.” In other words, they close the gap between ends and means – which undermines revolutionary socialist attempts to address the housing question (Engels, 1872) – reconnecting the producer and consumer of housing, the designer and user; as working, albeit imperfect, examples of ‘dweller control’ (Turner, 1977; Ward, 1974).

This study of Liverpool’s housing history has shown that these two approaches tend to pull in different directions: the latter promising more democratically-accountable, locally-responsive, and self-sustaining solutions to the housing and neighbourhood questions. That said, I hope to have demonstrated that the divide between abstract space-makers and social space-makers suggested by Lefebvre’s theory is far from impermeable; differences between projects on each side of the line far from clear cut. It must be recognised that Logos and Anti-Logos – abstract and social space – are simultaneously present in all projects, as dialectical counterparts of the same social reality; as tendencies that collide, conflict and cooperate in multiple ways between and within different ‘spatial projects’ (Madden, 2014). There are no obvious ethical narratives with a clear set of protagonists and antagonists, nor any simple explanations, of how these projects have emerged and developed into various shapes. In this concluding discussion chapter I explore this interwoven and contradictory history as a whole, and draw out the salient points for this research. What follows is structured into four sub-chapters corresponding to the overall research objectives, rephrased as questions in figure 7.1, which I address below in turn. Integrated within all these sections are concluding reflections on the limitations of the research, the questions raised for further research, and possible future directions to tread.
Figure 7.1: Structure of this chapter: research objectives rearticulated as questions to answer.

1. What is the role of mutual housing in addressing the neighbourhood question, and how can Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space be used to understand social innovation?

2. How have diverse actors, organisations, politico-institutional processes, socio-economic conditions, and cultural contexts interacted in Liverpool to catalyse and shape the development of mutual housing alternatives since the 1960s?

3. How have different alternatives to conventional public sector housing provision developed and institutionalised over time, including their role in transforming Liverpool’s urban spaces and governance structures?

4. What are the influences of place on Liverpool’s recent history of mutual housing experiments, and the challenges posed for replication?
7.1 Can mutual housing save the neighbourhood? A Lefebvrean analysis

In his reflections on the scope of social innovation to investigate socio-spatial change, Frank Moulaert (2009: 21) raises these questions about the import of Lefebvrean ideas:

- How does social innovation relate to the social production of space?
- Should it only be interpreted in terms of production (and production of perceived space) or is it also part of conceived and lived space?

The literature on social innovation tends to focus on ‘spatial practices’ – perceived space (Lefebvre, 1991) – to the neglect of the dialectical interaction with conceived and lived space (Maccallum et al., 2009; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). But as Moulaert (2009: 20) suggests, this leaves unanalysed important aspects of the production of social innovation:

But in reality its materialization depends significantly on its relations with lived space and its perception; in fact it is this lived space that will produce the images and the symbols to develop a new language, and the imagineering tools to conceptualize a future social space.

In this opening section I want to elaborate on the roles of conceived and lived space in the process of social innovation, and on the distinctions I have drawn out above – abstract versus social space; large-scale property-led versus small-scale grassroots approaches – as a way into understanding the socio-spatial effects of mutual housing alternatives.

The applicability of Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space to Liverpool’s housing history is clear in the way in which successive state-led urban renewal programmes embodied an abstract rationality and employed tools of abstraction – as technologies of abstract space. First, comprehensive redevelopment can be seen to impose a quantitative equivalence, or difference-through-sameness – a major feature of abstract space, which, for Lefebvre (1991: 370),

Destroys the historical conditions that gave rise to it, its own (internal) differences, and any such differences that show signs of developing, in order to impose an abstract homogeneity.

The post-war slum clearance programme, Militant-led URS and HMR alike – all involved the total erasure of existing 19th century street patterns, replaced by abstract modernist designs of tower blocks and tenements, or, later with HMR, ad hoc suburban designs with little coherence or legibility in either architecture or road layout. At the risk of romanticising the terraces, it must be remembered that they too are a concrete expression of abstract space, built by speculative builders to house migrant workers, often in appalling conditions, and arranged
in abstract grid-like street patterns, with identical ‘back-to-back’ housing designs. There was a reason why it was called the *slum* clearance programme: many of these houses lacked basic modern facilities like hot water and inside toilets. In many respects, then, the council was enlightened in its reformist determination to upgrade insanitary living conditions with modern housing. However, such streets quickly became home to densely woven networks of families, friends and neighbours who forged communal ties and created rich social space out of the deleterious material environment. Destroying such a delicate social fabric in a few fell swoops by comprehensive redevelopment was a directly, as well as symbolic, violent act – replacing social space with an abstract space of homogenous housing estates.

Again, with the rationalisation of the road network in the 1960s occurring alongside the slum clearances – such as in the case of the Kingsway Road Tunnel under the Mersey, which cut through dockside neighbourhoods in north Liverpool, and the highway plan to cut Granby in two with a distributor road – we see the violent power of abstract space in operation:

> In order to dominate space, technology introduces a new form into a pre-existing space – generally a rectilinear or rectangular form such as a meshwork or chequerwork. A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out. (Lefebvre, 1991: 165)

In direct opposition to such top-down initiatives, inhabitants often organised to resist these incursions of conceived space into the lived space of their residential neighbourhoods. We saw this in the case of the Kingsway Tunnel, with albeit unsuccessful campaigns against the development nonetheless galvanising local communities to fight for more, and inspired the likes of Tony McGann who would go on to successfully campaign for alternatives; and in Granby where residents, organised through SNAP, successfully opposed the demolition of the neighbourhood.

The dominance of conceived space in the thinking of councillors, planners and council officers can be seen in the way in which successive council-led programmes target as the object of renewal efforts the physical form of the housing itself – seen as a decontextualised material object – rather than all the other structures and lived processes which go into producing it. The slum clearance programme aimed to rehouse residents in modern hygienic tenements, tower blocks and houses, mostly built out on the city’s periphery. But providing people with all the latest amenities in clean, spacious, safe environments was not enough to improve standards of living, and in fact too often destroyed the delicate web of social relations – lived space – that knitted communities together and provided socioeconomic safety nets of
mutual aid and solidarity so important in times of hardship and precarity (McBane, 2008; McDonald, 1986; Rogers, 2010, 2012).

We see this narrow focus on the material objects of dwelling – to the detriment of social processes – repeated down the decades. For all Militant’s admirable ambitions to solve the housing crisis of the 1970s through municipal re-appropriation of the means of a social reproduction, in their massive programme of council-housing-building – the URS was fixated on the type of housing it built rather than its relation to wider socioeconomic processes. Influenced by Alice Coleman’s ‘design disadvantage’ theory, URS architect Tony Byrne became seduced by a kind of design determinism, in which the semi-detached inter-war suburban house was fetishised as the ideal model for council housing – reincarnated as the ‘Hatton house’. Militant’s monomania elevated their housebuilding programme as the answer for all Liverpool’s problems: by socialising the ownership and management of housing, and striking partnerships with big developers, the council hoped that the job creation and injection of desperately-needed investment into deteriorating neighbourhoods, would simultaneously resolve unemployment, housing shortages and dilapidation.

For all Militant’s faults, theirs was a brave and admirable attempt to stand up against the central state, unusual in British politics, but ultimately incapable of challenging the emerging neoliberal consensus (Frost and North, 2013). Municipal socialism proved politically – and socially – unsustainable in the post-Fordist era. Unfortunately for Militant, the tide of progressive politics was moving away from hierarchical state-like organisation towards more participatory and self-organised forms, eventually articulated in ‘commons’ discourse (Cumbers, 2015; Hodkinson, 2012a). The idea of the commons was to find traction in Liverpool’s contemporary CLT campaigns, initiated in reaction to HMR (Grant, 2011; Mitchell, 2014).

We see history repeating itself in the 21st century. Much like Militant’s URS, HMR focused too much energy on treating the surface symptom of a deeper structural problem. HMR’s initial objective of systemically restructuring failing housing markets was quite forward-thinking. However, this expansive rationale was soon distilled down to the narrow issue of housing type and design: a mission drift both complex and highly political – caught up in the increasingly financialised incentive structures governing housing associations since the 1988 Act (Webb, 2011, 2012). Put simply, because HMR followed an abstract logic of markets and exchange, the problem was reformulated as one of housing ‘products’ competing for the attention of upwardly mobile ‘consumers’ in a residential ‘market of positions’ (Allen, 2008; Webb, 2012) –
an expression of abstract space. HMR researchers deemed terraced housing unviable owing to its low market price, and so the solution became replacing it with a new product, reflecting consumer choice, rather than improving wider systemic factors, such as employment, education, health, and environment. The terraced house was thereby vilified as ‘obsolete’ – internalising responsibility for complex socio-spatial structural problems. But upgrading the materiality of housing by itself is not enough, as acknowledged even by leading figures in HMR management:

You have to try and make sure that housing is linked into other forms of socioeconomic regeneration…I think a mistake was made in the work that…led to Housing Market Renewal…[it] should have been called ‘Market Renewal’; because housing in a sense in itself may stabilise, may stop decline, but in itself it will not be enough to promote economic wellbeing; you have to have other things that go alongside it. That’s where the Eldonians were clever. (interview, P3)

Of all the mutual housing campaigns, the Eldonians have gone the furthest in achieving this vision of a ‘Self-Regenerating Community’, with significant progress in local training, education, health, community care, leisure, employment, and job creation, as well as in the development of local social enterprises and economic partnerships through their business arm, the development trust, now called EGL (Eldonian Group Ltd). What sets them apart from the rest is that they

Took over the whole neighbourhood; so they aren’t just a housing landlord…not just a social club…not just a social enterprise creator, they’re not just a partner – they are the driving force (interview, C3)

Despite many differences, the Granby CLT vision has likewise provided the blueprint for going beyond just housing, beginning to collaboratively craft the area’s wider regeneration via ‘community homesteading’ (Assemble, 2013). Like the participatory design techniques of the new-build co-ops, this has the potential to provide a conduit for socioeconomic and political empowerment. It also brings diverse groups together around a hands-on project; cultivating new relationships, habits and networks of cooperation which may help sustain practices of commoning conducive to CLT governance in the long-run. Likewise, Homebaked employs a similarly hands-on and incremental approach. A participant-observer emphasises the

Importance of slow learning and cumulative change through this longitudinal model…a difficult commitment to retain in the face of the urgency, and even desperation, that characterises the needs of the local residents of Anfield as regeneration strategies…continue to threaten not only Homebaked but also their own homes…(Jones, 2014)
This works in stark contrast to HMR. Despite pulling huge amounts of government funding into the city, HMR failed to embed this capital into lasting socioeconomic change for hard-hit neighbourhoods like Anfield, or build the kind of durable socio-spatial infrastructures for slow and steady ongoing regeneration after funding dried up. A weakness of this model is the dependency on continued government funding, making it vulnerable to electoral politics. When HMR funding was cut, neighbourhoods were left like “war zones”, publicly denounced by former council leader, Warren Bradley:

You can’t rip the heart out of the community and promise them something in 15 years’ time…We announced six renewal areas, and in hindsight we should have done it one by one. Completing one area and then moving onto the next…We should have landscaped areas so that people didn’t feel they were living in a war zone…The big challenge is going to be to sustain communities in areas where we have announced renewal (quoted in Bartlett, 2010)

There is unrealised potential to utilise the CLT model within HMR delivery to ‘lock in’ capital investment and recycle surpluses locally, in a more self-sustaining and self-sufficient method of regeneration that does not require continued top-up funding from the state: a paradigm shift from hierarchical dependence, towards radical local autonomy in which regeneration becomes self-generating, albeit from an initial state investment, building its own momentum.

From another perspective, it is easy to see why Liverpool council may justifiably seek to retain control of the development process in HMR areas: to generate surpluses for investment in general welfare provision or recycle back into further regeneration and improvement works for other hard-hit areas. In this respect, large-scale development agreements provide the council with overall stewardship over the city-wide regeneration process with the ability to redistribute revenues between specific neighbourhoods. This is a very similar principle to the argument for CLT stewardship of land for recycling rent revenues back into the neighbourhood for community benefit – only the council can do this at a municipal-metropolitan scale. The contention then becomes one over the scale of stewardship – and the scope of redistributive duties – rather than any essential disagreement over the logic of action per se. The trade-off becomes one of balancing the long-term needs and costs of regeneration for individual neighbourhoods like Granby or Kensington – which may gain their own momentum through relatively self-funding CLTs after initial council investment – versus those for other neighbourhoods in the wider metropolitan area, which may otherwise be subsidised by surpluses made in CLT areas.
Yet stewardship invested in the council – the ‘public interest’ – remains relatively unaccountable and inaccessible to local communities, powerless to influence investment strategies except by the ballot box every few years. They would maintain more direct democratic control over the future of their areas if given collective ownership powers. It also remains unclear how the surpluses accruing to HMR grant regimes are shared out amongst partners; just how big a slice of the pie the council is able to secure for public purposes, as opposed to being siphoned off as private profit by development companies. Even if the council were able to claw-back most of the land value rises as public surplus, how much of it would actually be reinvested in the communities that need it rather than some other project? What is clear, however, is the power of abstraction over regeneration thinking – in the LIFE model and HMR ZOO policies – in which all potential plans must contend with formal agreements with a single preferred developer within each area. Future research needs to ‘follow the money’ to get a better understanding of the political economy of regeneration.

7.1.1 Playing the regeneration game: from indices of multiple deprivation to indices of multiple celebration!

Yet there is something about the demonstrable materiality of large-scale property-led development that maintains its hegemony: it produces quantifiable and relatively rapid visible results. With the increasing infiltration of abstraction into urban renewal policy – increasingly target-driven, performance-measured, evidence-based, market-led approaches to designing and evaluating interventions (Hodkinson, 2011; Pinnegar, 2009) – large-scale housing-led schemes are better able to attract large pots of state funding, as well as demonstrate their outputs in measurable terms: number of houses built, refurbished etc. This becomes a self-verifying, reinforcing logic. Greater quantities of demolished and completed homes validates the initial outlay, but also brings large amounts of investment into the city and secures the financial interests of major stakeholders in the ‘grant regime’ (Couch and Cocks, 2011).

To justify further investment, the grant regime must demonstrate need through evidence of further housing dereliction and socioeconomic malaise. Facing fiscal austerity and decreasing resources from central government, councils like Liverpool are pressured to exploit the ‘rent gap’ (Smith, 1989) as an alternative source of revenue. The central contradiction at the heart of property-led regeneration is highlighted by Kallin and Slater (2014):

The role of the state here goes much further than simply the selling of certain homes, or even the demolition of old ones. The reliance on stigma as an engine of regeneration is written into the very policies that are aimed
at these areas of deprivation. As stigma gets worse, the rent gap – the opportunity for profit – gets wider.

Figure 7.2: Notice on the Homebaked terrace in Anfield, an example of Scouse wit satirising what many locals see as ‘dereliction by design’ (source: author’s own, 2013)

With these political and financial interests at stake, there exist perverse incentives to overemphasise deprivation, and perhaps even escalate structural processes of neighbourhood decline. Many residents and commentators believe Liverpool council is engaged in a strategy of ‘managed decline’ or ‘dereliction-by-design’ (interviews, N5/N7/H8/H9/A4/C7), captured in figure 7.2 above. Such participants believe Liverpool is playing the ‘regeneration game’, competing to win successive rounds of public investment as a circuitous route to actually ‘doing’ regeneration:
People have been misunderstanding what game, what league, Liverpool was playing in, because actually if the biggest prize was European money, we won it...And we not only got Objective One, we got it for three decades on the trot; and the transition programme, no other city’s got that have they! And you look at the amount of money that it’s brought: it’s phenomenal. So if the game has changed, I think it will be interesting to see if Liverpool changes. So you could even describe it as the most entrepreneurial city – even Canary Wharf didn’t get as much as us in terms of European investment (interview, H8).

Notice the past tense, the game Liverpool “was” playing. This regeneration consultant sees the city entering a new era – of austerity urbanism, post-2008 financial crisis – in which more grounded, creative, resourceful and piecemeal approaches to regeneration fill the vacuum created in absence of government funding. Like many others, she identifies a culture change: from competing on the ‘Index of Multiple Deprivation’ to secure grants for large-scale redevelopment, towards competing on the “index of multiple celebration” (ibid). Granby is perhaps the first grassroots initiative for many years to assert pride and a celebratory outlook: demonstrating to potential investors and members alike their power to effect urban transformation through grassroots interventions. This bucks the trend of a self-defeating mindset proving to authorities the severity of local deprivation to procure external assistance. One of the artistic activists in Homebaked describes the dampening, deadening effect this can have on self-esteem and collective identity:

There was a big pot of gold...In order to access this pot, the area had to tick so many boxes in the magical world of deprivation. So suddenly, we were told all the time that we were from this deprived area. And we were like ‘I’m not deprived. I don’t feel deprived. We have food and clothes, both parents work. How am I deprived?’ But the more you feed that in: ‘You’re poor, you’re this, you’re that’, you watch the standards drop; everything seemed to drop and it took about ten years, but they finally ticked that last box (Jayne Lawless quoted in: Heeswijk & Jurgensen, 2014; Jeeves, 2014: 7)

These comments primarily refer to the EU Objective One Structural Fund, but the argument equally applies to the whole ‘regeneration game’. This is a troubling example of the power of performativity: how the conceptualisations and categories used to analyse socio-spatial conditions can adversely reshape place in their image (Aalbers, 2014a; Christophers, 2014; Lovering, 2007). Granby and Homebaked CLTs may conversely act to re-describe place in a more positive image, and therefore potentially begin to ‘perform’ that space into being (figure 7.3).
These visions are conjured up from the imaginations of activists and residents – through lived space – yet they are re-presented in the language of professionals, planners and architects, as conceived space. Granby’s spontaneous grassroots activity is a powerfully performative demonstration to key stakeholders of the social value of the neighbourhood, and the motivations and capacities of local people for collective self-government; heeding Lefebvre’s dictum (1991: 189-90): “To change life, however, we must first change space.” It helped attract the main funding partners, HDSI, as well as the NAHC co-operators, as vital advocates for the CLT project. Likewise, Homebaked’s ongoing success can certainly be attributed to their proactive capability to shape the conceived space of media representations, political discourses and design philosophies, in addition to the perceived, material space of buildings, and the lived space of social practices and embodied experiences. Such proactive ‘imagineering’ is the first step in the process of bringing people together to formulate more concrete plans, attract funding and delivery partners, and realise regeneration in the long run.

Figure 7.3: The CLT’s ‘Re-creating home’ juxtaposed with the sign that it directly replaced: HMR’s tagline ‘creating neighbourhoods for the future’, as if not for the present, but for some abstract, receding horizon (source: author’s own, 2015); and pictorial aerial vision of the four streets in CLT brochure, with Granby Street flourishing – so critical in persuading the council (Assemble, 2013).
7.1.2 Housing fetishism

All these instances of top-down large-scale application of conceived space fall into the trap of commodity fetishism: simplifying the complex realities of dwelling as a spatial constellation of fluid social processes – just as the relations of exploitation in global production are obscured in the final consumer product on the shelf. Lefebvre (1991: 113) points to the tendency of “productive operations” to “cover their tracks”:

When construction is completed, the scaffolding is taken down; likewise, the fate of an author’s rough draft is to be torn up and tossed away…products, and even works, are further characterized by their tendency to detach themselves from productive labour. So much so, in fact, that productive labour is sometimes forgotten altogether, and it is this ‘forgetfulness’…this mystification…that makes possible the fetishism of commodities: the fact that commodities imply certain social relationships whose misapprehension they also ensure.

This ‘forgetfulness’ becomes especially acute with the infiltration of abstract space into spatial practices – which in Turner’s (1977) terms, amounts to the state-capitalist system of ‘productivity’. Housing fetishism works in two ways: to obscure from casual view the full productive process going into making a dwelling what it is; and to mystify the critical faculties of users from recognising their power to change it. All traces of the historical layers, social labour, collective action, skills, construction techniques, sweat, and toil that went into producing it are rendered invisible by the polished, homogenised – fetihised – end-product. This is tantamount to Lefebvre’s (1991: 95-6) insight that modernity is marked by the “manifest expulsion of time” by fetishised space; that “with the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space.” Moreover, this also conceals from common sense the lived space of the inhabitants themselves, who infuse material structure with life and project their subjective experiences, desires, memories, dreams, and imaginaries into buildings in ways that actually produce dwelling a social space over mere abstract product. Commodity fetishism helps us forget that it is the users of dwellings that truly ‘perform’ dwelling – that dwelling is a verb as well as a noun (Turner, 1972). A fog of abstraction descends, which Lefebvre (1991: 93) identifies as affecting both users and critics – but which just as easily applies to policymakers and practitioners:

Fetishized abstract space thus gives rise to two practical abstractions: ‘users’ who cannot recognize themselves within it, and a thought which cannot conceive of adopting a critical stance towards it.
In fetishising the housing itself over the activities that produce and enliven it, property-led approaches to regeneration do more damage than first meets the eye. As forms of abstract space, the modernist comprehensive renewal mentality of the slum clearances, URS, and HMR separate the thingness from the flow of space, focusing on the end-product, the final design, over the process of getting there; reflecting abstract time horizons of neoliberal urban policy – and revolutionary socialism – privileging the future, and the future end-user, over the present (see figure 7.3). They assume a division between the makers and users of urban space – what Tonkiss (2013) calls the ‘fallacy of the end-user’ – obfuscating the interactive connection between dweller and dwelling, thereby neglecting the lived space of inhabitants in favour of abstract visions of planners and technocrats operating within conceived space. They tend to mask the historical process of producing space, and the inherent agency of spatial projects, thereby becoming politically disempowering and discouraging of social innovation and differential space.

When combined with the economies of scale demanded by the speculative development industry, the outcome is a one-size-fits-all, resource-intensive, efficient-though-wasteful ‘productivist’ approach to redevelopment abstracted from the differences of lived space, and blind to opportunities for more piecemeal and resourceful solutions. By focusing on the materiality of space, these approaches produce a kind of spatial closure, a totalitarian conception of utopia – ‘utopist’ rather than truly ‘utopian’ in Lefebvre’s distinction (Pinder, 2013). They foreclose the possibility of ongoing change: lacking the temporal openness and flexibility for genuine engagement of users with their environment. Experimental utopias, in contrast, tend to transform space endogenously in the here and now, through in-tense, immanent and immersive methods. This is the realm of Scott’s (1999) métis, where street-level innovators test out material practices through local knowledge and practical wisdom. The promise of participatory techniques and cooperative governance relations of mutual housing models lies in the greater degree of interaction between users, and between dweller and dwelling, such that a dialectical spatio-temporal process of experimental-utopian change may produce ‘differential space’ (Lefebvre, 1991).

The architectural critics of the supposedly ‘ordinary’ and uninspiring’ suburban designs of the 1970s co-ops missed the point: their spatial structure reflects the process of democratic design, and enables the continued interaction of residents as a co-op. Nonetheless, a higher degree of spatial closure marks the co-ops than more temporary, flexible self-build designs. The CLTs perhaps better demonstrate how material space itself is an organic evolving spatial
expression of inhabitants’ lived space: old terraced houses are reimagined and internally reworked in combination with transformation of public space to create an ‘experimental utopia’ out of historical materials. Distinguishing the CLT campaigns, especially Granby, from the co-ops is their creative use of public space (see figure 7.4); encouraging collective encounter, play, festivity, and the carnivalesque, they are micro-expressions of the right to difference and the jouissance of differential space (Merrifield, 1995).

Figure 7.4: a familiar sign on the walls of many co-op schemes across the city, this one Langrove (left), reflecting the culturally more conservative and traditional values of the co-ops; contrasted with its playful subversion in Granby (right) (source: author’s own, 2015)

It may be protested that I fall into the same trap: fetishising mutual housing as a way to resolve complex socio-spatial problems. But my point is not to emphasise the materiality of the housing as such – even though some designs are better suited to the reproduction of cooperative relations than others – but to show how the process of producing housing is important in the way urban space is inhabited, and social relations are reproduced. Nor is it my intention to emphasise the formal institutional form of mutual housing models over the practices that produce it. My point is that mutual housing does not simply amount to a redistribution of legal entitlements, but that these institutional formulas are vitalised by cooperative practices; as Linebaugh (2008: 45) remarks: “think first not of title deeds, but of human deeds.” Just as housing is not simply an object but also an activity (Turner, 1972), so too is property not a thing or possession, but rather an active form of human ‘doing’ enacted out through embodied and performed practices (Blomley, 2004b).
7.1.3 Contradictions in the production of socio-spatial innovation

Whilst this provides a neat heuristic of ideal-types, social reality is far more complex and contradictory than Lefebvre’s (1991) opposition between abstract and social space, conceived and lived space, suggests. First, grassroots campaigns must use the tools of conceived space – masterplans, surveys, business plans, construction methods etc. – in order to plan, develop, and manage anything at all, or to successfully negotiate land acquisition from the state, which must be convinced of the community’s competency to manage public assets. Campaigns eventually require fluency in the language of state bureaucracy, market processes and professional mores if they are ever to gain the trust of key gatekeepers and successfully attract financial and legal support. CDS in the late 1970s was very good at bridging the gap between the lived space of co-op communities and the conceived space of architects and planners: drawing on and developing métis, helping residents acquire the knowledge and tools required to take control over the decision-making process, even though the actual development work was conducted by professionals. Chapter Four illustrated the huge benefits for residents and neighbourhoods alike: in more responsive housing designs and urban environments, and socio-economic and political empowerment of residents to find jobs in related professions as well as political roles in local government.

Granby CLT shows how resident involvement can be pushed even further, with the do-it-yourself rehabilitation of community homesteading. However, it remains impossible to incorporate residents completely into the design and development process – for this is extremely complex, involving the multiple interactions of bureaucratic, architectural, legal, financial and political procedures, each of which require expertise honed over years of learning and experience. Assemble have attempted to implement such an approach as fully as possible, but have had to employ professional contractors to carry out the most demanding structural refurb work. To suggest that residents can rehabilitate or build housing anew through a purely grassroots approach misapprehends the scale and difficulty of the challenges facing some of Liverpool’s inner-city neighbourhoods – and misapprehends the relational nature of ‘self-help’.

Moreover, skilling up residents to ‘do-it-themselves’ is painstakingly time-consuming and expensive. It is also very complicated to coordinate at a sufficiently large enough scale to address Liverpool’s problems: to provide the necessary strategic oversight to link together – and avoid duplication – diverse small-scale projects all operating in a piecemeal fashion. This is one of the reasons why conventional regeneration programmes, such as HMR and the LIFE model, adopt a more abstract, professionalised and uniform approach – for the efficiencies
and simplicities that come with economies of scale (interviews, P3/P7/N3). But HMR went too far, and missed the opportunity to balance these two tendencies for a hybrid combination of resident-led, locally-responsive, publicly-accountable, and ‘resourceful’ projects supported and coordinated by larger-scale ‘enabling’ bodies (Turner, 1977). There is no necessary reason why HMR funding could not have been channelled into a diversity of CLT projects, as suggested by URBED (2004), and tentatively explored in Kensington, to no avail.

Second, mutual housing alternatives do not emerge out of a political vacuum, but are highly intertwined and interdependent with the multi-scalar governance processes structuring their localities. While the literature largely suggests social innovation arises through civil society organisations and social movements outside the state, usually in reaction to government failings (Moulaert et al., 2013; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010), I argue that Liverpool’s socially innovative spatial projects are the result of a multitude of actors – across public, private, and third sectors – often working at cross-purposes, but sometimes collaboratively and cooperatively in state-funded projects. SNAP was a council-commissioned action-research project run by the voluntary housing campaign group Shelter, using state funding to deliver its radical agenda. The co-op movement was effectively bank-rolled by central government, via the Housing Corporation, and promoted locally by the Liberal council. The Eldonians received unprecedented political and financial support from the Thatcher government. Homebaked was commissioned by Liverpool Biennial, itself funded by a range of state agencies – including Liverpool council, Arts Council for England and EU – and also Peel Holdings, the private consortium with huge investments in redeveloping Liverpool’s infrastructure (Dembski, 2015; Harrison, 2014). Granby is dependent on philanthropic capitalism, in the shape of an ex-stockbroker ‘mystery millionaire’. The idea for a CLT in Liverpool was first tested out by a large commercialised housing association in Anfield and a former-NDC regeneration partnership in Kensington. What all these examples demonstrate is the complex crossovers and multiple enmeshments between local and national state actors, private companies, housing associations, charities and grassroots groups involved in the innovation of potentially radical and transformative spatial projects.

Third, there is a ‘tendency to oligarchy’ operating within all forms of human organisation (Ward, 1973) and co-ops and CLTs are certainly not exempt. ‘Actually existing commons’ are neither free from contradictions nor immune to human power relations (Eizenberg, 2012a). They construct walls within – and boundaries without – as necessarily exclusive enclosures that protect against more pernicious enclosures. Whilst there are differences between models,
such that CLTs have the potential to be more democratic, publicly accountable, inclusive and outward-facing than co-ops – which are seen as ‘collective private ownership’ (Geisler and Daneker, 2000) – all mutual housing models are essentially pragmatic compromises made with an inhospitable legal landscape that attempt to express mutual relations in institutional form. As forms of housing, they are complex hybrid social spaces: combining the privacy of the home with more cooperative social relations for the democratic governance of land.

There are tendencies towards abstraction in the Eldonian model. Residents treat the management of their housing as a service provided to them rather than a co-produced benefit of collective self-government. The 1970s co-ops were better at inculcating participation and cooperation within smaller communities. Yet their exclusionary and inward-facing ‘waggon train’ urban design produced a problematic legacy. In many respects this is a spatial expression of the exclusivity of cooperatives (Rose, 1994), but is best seen as a form of defence against threats of deprivation, dilapidation, crime, sectarian violence, and council-led displacement. As exemplars of sustainable communities, the co-ops contributed to the trend for defensible space principles that informed secured-by-design policy. In Liverpool this furthered divisions in an already divided city: splintering the urban environment and ramifying the feeling that Liverpool is a “city of a thousand villages” (interview, N7). It risks adding new layers to a history of sectarianism: producing isolated clusters of ‘militant particularisms’, incapable of drawing strength from cooperation and solidarity, and disconnected from the wider struggle for urban land reform (Harvey, 1995).

There is a danger in Liverpool that individual projects pursue a kind of competitive vanguardism – encouraged by neoliberal discourses of austerity localism and resilience (Featherstone et al., 2012; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). Such a tendency risks fragmenting Liverpool’s nascent CLT movement, ‘dividing and conquering’ projects before they can even get going. This is precisely what happened to the Weller Streets: they got so carried away with their own self-asserted image as a pioneer of radical autonomy that they alienated other co-ops, their potential allies and partners, leading to the collapse of their independent secondary agency before it even really got going (McDonald, 1986). In moving towards a strategy of mutual ‘resourcefulness’ rather than self-reliant ‘resilience’ (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013) the co-op and CLT movements in Liverpool need to build bridges between projects and develop those supportive infrastructures and ‘enabler’ organisations – promoted by Turner (1977) and embodied by CDS in the late 1970s, and later by the Merseyside Federation of Co-ops.
Despite slow progress on this front, the CLT model has the potential to transcend the problem of inward-facing exclusivity associated with the co-ops – as essentially collective forms of private ownership – through its counteracting principle of stewardship. Although Granby and Homebaked were galvanised by particular groups with their own specific political agendas, they may prove more publicly-accessible and democratic than their cooperative forebears. There are far more stakeholders and wider community representatives involved in the management of CLTs than co-ops, which were controlled by tightly-circumscribed communities. The necessity for partnership-working and negotiation with a wide range of actors brought about by complexifying urban governance relations has the potential to combine with the CLT model’s tripartite trust governance structure to produce a new kind of institutional vehicle for locally-controlled and publicly-accountable neighbourhood management.

Whilst the critical contribution of the CLTs is to protect the housing at the heart of these neighbourhoods as perpetually affordable, this amounts to only a fraction of local stock; Granby guerrilla gardeners and Homebaked artist-activists enact a certain bohemian habitus, which may act to exclude others from the area. Just as HMR has been accused of implementing state-led gentrification by stealth (Allen, 2008; Bridge et al., 2012), the CLT projects may inadvertently lead to colonisation of Granby and Anfield by an upwardly mobile creative class asserting ‘the right to the (creative) city’ (Novy and Colomb, 2013). Granby’s winning the Turner Prize may only exacerbate such tensions. Positioning the neighbourhood as a cutting-edge exemplar of fashionable urbanism will no doubt attract newcomers to the area, potentially sparking up a process of gentrification – further crowding out those who have lived here for decades, through thick and thin, through the bad times and bad press following the 1981 Uprising; putting in all the unsung hard work into trying to bring the place back from the brink of demolition, only to see the neighbourhood suddenly catapulted into the headlines as a posterchild of the latest trends in architecture and arts-led regeneration; much of the credit for the turnaround, at least in the national media, going to a group of young architects from London who only just arrived on the scene, but just at the right moment for the neighbourhood and the art world; events which have the potential to threaten the ability of those longstanding residents to remain in, or indeed to reap the rewards of their commitments to, place. Contrary to recent characterisations (Aalbers, 2006; Madden, 2014), we can see how ‘social space-makers’ do not necessarily create inclusive social space, which may be just as alienating for some as abstract space is for others.
Fourth, there are significant political problems with the mutual model. In what Herbert (2008) describes as the ‘trapdoor of community’, communities risk exposing themselves to unwanted responsibilities for delivering public services, offloaded by a retreating public sector. Community ownership of housing may provide justification for further privatisation and cutbacks in public services, through such discourses as sustainability, self-sufficiency and resilience, which tacitly promotes community capabilities to defend against structural forces by maintaining the status quo rather than achieve any kind of radical transformation (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). Granby and Homebaked CLTs might be framed as unwitting agents of neoliberal austerity: taking up the slack in the paralysed development model and filling the gap left by the retreating state. They may pave the way for the next wave of speculative property development to hit Liverpool after its long decline: rescuing desirable architectural assets from near-destruction, valorising the land and environment through painstaking unpaid voluntary labour, and attracting social financiers, artists and ‘conscience constituent’ activists, as the nascent signs of gentrification.

The values of entrepreneurialism, creativity, flexibility and do-it-yourself initiative so central to Granby CLT and Homebaked – as experimental utopias – are at the same time the values treasured by ‘roll-with-it’ neoliberalism: the subjectification and normalisation of enterprise and self-governing capabilities (Keil, 2009). Yet we must remember that these projects grew out of grassroots passion for place and radical ideals; not foisted upon them by the state seeking to offload responsibilities. In the case where this did happen – Arena Housing’s failed experiment in Anfield – tenants actually resisted the imposition of the CLT idea and rejected narratives presented to them, at base about operational costs and organisational efficiencies (Engelsman and Southern, 2010). There is perhaps an inbuilt safeguard within the CLT model against neoliberal exploitation: residents really have to want to do it if it is ever even to get off the ground.

Finally, there are often counterintuitive outcomes that result from the decisions of well-intended projects for inclusive and participatory urbanism. Indeed, Granby’s tumultuous history of conflict over neighbourhood change reveals how actors engage in different ‘spatial projects’ which collide and interact in complex and unpredictable assemblages that shape the production of space in novel ways (Madden, 2014). For instance, the SNAP Traffic Task Force, made up of local resident representatives, decided to close off the four streets from the main arterial roads, creating bollarded cul-de-sacs in an effort to prevent kerb-crawlers in what was a crime-ridden neighbourhood (McConaghy, 1972) and challenge the council’s plan for a
major highway through Granby. Whilst SNAP empowered residents to collectively campaign and save many houses from demolition, their reactionary plans materialised as dead-end streets, severing Granby from vital arterial through-flow. Arguably, this precipitated the spiral of decline in the following decades (Merrifield, 2002). The social space making of SNAP, then, had both progressive and regressive effects on the production of space: saving Granby from demolition; initiating the rehab co-op movement; inspiring new democratic planning practices among the local housing associations; sowing seeds for the CLT vision – but also contributing to the area’s isolation and socioeconomic decline.

Another fascinating irony inherited from SNAP is the effect of Granby Residents’ Association’s anti-demolition campaigning. Their stalling of all council schemes to consolidate and rationalise stock led to a deadlock in decision-making which effectively provided the impetus for the Liberal Democrats’ LIFE model as a solution to the longstanding stalemate. But the roots of the LIFE model can be traced back to SNAP itself, and the Liberal council’s creation of ‘improvement zones’ – in GIA and HAA policies following the 1969 Housing Act – for housing associations and co-op development agencies to monopolise as the main delivery agents of rehab. This logic is taken further in the LIFE model’s nomination of one lead housing association for each area – a way for the council to create a more streamlined regeneration process for the persistent problem of private sector inner-city terraces. This in turn provided the blueprint for the monolithic organisational structure of ZOOs in Liverpool’s HMR Pathfinder. Ironically, the vocal resistance against redevelopment in Granby – first put in train by SNAP – paved the way for a more extreme solution to the problem of effectively consolidating land for redevelopment. If there is just one way to summarise the import of Lefebvrean ideas to the study of social innovation, therefore, it is to emphasise the complex dialectical relationships in the production of space: that social space is difficult to disentangle or produce independently from its dialectical other, abstract space. Social space-makers do not necessarily always produce progressive or emancipatory outcomes, but rather collide, cooperate and interact with abstract space-makers in highly contextualised and contingent socio-spatial combinations.
7.2 Key factors catalysing development of mutual housing experiments

By constructing such a broad comparative history, I have had to prioritise particular cases and periods over others. It is easy to link these to ‘cycles of contention’ identified in the collective action literature (Martinelli, 2010; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978), such that the 1970s co-op movement is representative of the second cycle associated with the New Left, and the contemporary CLT movement of the third cycle emerging in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis (Mayer, 2009a). Within these periods, I have sought to identify those path-shaping and path-breaking ‘turning points’ which helped define the development of mutual housing alternatives, seen as distinct ‘pathways’ forged into the landscape of Liverpool’s housing history (Mahoney, 2000; Malpass, 2011; Pierson, 2000). Such an exercise has proven useful for interpreting a complex history, by highlighting the key moments for further elaboration and critical discussion. But such periodisation, although analytically helpful, risks dramatising historical moments and draws attention away from the bits in between. There are historiographical dangers in isolating causal factors from the privileged position of hindsight. The 1990s, for instance, although seemingly empty of experimentation, is still a hugely important decade for legislative, policy and socioeconomic developments that would lay the groundwork for later manifestations of social innovation. What I hope to have presented here is a relatively continuous history of significant processes and episodes leading to the formation of mutual experiments.

Notwithstanding these reservations, it is clear that both the co-op and CLT movements manifested through radical moments – concentrations of actions, episodes and processes fortuitously combining with just the right conditions to produce an opening or rupture, in time consolidating as more lasting change. This is perhaps more true for the city’s co-op than the CLT movement, which – numbering two embryonic campaigns – is arguably not yet a regional movement at all. Part of my interest in delving into the reasons behind the co-op movement’s growth is to understand how a certain set of factors came together to produce Liverpool’s so-called ‘Co-op Spring’ (Ospina, 1987) or ‘cooperative revolution’ (CDS, 1994) – a means of providing insight into the necessary ingredients and possible trajectories of the emerging CLT movement.

The short answer, gathered from a range of centrally-involved participants, is that “it was just of the moment” (C6); that “there had been a set of circumstances” peculiar to inner-city Liverpool of the 1970s (P1) that made it “ripe for development” (N2); creating a “cocktail which enabled it to occur” (H1), from “a combination of mutual interests” across the national,
city-regional and local political scales (N2). It was generally seen that “a confluence of factors…had come together to make it happen” (C2); such that the movement “blossomed briefly under this kind of political spotlight…showered with money to develop co-ops, but only for a very short space, then the door closed again.” (C1). But what exactly are the specific components which make up this ‘cocktail’, this ‘set of circumstances’, ‘combination of mutual interests’, this ‘confluence of factors’? From the findings, seven basic ingredients can be identified (see figure 7.5 below). These conditions broadly map onto Birchall’s (1988) categorisation of conditions for co-op development (figure 2.14). In what follows, I address each of the seven categories in turn, comparing how each period has mobilised these ingredients to different effect. The final ingredient – Liverpool’s exceptionalism and contact with radical models – is taken up in the concluding section of this chapter, as it corresponds to the fourth research objective about the influence of place and challenges for replication.

Figure 7.5: Confluence of factors in genesis of co-op movement

1) housing need left unmet amongst communities, and grassroots motivations to campaign for alternatives;
2) strong leadership and social organisation within these communities;
3) dedicated activists committed to cooperative principles and professional support networks based in Liverpool;
4) availability of cheap and vacant land to develop, or empty housing in need of refurbishment;
5) local political will and policy support from the council;
6) a benign funding and legislative regime at the national scale;
7) place-based traditions of political radicalism and radical ideas for mutual housing alternatives.

### 7.2.1 Community motivations

Community motivations for cooperative housing have two fundamental sources – inadequate housing standards and community displacement – with the desire for individual and collective autonomy also playing a major role (see figure 7.6 below). As Chapter Four attests, the appalling conditions of the council-managed terraces and tenements were made worse by Liberal council administrations of 1973-83, pursuing a policy of municipal housing retrenchment: putting a halt to all new council-housebuilding, and switching budgets into the
voluntary and third sectors; leading to massive growth in dilapidated ‘hard-to-let’ properties and a huge waiting list. Their motivations were part commendable political commitments to the principle of dweller control; part politicking strategy to disarm the Works Department, the city’s heavily unionised housing maintenance division, which the Liberals believed was too powerful, inefficient, bureaucratic and wasteful of public resources. Ironically, by fervently supporting the co-op and housing association movements as alternative means to resolve the housing question, the Liberals only exacerbated it, and paved the way for their demise, through the Militant backlash.
Figure 7.6: Community motivations

1) **Better housing conditions:** the accommodative interest in the use-value of ‘amenity’ (Davis, 1990) was the driving impulse behind most new-build co-ops as well as the initial rehab co-ops developed out of SNAP in and around Granby. Likewise, the Kirkby co-ops tended to be more opportunistic assemblages of pepper-potted residents coming together to fight for better conditions.

2) **Anti-displacement:** The ‘first wave’ of pioneering new-build co-ops – particularly Weller and Hesketh Streets, the Eldonians, and also Thirlmere and Leta-Claudia – were distinctive for emerging out of anti-displacement campaigns against the ‘Slum Clearance Programme’, focused on keeping the community together, rather than just attempting to secure better housing, although this was clearly a concern. These campaigns against displacement were primarily seeking to protect their accommodative interest in ‘security of tenure’ (Davis, 1990). This was threatened by the council, which was therefore seen as the ‘enemy’, with ‘battle lines’ drawn in a ‘fight’ to save communities from dispersal.

3) **Dweller Control:** individual and collective autonomy in housing, represented as the accommodative use-values of ‘individuation’ and ‘control’ (Davis, 1990). The Weller Streets and Eldonians are perhaps unique among the co-ops for valuing these interests so passionately. Indeed, Colin Ward’s (1974) manifesto for ‘collective dweller control’ was highly influential in the gestation of the Weller Streets’ political philosophy (Ward and Goodway, 2003). However, both communities were more collectivist than individualist in their orientation to autonomy: driven by a desire to assert community self-determination over individual self-actualisation. This is reflected in the ‘utilitarian’ – utilitarian-cum-totalitarian – ethos of the Weller Streets, and the almost ‘Stalinist’ egalitarian approach of the Eldonians. In both these campaigns, radical self-government was an explicit aim – most fully realised by the Eldonians. In other co-ops, such as Hesketh Street, individual dweller control was given more room to grow, with greater self-expression and creative choice granted over the design, decoration and management of housing.

4) **Ideological cooperativism:** Certainly the Liverpool co-ops were distinct from the kind of lifestyle libertarianism and ideological purism of more middle-class co-op movements. Indeed, they were rooted in a deeply traditional working class culture, closely associated with the docks, heavy industry, trade unionism, organised religion and the old Labour Party. Liverpool co-operators sharply dissociated themselves from the London-based lifestyle co-operators – seen as “brown rice and sandals brigade” (interviews, C1/P4) – although Hesketh Street was seen as slightly “flower-powery” (interview, P1). Although cooperative principles were not so intensive as co-housing or commune-type living, with preferences for traditional family homes, the socialist and communitarian aspects of cooperativism – managing common assets as self-governing communities – were major motivations for many co-ops. Such ideological motivations, however, gradually dissolved as the movement gained ground.

5) **The Bandwagon effect:** ‘jumping on the bandwagon’ and ‘following the trend’ attained salience as ideological commitments waned. As more people saw how other groups were securing better houses through the co-op route, there was what participants describe as a ‘snowballing’, ‘demonstration’ or ‘bandwagon effect’ (interviews, H1/C3/P1/P3). From the second and third waves of new-build co-ops, there were elements of opportunism, ‘catch-up’ and ‘keeping up with the Jones’ at work. As the idea gains wider currency, and the perceived entry costs and risks begin to diminish, the early radicalism gets diluted, and “the idea itself gets flattened out, reduced to something like a formula” (McDonald, 1986: 209).
Motivations for mutual models have changed dramatically since the co-op movement’s heyday. Starting with Langrove, more recent community campaigns tend to be motivated by opposition to demolition plans rather than poor housing conditions, since standards have improved through modernisation and more effective management by housing associations. Community-led CLT campaigns are all geared towards protecting existing assets from demolition. For remaining homeowners in Granby, motivations to campaign for alternatives to demolition are a mixture of self-interested protection of individual ‘accumulative’ and ‘accommodative’ property values (Davis, 1990), with more collectivist aspirations for dweller control and a ‘backyard commons’ (Grant, 2011). Residents became increasingly incentivised to save what they had created from demolition: motivated more by a deep love for the architecture, ecology, and social atmosphere than any material property interest (interviews, A5/A6/A7/A8). Davis’ (1990) domestic property-based explanation does not account for these extra-material reasons for creative dissent.

In Anfield the context is different: generally more deprived than Granby, more isolated from the citycentre and economic opportunity, suffering from years of indecision from Liverpool FC’s flip-flopping on stadium redevelopment (Southern, 2014a). The uncertainty created has driven away many residents and businesses, leaving Anfield without the same determined group of homeowners left to campaign for alternatives. It would take interested outsiders to galvanise collective action – those ‘conscience constituents’ not directly benefiting but ideologically or professionally committed (Martinelli, 2010). Jeanne van Heeswijk’s vision for the area, co-produced with local residents, is ideologically-driven by radical political ideas around right to the city, keyed into global activist networks such as Cohabitation Strategies (CohStra, 2015). For other centrally-involved artists this is “one of the most mainstream things [they’ve] ever done”, generally involved in more agitprop art forms (interview, A5); and have had to channel their anti-capitalist leanings into more practical tasks like property negotiations. One participant describes it as ‘pragmatic radicalism’ (A5) – mirroring Colin Ward’s ‘pragmatic anarchism’ (White, 2007).

In both cases, it is important to note that affordable housing is not the principal motivation. Unlike rural CLT initiatives in Britain (Moore and McKee, 2012), these urban CLTs are unique for privileging democratic control of land and local autonomy. But even these are just a means to an end: as institutional platforms for commoning practices beginning to embed in these communities. An interesting, though problematic, aspect of both Homebaked and Granby is the relatively blank slate with which they started – the opportunity presented by
years of local depopulation to construct a community almost from scratch; redefining and reshaping place in the image of a colonising habitus. Unlike the earlier, more community-driven co-op campaigns, the CLTs are the product of a minority of homeowners and politically-oriented conscience constituents.

We can see this all too clearly in light of Kensington’s failure. From very similar contexts of traditionally privately-rented, poorly-maintained terraced housing, the dynamic in Kensington seemed played out differently owing to the presence of a large number of short-term private tenants representing a quantitatively powerful interest group for homeowners to contend with in CLT politics. When asked about these differences, the Kensington consultant – who suggests the CLT failed there due to homeowner fears of losing class control of the project to a group that outnumbered them – had this to say about Granby:

If the empty houses had been full of tenants, mixed race, tenants of bad landlords, a few housing association tenants still there, I pose the question would the homeowners still have been running for a CLT? (Interview, H9)

However, a large component of both Granby and Homebaked’s campaigns is community engagement to raise participation – as an end in itself, but also to gain democratic legitimacy and a local mandate to control public assets. Participatory techniques have been used to incorporate residents’ needs and desires into the vision and plans, but in each a new identity is constructed out of relative emptiness, as envisioned by activists, procuring community buy-in post hoc. The place-making efforts of Liverpool CLTs support recent claims that resistance not only helps reconstruct the socio-material environment but so too the collective meaning and identity attached to place, as a social construct reshaped by the process of collective action itself (Martin, 2003; Martinelli, 2010; Pierce et al., 2011). Whilst a testament to the power of grassroots experiments to transform place, we must remain cognisant of whom this place is for, who is doing the transforming, and who benefits.

Common to the more grassroots mutual housing campaigns – Weller Streets, Eldonians, Langrove, and Granby CLT – is the central function of direct action in their early stages. All these examples broadly follow Ward’s (1973) four phases of direct action in housing struggles (figure 2.11): the “spark starting the blaze” was the immediate threat of demolition, provoking some form of insurgent occupation of houses to prevent eviction or street protests to physically block bulldozers. In terms of Davis’ (1990) framework of locality-based collective action (figure 2.12), these campaigns appear to skip the first ‘improvement group’ stage, emerging as ‘conflict groups’ to collectively contest demolition, evolving into ‘radical housing
groups’ through constructive institution-building of co-ops, community trusts or CLTs. Rather than fully forming as celebratory neighbourhood associations, pace Davis, these groups appear to have been constituted largely through the process of contestation itself, defined by their opposition to abstract space makers. This is not to say that celebration and positive affirmation of neighbourhood identity do not also play their part, but rather that these activities consolidate during or after crystallisation of group consciousness through opposition. Just as ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘place’ are partially socially and politically reconstructed as meaningful territorial entities through these spatial projects, so too are community groups strengthened and redefined, if not wholly produced, by the process of contestation. This suggests that resisting and directly challenging authorities is a necessary first step in realising collective dweller control, not least because mutual housing remains relatively invisible, and potentially threatening, to the established ownership model, and so must be actively claimed through extra-legal insurgency (Blomley, 2004b). The defining feature of all these – arguably the most successful examples of social innovation in this study – is their ability to move from purely defensive modes of resistance, in antagonistic relations with the state, towards more creative forms of institution-building through proactive partnership-working with professionals and negotiation with state agencies.

**7.2.2 Leadership and social structure**

Critical in driving forward the co-op and CLT campaigns alike are strong and charismatic leaders. The co-ops were generally led by authoritative men, drawing on a rich tradition of working class organisation, but changing over the years as class politics, cultural practices and gender roles are transformed. Whilst co-ops produced leaders from within the community, CLT activists often came from outside. Partly due to many original residents being displaced by HMR resulting in fewer people to galvanise resistance; partly because the severe economic restructuring and urban decline afflicting Liverpool had precipitated a downward spiral of depopulation, deprivation and despair in inner-city neighbourhoods – leading to the decomposition of working class habitus and weakening of traditional networks of solidarity, mutual aid and community organising.

Secularisation – the decay of the Catholic parishes in particular – has broken community bonds that once sustained collective action in the north docks communities. The push for CLT alternatives therefore had to come from outside. This is most obvious in Homebaked, where the impetus came from a well-resourced public arts project commissioned by Liverpool Biennial, led by artists and activists from all over the world. Many on the board are connected
to Biennial and powerful players in Liverpool’s property development and planning industries. Although around a third to half is made up of local residents, these tend to be public sector or artistic professionals, such as retired teachers, social workers and theatre producers – far removed from the dockers, unionised factory workers, milkmen and shopkeepers of the 1970s co-ops. Likewise, incoming ecologically-minded co-operators – doctoral students, architects and planners – living within a few miles of Granby are nonetheless considered coming from ‘outsider’ territory (interviews, A4/A6/N7). The collaboration of these two groups within the campaign process has produced tensions, requiring strong leadership to draw on these diverse capacities and maintain enough cohesion to push the project forward.

As considered in Chapters Four and Five, figureheads of the earlier co-ops were usually men, acting like generals in a war against the council, but most of the community organising was done by women through neighbourhood networks. The later co-ops were more female-led, especially the Kirkby co-ops, whilst CLT campaigns are now almost exclusively run by women. In Granby there are concerns that the CLT board, and informal leadership, is dominated by white women, raising questions over representation and inclusion in an area historically renowned for its diverse multiculturalism. Ironically, the only black male board member – a longstanding resident – has recently stepped down over the lack of sufficient community participation (interview, A6). His replacement is a committed activist who has been centrally involved from the start in constructing the CLT vision, but does not live in the four streets, thereby exacerbating residents’ reservations over local representation.

Homebaked is also strikingly female-led, and Little Klondyke, too, was steered by one particular well-known female activist. Why is this? Interestingly, such a phenomenon has been observed in multiple contexts of community organising, but especially in more traditional neighbourhoods (Davis, 1990; Lane, 1997; McDonald, 1986; Medoff and Sklar, 1994; Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010). In his study of CLCC in the 1980s, the first urban CLT, Davis (1990: 318) finds that women play a special role in the development of oppositional politics at the neighbourhood level, and claims a “remarkably consistent pattern” of female leadership across various examples. His explanations include the feminisation of poverty, predominance of female-headed households among public and private tenants, the exclusion of women from property professions, and female networks tied to traditional gender roles – such that men dominate accumulative interests and women accommodative.

This characterisation appears to hold true for some aspects of Liverpool’s history, particularly the Weller Streets as documented by McDonald (1986). Some participants characterise 1970s
inner-city Liverpool as a ‘matriarchal society’ (interview, P1/C2); perhaps some of those cultural traditions have survived, reproduced through place-based practices, despite prevailing social changes. However, by associating the cultural rituals of everyday life that tie communities together more with women, and political rituals that rouse collective energies and stoke conflict with authorities more with men, Davis (1990) enters the problematic terrain of assigning crude gender roles. Such claims are certainly more appropriate in describing the 1970s co-op movement than contemporary CLTs.

7.2.3 Professional support infrastructures

The third main ingredient in the ‘confluence of factors’ is the constructive role played by professional co-op development managers, architects and community workers. It is clear that without the extensive support of co-op development agencies acting as ‘mother’ co-ops (Clapham and Kintrea, 1987), the movement would never have begun. SNAP was seminal to the development of the co-op movement in setting up the first rehab co-ops, revolutionising community planning methods, providing the basic tools for further experimentation, and demonstrating how rehab could be delivered as an effective alternative to demolition. NHS and CDS were both incredibly important to the development of the rehab and new-build movements respectively. CDS proved viable where NHS failed due to its strategy to build its own houses as an asset base, providing a continuous rental stream to cross-subsidise independent co-op projects, which could be very resource-intensive (interviews, H1/C6). The Weller Way was the product of creative, antagonistic interaction between ideologically-committed CDS staff and Weller Streets residents.

CDS embodied the role of ‘enabler’ promoted by John FC Turner in his recommendations for a system of self-help housing, supported by state-funded infrastructure (Turner, 1977, 1978; Wates, 1985). It was an early example of the ‘intermediaries’ identified as so important to the contemporary growth of self-help housing and CLTs, either through ‘scaling up’ or ‘going viral’ (Moore and Mullins, 2013). Be it through endogenous expansion or rhizomatic replication, key intermediary organisations or secondary co-ops offer essential training, guidance and support. There is nonetheless a danger that professional organisations can exploit unequal power relations for their own ends. Whilst there were suspicions amongst Weller Streets residents that CDS were taking them for a ride (McDonald, 1986), the evidence suggests CDS was committed to promoting dweller control, pushing up against financial and legal constraints. Experimental socio-material practices like participatory planning techniques – innovated in partnership with architects like Bill Halsall – were the result of CDS stretching
its organisational capabilities to the limit and taking risks, investing heavily in untested methods in the hope of producing lasting social value. Whilst CDS played a central role, LHT and MIH were also pivotal. Indeed, competition between secondary service providers was fundamental in social innovation: paradoxically furthering the possibilities for cooperation within communities through competition at higher scales, driving up standards and providing choice to residents (Lusk, 1998). SNAP was an original source of ideas for many of those working in CDS, LHT and MIH.

This highly effective system was irreversibly transformed by subsequent neoliberal reforms, placing great pressures on these small-scale charitable trusts to expand through mergers, acquisitions and stock transfers. Many dropped their titular place-based titles – Plus Dane, Symphony and Riverside – morphing into placeless commercialised concerns. However, key staff from the co-op era still working within these organisations remain supporters of co-op projects; resulting in Riverside’s new co-op development for Langrove. Moreover, CDS’s reincarnation as NWHS – having disbanded from Plus Dane to become an independent co-op servicer – has enabled NWHS to offer critical support to the fledgling CLT movement, offering Granby pro bono legal and financial advice and a low interest loan.

In the main, however, the associations evolving out of the co-op agencies are now too implicated in alternative plans for large-scale redevelopment – notably HMR – to be of much service to CLTs. Both Homebaked and Granby have drawn on advice from independent consultancies, such as Locally Made and URBED, as well as from national umbrella NCLTN. The other major players are SAVE Britain’s Heritage and the Empty Homes Agency, two national campaign organisations with particular political interests in conserving architectural heritage and promoting the reuse of empty homes respectively. The Empty Homes Agency is ideologically committed to community self-help, of which CLTs are a significant component (interview, N5). The involvement of partisan single-issue charities in the development of Liverpool’s CLT movement demonstrates how far mutual housing has been marginalised since its heyday in the 1970s, when co-ops were state-funded and systematically developed by a bespoke and dedicated professional infrastructure.

In addition, Homebaked is lucky enough to have the professional contacts and experience of Liverpool Biennial. Granby has been fortunate in finding a social investor, HDSI, to back the project not just financially but also with professional networks. HDSI’s representative in Granby has brought Assemble architects to the table. In the past, these processes of procurement and selection of architects and agents would have been facilitated by CDS et al,
but today depends upon the personal connections of activists in a snowballing process of trial and error. Both Granby and Homebaked are privileged by a broad range of professional involvement – but not Little Klondyke. Part of the reason for its failure was the lack of cultural capital and professional know-how to draw upon.

7.2.4 Land, funding, legislation, political will

Availability of land, funding, national legislation and local political will are discussed together, for they are inextricably entwined. The national and local state are the crucial actors in making community asset transfer work, by offering policy support and public land and assets at sub-market rates. It is interesting to note how all these factors are present to differing degrees in each period, combining in distinct ways to produce varying outcomes. Only in the decade from 1973 – when the Liberal council capitalised on the 1969 and 1974 Housing Acts to push for rehab through GIAs, HAAs, housing associations, rehab and then new-build co-ops – were all these factors present and mutually working in favour of co-op development, resulting in the rapid expansion of the movement.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Militant considered co-ops a bourgeois conspiracy: “part of a deliberate and calculated attack on municipal housing” (DLP 1984, quoted in Lusk, 1998: 161) leading them to withdraw support from 1983-7, forcing the Eldonians to forge a counterintuitive alliance with the Thatcher government. Militants Taaffe and Mulhearn (1988: 161) believe that the Tories were “prepared to use any opponent of the city council, no matter how ideologically opposed to themselves”, intervening “on the principle of ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’”; using the Liverpool co-ops as an unwitting pawn in their chess game.

Langrove, too, were lucky enough to find alternative sources of support: from the new chair of housing, Phil Hughes, the treasurer of Weller Streets, following Militant’s expulsion from office. Under Militant’s hostile regime, the movement had to migrate to more benign political climes – successfully ‘exported’ out of Liverpool to Knowsley, where there was the demand and the land available to develop. Kirkby’s new suburban estates were laid out with small pockets of green space in the middle of perimeter housing, which became neglected and overgrown, presenting the perfect spot for low-rise infill co-op development (interview, A2). Following 1988 Housing Act, the national legislative landscape became too inhospitable for mutual housing alternatives to flourish. Liverpool council has since begun to play the ‘regeneration game’, as discussed above. The LIFE model blueprint for HMR ZOOs, within which a preferred housing association and developer enjoy sole remit to develop according to market viability, leaves little scope for small-scale innovation due to financial incentives and
economies of scale favouring unified comprehensive plans for entire blocks. We can see the regeneration game in play in Granby, where even after the withdrawal of HMR funding the council chose to put the area up for best value bid, in line with the dictates of compulsory competitive tendering, rather than consider the more pluralist, piecemeal, and incremental approach of the CLT partners. Homebaked have faced similar barriers to getting their ideas heard. Like the Eldonians, the CLT campaigns have jumped scales, going over the head of the local state, to seek support from central government policy: capitalising on the 2011 Localism Act and recent political will for rehabilitation through the Empty Homes Fund.

Only since 2011 – with the advent of the localism agenda, renewed funding opportunities for self-help, and slowly changing attitudes in the council – do we see the recipe realign, essential ingredients beginning to mix again, only to be left with the bad taste of austerity. Little Klondyke’s application for the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme successfully secured some £5 million of DCLG funding for their project – only to be rejected by Sefton council. Participants believe the council “wanted to take direct control over that land” and “were looking at something bigger”: a demolition and rebuild scheme with their preferred housing association and developer partners that could deliver large surpluses – an important source of revenue in times of budget cut-backs. (Interviews, A9/N5). The campaign in Kensington also stumbled on such a block: senior council officers began stalling plans made by the independent consultant they had themselves brought in to trial the idea amongst the community when they realised they were losing control and were “not going to be making some of the recycled surpluses” (interview, H9).

In her keynote address to a Liverpool housing conference I attended, Cabinet Member for Housing and now Deputy Mayor of Liverpool, Ann O’Byrne (2015), revealed the logic behind the council’s continued support of large-scale redevelopment schemes over small-scale community led-projects. Conservative government-led fiscal austerity has entailed 58% cuts to the city’s budget, leaving the council little choice other than make up the shortfall from other sources – if they wish to protect essential public services from drastic cutbacks, which would do untold harm to thousands of vulnerable people. The main alternative method of revenue generation left open to the council is property-led regeneration: selling public land to developers for large capital receipts; then procuring higher council taxes from the more affluent housing built in place of low value terraces. This is nothing short of an admission of exploiting the rent gap through state-led ‘gentrification by stealth’ (Bridge et al., 2012; Kallin and Slater, 2014). Austerity urbanism thus opens a window of opportunity for small-scale
alternative solutions with one hand, whilst slamming it shut with the other; forcing the council
to maintain the hegemony of large-scale housing-led development. This certainly sheds new
light on why Sefton council – similarly hard-hit by austerity – was so indisposed to accept £5 million of government funding.

A particularly important area for future research is to explore in more depth the potential for
more systematic land reform and legislative reform of regeneration processes. Ideas suggested
by participants include splitting the decision-making process for large-scale regeneration
programmes into two stages (interview, H9). The first democratically deciding whether change
is required through some kind of state-funded intervention, and setting the boundaries; the
second deciding what form that intervention then takes. Once people have signed up to the
severity of the action needed, then there is a clear democratic mandate and any legal challenge
can only be directed at the type of intervention taken, rather than those which seriously beset
HMR in Liverpool. Increased legitimacy might derive from community consultation being
conducted by independent advisors and not the council, which, as part of the grant regime,
has a conflict of interest. If the first stage results in a popular mandate, then a community-
controlled development agency may be established, with expert representation as in CLT
governance, to decide on the actions to be taken.

This could take the form of a ‘community development corporation’ (CDC) as a more
democratic version of urban development corporations like the MDC (interview, N3). Like
the latter, these would need to be statutorily protected by Acts of Parliament, so that long-
term housing restructuring programmes are not victim to the whims of electoral party politics,
and cannot be simply switched off halfway through as in the case of HMR. A similar idea is
for a more sustained ‘investment mode’ of state funding, as a “friendly investor” rather than
drip-feeder of sporadic grants (interview, N5). This participant likewise suggests an arms-
length agency to take on the task of investment tasked with coordinating state funding within
a delineated area and for democratically-agreed ends. The culture of grants is
counterproductive for long-term regeneration, as it encourages competitive bidding,
vanguardism, and vulnerable dependence on government hand-outs. When combined with the
culture of competitive tendering of public sector assets, this leads to wasted resources and
exhaustion of creativity for multiple bidders, as in the case of Granby. Another idea is for
more collaborative processes of public tendering so that ideas and visions can be explored
through creative dialogue (interview, H8). Such collaboration may be conducted through a
CDCs, overseeing regeneration at an arms-length from the council but with public accountability.

The Eldonians have shown how their Community Development Trust (CDT) model can generate surpluses for more self-sustaining regeneration; providing a good starting point for what a British urban CDC might look like. Writing in 1988, Cowan et al (1988: 63) make some interesting divinations of government intentions for funding the Eldonians:

Perhaps they would like to see – in Liverpool and elsewhere – a city run by a federation of development trusts on the lines of the Eldonians’ prototype, with government funds being coordinated by a Task Force…The city council could then be allowed to wither away.

Such a model shares many characteristics with SNAP final recommendations for a “task force under the Cabinet Office” to coordinate a decentralised Urban Programme of metropolitan development agencies (McConaghy, 1972: 207). It also recalls the anarchist vision for decentralised self-governing city-regions, composed of community-controlled associations, connected through a democratic federated structure, governed according to the subsidiarity principle (Kropotkin, 1974; Ward, 1973). CDCs would need to be scaled-up from SNAP/Eldonians to HMR Pathfinder size in order to coordinate effective interventions for the huge multi-scalar problems Liverpool and other cities face (Pinnegar, 2009).

There is a long-established CDC sector in the US, with roots in 1960s radicalism, now a ubiquitous feature of urban America with a large number of organisations operating across a diverse range of local economic development activities (Bruyn and Meehan, 1987; DeFilippis, 2004; Goetz and Sidney, 1994; Imbroscio, 1997). They are seen as “the crucial coordinating agent” of the three domains of production, consumption and exchange in an alternative system of community-based development, overseeing the activities of CLTs, credit unions, consumer and worker cooperatives (Bruyn & Meehan, 1987: 16). Although most do not function in their fullest, most radical capacity (Soifer, 1990), and have since been subject to co-optation and mission drift from their roots in radical community control towards more operational service delivery as part of the ‘shadow state’ today (DeFilippis, 2004), they nonetheless provide important lessons for how similar institutional forms may be developed in the UK for addressing the neighbourhood question. There are few comprehensive evaluation studies of American urban CDCs (Imbroscio, 1997), and future research on the potential of mutual models in the UK should therefore look to the US for insights.
7.3 Institutional development and neighbourhood transformation

First, I will consider the observable impacts of mutual alternatives on governance relations and urban spaces, before discussing their ongoing development and institutionalisation. A framework for assessment is provided in the definition of social innovation as socio-spatial transformation reiterated in figure 7.7 below. As explained in Chapter Two, however, this focuses more on outcomes for institutions and people than for place, and we must add to this the spatial effects of co-ops and CLTs on the urban environments in which they are embedded.

![Figure 7.7: Definition of social innovation. (Source: Moulaert et al. 2005: 1976)](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content/product</th>
<th>Satisfaction of human needs that are not currently satisfied, either because they are 'not yet' or 'no longer' perceived as important by either the market or the state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Changes in social relations, especially with regard to governance, that enable the above satisfaction, but also increase the level of participation of all but especially deprived groups in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Increasing the socio-political capability and access to resources needed to enhance rights to satisfaction of human needs and participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all experiments, the Eldonians have gone furthest in the content/product dimension of social innovation. They have transformed a large area of contaminated ex-industrial land into a sustainable community, albeit with much government assistance. The fact that they are now big players in Liverpool-wide and regional regeneration and enterprise initiatives – working with huge multinationals and the council as the lead partners delivering development projects in north Liverpool and beyond (interviews, H4/H5/P3) – has led to a widespread perception that in many respects they have replaced the council as the dominant arm of the local state, increasingly involved in delivering a number of localised public services: energy, heating, policing, planning, environmental management as well as housing.

As discussed in Chapter Five, they are commonly perceived to be an exclusive, inward-facing tight-knit community whose hard-won sense of ownership over the village has perhaps mutated down the generations into a more passive sense of entitlement. There is evidence of bureaucratic paternalism: the locally detested ‘Corpy’ has been partially replaced by another,
albeit more effective, landlord at a smaller scale; a “nanny state” in co-op clothing (interviews, C4/H4/H5). Tony McGann and his inner circle still have overarching control, with little rotation or interest of residents to join the community trust board. A large part of these problems derives from the origins and sheer scale of the scheme. Residents – long suffering from poverty and unemployment – were desperate to gain some economic security, and sought homeownership and to retain their community over cooperative tenure per se. The co-op option asserted itself as the most effective means to achieve their long-term aims for socioeconomic self-sufficiency. To a great extent, it worked; but in handing so much power over to the leadership, and becoming more ‘state-like’, there has been an inevitable price to pay in the domain of individual empowerment.

Other co-ops, less successful in comprehensive local economic development, have perhaps achieved more in the process and empowerment dimensions: attuned to incorporating into the process of development the skills, education and imaginations of their resident-members. The new-build co-ops were excellent at carving out the space for residents to develop their capacities and personalities through campaigning and community organising, and to learn new skills in self-build, architecture, accountancy, business planning etc. This was achieved through close working relationships with architects and development managers; participatory ‘planning for real’ techniques; and democratic input into the design process itself. Gains made in self-confidence, self-respect and collective purpose are intangible, yet others are more empirically-observable: countless residents gained new employment, particularly in architectural and planning practices, utilising new-found fluency in professional discourses. Many others were politically empowered by the campaign process, inspired to stand for election as Labour councillors, and becoming powerful figures on the council, shaping local politics in pro-mutual directions.

Individual empowerment combines with environmental improvements in mutually reinforcing virtuous circles, making neighbourhood regeneration more effective, durable, and self-sustaining. In theory, democratically-designed housing is more manageable and better able to respond to residents’ needs than pre-fabricated, mass-produced, technocratically-planned schemes embodying the abstract space of state bureaucracy and market efficiency (Turner and Fichter, 1973). In practice, many of the co-ops resembled – or influenced – ordinary suburban estate design of the 1970s. But this is what people wanted. They enabled co-op activities, and, unlike their mass-produced imitations, they have “stood the test of time” (interview, P3). Almost all the co-ops are here today, in better condition than surrounding housing built
afterwards. This is borne out by my own onsite observations and several interviewees and commentators (C1/C2/P1/P3). The co-ops are likened to “beacons of hope”, which “weathered the recession of the early ‘80s and ‘90s far better than other parts of Liverpool (P1). They are higher quality, cheaper to manage and fully occupied (P3); with strong community spirit and greater resident involvement (P1), less unemployment and fewer social problems than their surrounds (Holmes, 2005).

A survey of resident views in 1984, based on the DoE’s standard survey of tenant satisfaction, found that Weller Streets members were far more satisfied with their estate than virtually all council tenants (McDonald, 1986: 199). This has since been verified by qualitative work by CDS (1983, 1987, 1990, 1994, 1997). However, as discussed in Chapter Four, we must remember that co-ops have had less satisfactory results for the urban environment as a whole, being exclusive and inward-looking by design. It must also be recognised that these positive records are only anecdotal evidence from an agency with biased interests, so more research is required. Indeed, several participants (C5/C8) highlighted the need for better monitoring and evaluation of projects to consider health, wealth, well-being, employment, and social engagement longitudinally. This could ascertain exactly how successful co-ops are in resolving socio-spatial problems. Investigating causes for disengagement among second and third generation members is also worthy of further enquiry. A comprehensive sociological study of socioeconomic outcomes of the co-ops would provide an excellent complement to this thesis, for triangulation of findings.

It is perhaps too early to evaluate the impact of CLT projects on institutional and urban spaces. This is partly because they are in very early stages, only just emerging into their development phases, but also due to the slow-burning, incremental nature of the projects. Indeed, this is a salient feature of mutual alternatives in general. The co-ops were designed as long-term solutions, with 30-40 year maturation cycles in the minds of the initiators: “we always said with the Eldonians, we wouldn’t know the success probably until 2010” (interview, P3). Likewise, the CLTs are designed for the long haul: to slowly revitalise areas of longstanding decline through immersive and therefore gradual participatory design and construction methods. Bringing residents on board is a painstaking process that requires great effort and patience.

There are nonetheless promising early signs. The ambition to revitalise Granby Street as a local shopping avenue has already begun to materialise, with new businesses opening up for the first time in decades, and plans to permanently relocate the market there. Likewise,
2Up2Down have created a renewed community anchor in Homebaked bakery, where community meetings can take place. The bakery is now considered a major keystone in the council’s wider vision – bringing in investment and attracting football fans out of the stadium to spend their money locally (interview, A10/P6). By doing more than just housing – pursuing holistic socioeconomic development and institutional innovation in local democracy – these CLT projects have the potential to do not only what the Eldonians have done, albeit on a smaller scale, but more than that: to establish a more open forum, bringing together disparate local groups to discuss common issues and debate the future of the area, as a ‘politics of space’ (Purcell, 2001). As political disagreement can never be fully sutured, the CLTs need to construct a polity for open plural debate and agonistic dissensus. As it stands, both have some way to work towards making this a reality, to gain the trust of their communities, but the institutional ingredients are there to begin this process.

Granby is much further ahead in terms of neighbourhood transformation – with workers onsite rehabilitating the terraces. But the process of place-making began long before the CLT vision was finalised: growing out of guerrilla gardening. This has transformed the materiality of the neighbourhood to produce a more attractive, liveable, and sociable space, inviting residents from diverse political starting points into what was otherwise vacant and neglected public space, to partake in everyday domestic acts, the organic tissue of commoning (Linebaugh, 2014). The socio-spatial transformation achieved by guerrilla gardening and the street market have provided the inspiration for the ongoing regeneration of Granby.

7.3.1 Institutionalisation over time

So how has the co-op movement developed over time? The 1988 Housing Act effectively put paid to any further co-op development, causing existing co-ops to “wither on the vine” (interview, H1). The Act also tightened up registration of new housing providers, requiring successful management track records, forcing resident-run co-ops to seek formal partnerships with larger housing associations. So not only did co-ops cease to grow or replicate, they also sacrificed some of their autonomy. Many of the co-ops today have contracted out most of their day-to-day management/maintenance to professional associations, notably NWHS.

But this is not all down to regulatory reforms. Many participants acknowledge that dweller control is more desirable and workable during campaigning/design/development than later stages of routine maintenance (interviews, A2/A3/C1/C5/C6/H1/P4). Much of the tailing off of commitments to dweller control can be attributed to the phenomenon of ‘post-development blues’: the inevitable burn-out and anti-climactic come-down from all the
excitement and intensity of the campaign process (interview, C6). Furthermore, not only are routine jobs more mundane, technical and laborious, but the people doing them have mostly changed. The second and third generations of member-residents do not have personal memories of severe housing need – or of life-defining, collectively-bonding campaigning – to motivate them to manage co-ops directly. Much of the voluntary ‘heavy-lifting’ required is demanding and complex – financial, HR, facilities management, repairs, allocations, legal services – so it is understandable why residents are happy to offload these responsibilities onto trained specialists.

However, the cooperative spirit may be simply “dormant” rather than “defunct” – merely awaiting reactivation (interview, C5). Although the threats that motivated their formation as reactive campaigns are unlikely to resurface, the dormant power of co-ops may soon be resuscitated by incentives for proactive development. Several participants believe that the co-ops are on the cusp of a new phase of expansion, having accumulated large asset bases in their fallow period (interviews, H1/C1/C6). Their modest mortgage repayment schedules were originally calculated on the basis of very low ‘fair rents’ as set by the 1974 Act. The 1988 Act replaced these with ‘assured rents’, generally much higher in order to pay for ongoing costs in the absence of HAG. As tenant turnover escalated, co-ops found it easier to pay mortgage and other costs, banking increasing surpluses. Having repaid debts, co-ops are now “coming out of the other end” of dormancy with considerable “reserves to enable them to now start to develop new homes” (interview, H1) – of which the first sign is Langrove’s new co-op development, the first on Merseyside in over a decade. It remains to be seen whether this is the start of a wider renaissance; another fascinating avenue to explore for future research.

The HCA had been putting increased pressure on CDS to utilise this untapped asset base – “get them sweating their assets” as a means to leverage funding for further development (interview, C6). Legally, surpluses are owned by the co-ops, but as Plus Dane is dependent on HCA grants and allocations for developing its social housing portfolio, CDS surpluses were at risk of being co-opted whilst under the auspices of Plus Dane. This may account for the CDS split to become independent as NWHS: to safeguard from potential asset-stripping. This narrative is corroborated by an NWHS representative (interview, H6). Previously, CDS had been registered with the Housing Corporation, which enabled the organisation to build its own houses and develop an asset base, against which to leverage private capital for expansion. Although this was the foundation that assured the viability of CDS, in comparison with NHS for instance, such a logic has since driven the “empire building” of the big housing
associations, which NWHS did not want to be “tempted by” (interview, H6). NWHS is now sitting in a unique position as financial manager and advisor to the majority of Liverpool co-ops, with the potential to reincarnate the initiating secondary role of CDS for a co-op revival.

For this to occur, however, NWHS needs to persuade their co-op clients of the efficacy of pooling surpluses together to invest into new co-op development. Conduits for cooperation had originally been put in place by CDS, who suggested the establishment of the Merseyside Federation of Co-ops, which for some time provided a fruitful arena for collaboration, knowledge sharing, resource pooling and mutual learning – but disbanded in the early 1990s, after HAG funding had been cut, and members became increasingly detached. Re-establishing a more formal member-based federation of Merseyside co-ops is a necessary route to revitalising the movement.
7.4 Place effects and the challenge of replication

In many ways Liverpool is uniquely placed for incubating radical projects for mutual housing, with a long history of political radicalism stretching back to its heyday as a maritime nerve-centre of the British Empire (Belchem, 2011). As Chapter Two explains, this is rooted in Liverpool’s deep maritime connections with anarcho-syndicalism. We can see the spirit of Liverpool’s enterprising brand of anarcho-syndicalism (Southern, 2014b) embodied in some of the more politically-motivated co-op campaigns – the Weller Streets, Leta-Claudia, Thirlmere, the Eldonians, and Langrove – in their bolshie challenge to local authority plans for rehousing, and the pride of place given to direct action in their ‘repertoire of contention’. Yet such bolshiness could equally be seen to inform the Militant Tendency, in their militancy against government cuts and insurgent style of local politics (Frost and North, 2013); ‘Better to break the law than break the poor’, as their slogan had it during the conflict with government in 1984-5 (Lavalette and Mooney, 2000).

However, Militant’s command-and-control politics jarred with the kind of spontaneous grassroots energy infusing anarcho-syndicalism and, later, community-based campaigning. Their connection may have been fairly direct: coming through certain residents’ contact with syndicalist practices in their work on the docks and factories, and experience with local trade unionism. There was also perhaps a more circuitous route at play here: anarchist ideas transmitted through families and social networks down the generations to the children of workers involved in the 1911 Strike and early anarchist circles (Lane, 1997; O’Brien, 2011). These ‘children of the revolution’ then came into contact with radical ideas during their university years of the 1960s, graduating to become those architects, co-op developers, and community workers so ideologically committed to cooperativism and making the co-op movement happen.

Architects such as Tom Clay of SNAP and Bill Halsall of the Weller Streets and Eldonians are exemplars of this generation of young radicals, exposed to new ideas in participatory design at university and through the work of SNAP, then innovating new models of democratic neighbourhood regeneration in their work with co-ops. Likewise, a large number of the housing managers working with CDS, MIH and LHT were schooled in this way. Lane (1997) sees this group as an entirely new occupational class – the ‘urban community professionals’ – pivotal in the development of cooperative institutions in Liverpool. A significant proportion of this new ideologically-driven class of urban specialist came not from Liverpool but from around the country, and even internationally, attracted to the city by its radical reputation,
including Paul Lusk from Oxford, and Jack McBane from Canada. The anarchist ideas of Colin Ward (1974) and Turner (1977) found more fertile ground to seed here – fed by a unique history of anarcho-syndicalism – than in other cities facing similar housing problems. Thus a virtuous circle of radical innovation was spun in Liverpool through the 1960s and ‘70s: the city’s history and reputation for radicalism attracting innovators from elsewhere, brought into contact with the heirs of working class anarcho-syndicalism, to co-produce a brief flowering of cooperative ferment.

Many of the vociferous local activists commanding against HMR were themselves involved in earlier instances of Liverpool radicalism: those leading resistance in Granby had cut their teeth in various forms of activism, such as a women’s housing co-op, radical printing press, and voluntary housing action in the 1970s. In Granby, the idea for a co-op, which led to exploration of the CLT model, was originally mooted by a local co-operator – a long-term resident of one of the early rehab co-ops in Liverpool 8, Alt Co-op, and the son of one of the leading architects of the new-build co-ops, who helped design Hesketh Street and Shorefields, as part of the practice Innes Wilkin Ainsley Gommon. This young professional inherited a great deal from the co-op movement to become something of an enthusiast, and the founding member of the NAHC which would go on to become a main partner in the Granby CLT vision. In Granby at least, we can see the direct lineage from SNAP and the new-build co-op movement to the fruition of the contemporary CLT campaign.

But the CLT movement does not just draw from the rich repository of radicalism embedded in place but also from assimilation of ideas from across the globe. The idea for Homebaked as a cooperative bakery was largely sourced from Dutch inspiration by the ‘entrepreneur-activist’ Jeanne van Heeswijk. The CLT idea was first introduced to Anfield by Arena’s KTP American field trip (Engelsman and Southern, 2010), pre-dating Homebaked, and whose tenant participants diffused their new knowledge locally. NAHC activists in Granby sought advice from the academic researchers on the KTP trip, disseminating the CLT model to Granby, where it gained the approval of residents, winning out over an alternative vision for a purely cooperative scheme.

In these myriad ways, Liverpool’s CLT movement has evolved through creative collision of ideas from different places. This process of model diffusion and mutation can be likened to policy mobilities processes (McCann and Ward, 2012a; Peck, 2011), whereby radical ideas rather than policy models are mobilised by a variety of actors, reassembling in Liverpool, where they mutate through exposure with local radical traditions – themselves the result of
earlier global mobilisations, such as Spanish anarcho-syndicalism – to construct novel assemblies in Homebaked and Granby. The importance of place to the development of mutual housing alternatives in Liverpool is therefore as much a function of Liverpool’s international connectedness and hybrid relationality as it is the city’s distinctive historical-geographical context.

But this is not necessarily unique to Liverpool: plenty of other cities, in Britain and beyond – those ‘edgy’ port cities, for instance – have their own distinctive history of political radicalism, and experimentation with forms of social innovation. It would be interesting to delve deeper into these connections through comparison, for instance, with Angotti’s (2007) historical political-economic analysis of Cooper Square CLT in New York. Future comparative research could compare Liverpool’s with Glasgow’s co-op movement, going deeper than current comparative overviews (Clapham and Kintrea, 1992) to reveal in rich empirical detail the factors shaping Glasgow’s working-class housing co-op movement and council stock transfers, in the context of radical traditions, like the ‘Red Clydeside’ era (Lavalette and Mooney, 2000).

Future research could build on this to develop an alternative policy mobilities approach, where counterhegemonic ideas are ‘studied through’ as they are mobilised across global urban contexts. This could be combined with international comparative research on how the CLT model has been adapted to, and taken root in, diverse conditions. There have only been cursory overviews of international CLT development (Moore and McKee, 2012), or single studies of particular countries, such as the US (Davis, 2010a; Meehan, 2014), Australia (Crabtree, 2009; Crabtree et al., 2013), England (Aird, 2010; Moore, 2014), Scotland (Bryden and Geisler, 2007; Satsangi, 2009), and Kenya (Midheme and Moulare, 2013; Midheme, 2013), or indeed of case-studies of cities, such as Brussels, Belgium (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2015). Holistic and grounded comparative work is required to draw out the connections, differences and similarities between these cases, and the prospects for building a more international movement.

7.4.1 Challenging replication

Such insights into Liverpool’s ‘place effects’ entail both positive and negative implications for the challenge of replication. There is certainly a sense that many of the Liverpool experiments were presented with opportunities specific to a particular spatio-temporal conjuncture, and therefore not easily replicable. The Eldonians, for instance, are a good example of a one-off project only made possible by the unique set of political circumstances that incentivised an
otherwise ideologically-opposed New Right government to fund a small community-led co-op – to the tune of over £6million – a small price to pay to extinguish the Militant threat to undermine government authority. Such an unsustainably resource-intensive model for mutual housing development is highly unlikely ever to recur. The fact that the government showed no interest whatsoever in replicating the Eldonian prototype demonstrates the uniqueness of the case.

However, the growth of the co-op movement through the secondary support infrastructure led by CDS suggests that replication is possible with the right institutional structures in place, and with the right contextual conditions. A CLT campaign has emerged in a similar ex-HMR neighbourhood in Middlesbrough, a city without such a rich political tradition to draw on, but sharing similar circumstances: post-industrial decline, housing vacancy and neighbourhood abandonment, and the availability of empty homes to renovate (interview, N4/N6). Liverpool’s mutual housing history demonstrates how networks of mutual learning, coordinated through some kind of regional structure, are essential to the task of giving embryonic campaigns the knowledge, skills and resources to develop. Cooperative education is an important component of more proactive replication. Indeed, communities only really get to know co-ops or CLTs are an option through such programmes. What is required today is a regional structure of intermediaries, coordinated by a body like the National CLT Network, to take on this role. Indeed, NCLTN is already doing this to some extent, providing direction and additional support for many regional ‘umbrella’ CLTs across the country (Moore et al., 2010).

But these umbrellas are presently limited to rural areas, with far fewer resources directed towards urban-regions (interview, N4). Things are beginning to change in Liverpool: links are being strengthened between the CLTs but more needs to be done to build formal partnerships. Part of the original idea for bringing Homebaked and Granby together in their NCLTN Urban CLT Fund bids was to pool resources in a £20,000 joint-application for a permanent development manager to work on both sites and across the city, as an initial step towards creating a Merseyside CLT umbrella (interviews, H7/N4). There may be scope to work with NWHS, which has the potential to become a Merseyside-wide secondary co-op agency, utilising the asset surpluses of individual co-op members to grow the movement once more. Indeed, participants recognise that the city “still has that ferment feel about it” despite the fact that “we haven’t got the money to play with now” (interview, C2). If the co-op
reserves could somehow be made available to those currently campaigning for alternatives, there may be a CLT Revolution to match the Co-op Spring.

A potential strategy of CLT movement-building is to embed research and researchers deeper into campaigns processes. CLT replication would benefit from working in closer and more systematic arrangements with researchers, who may provide historical insights into potential opportunities and pitfalls and help design effective development strategies. This would require more intensively transdisciplinary approaches to researching mutual housing, as outlined in the social innovation literature (Moulaert, Maccallum, et al., 2010). Although I sought to engage with practitioners and activists early on, the nature of the research, as a broad historical and comparative analysis, has limited my level of engagement. But there is now scope to utilise my findings for practical ends. Since Assemble’s nomination for the 2015 Turner Prize for their work with Granby Four Streets CLT (Wainwright, 2015), they have invited me to write a short piece narrating the history and function of CLTs, for inclusion in their catalogue to be submitted for the consideration of judges at the Turner Prize exhibition. This is just one small way in which transdisciplinary research can embed academic knowledge in the world it seeks to describe, and begin to contribute to the transformation it otherwise merely analyses. A useful future research direction is to couple big picture analysis with more grounded forms of participant action-research.

Liverpool’s history of mutual housing experiments demonstrates that campaigns flow from proactive, disruptive and often extra-legal attempts to claim a common right to place (Blomley, 2004b). The Weller Streets asserted their right to stay together as a community against council policy. The Eldonians likewise refused displacement, and occupied Portland Gardens during council attempts to municipalise. Langrove initiated an occupation against demolition, as did Granby resist bulldozers in the street. Granby’s grassroots practices of guerrilla gardening are essentially ‘imagined’ collective claims that ‘take ownership’ of neglected and derelict public space. All these examples show how property relations are founded in acts of ‘doing’ rather than merely abstract deeds of entitlement (Blomley, 2004a; Rose, 1998). However, the long-term survival and viability of collective control over the means of social reproduction is, in all these cases, paradoxically dependent on state support to authorise and finance community acquisition of land and recognise its legal ownership.

A danger of institutionalisation is the temptation to formalise and professionalise practices of collective self-management – entailing divisions between professional practitioners and the grassroots. We can see these emerge in the power struggle of the Weller Streets with CDS:
their motto was ‘professionals on tap not on top!’ (McDonald, 1986). And also in the Kensington community representatives’ experience of a CLT practitioner conference in London: in being “quite freaked out by the industrial size of the intelligentsia” (interview, H9). The participatory techniques first tested out by SNAP and the co-ops, and the community homesteading approach innovated in Granby, are potential ways to close the gap in social innovation between ‘street-level innovators’ and institutionalised experts. Assemble’s approach of living onsite throughout the development process in one of the very houses to be rehabilitated is an excellent example of how professionals can get more hands-on in helping residents learn the tools of the trade as they work, and live, together in the same space – an innovative method to help bring into closer contact within perceived space the often antagonistic and disconnected worlds of conceived space and lived space in Lefebvre’s (1991) triad. But this is a lot to ask of professionals unused to such immersive practices and extreme time commitments.

In seeking to institutionalise common ownership, we run the risk of diluting, paralysing and fossilising into inflexible bureaucratic structures the informal, spontaneous and creative energies of commoning which animate radical collective action. This tendency is present in two dimensions: temporally, within projects, as they ‘scale up’; and spatially, across different projects, as they ‘go viral’. We can see many of the dangers of scaling up within the Eldonians and the co-op development agencies in Liverpool, which gradually cut free from their roots, becoming increasingly detached from their original aims and place attachments. ‘Going viral’ risks co-optation by other spatial projects. The community architecture of new-build co-ops was co-opted and diluted by speculative mass house-builders of suburban estates. The co-op movement was arguably co-opted by the Liberal council’s political project of pluralising, decentralising and privatising municipal housing – gradually diluting cooperative principles and desires for radical autonomy. As it grew into a more mainstream tenure of choice, driven by the ‘bandwagon effect’ of people seeking simply to secure better housing, this posed severe repercussions for its integrity; the foundational 1975 Campbell Report recommending that co-ops be developed only where “it can be clearly established that the tenants really want to take part in a cooperative venture and are not simply anxious to be rehoused” (quoted in Hook, 1977). Perhaps, then, there is a structural limit to the outward expansion of co-ops, preventing their ever becoming ‘public sector housing mark II’ – at least within the parameters set by the current ideological climate, so dominated by the ‘Leviathan logic’ of neoliberalism and possessive individualism (Gilbert, 2013).
Indeed, a major political barrier presents a contradiction for mutual housing development in cities hit by decades of economic decline, and now political austerity. As alternative forms of public provision, CLTs must to some extent compete with councils and housing associations for control over increasingly scarce public resources. Community acquisition of public assets entails the local state losing its power to coordinate resources between projects: moving surpluses from more successful projects to more deprived areas to balance out uneven urban development. But the crux of the issue is the erosion of councils’ alternative sources of revenue in the context of austerity-driven budget cuts: the returns accruing from the valorisation of publicly-owned land produced by the rent gap in property-led redevelopment. In Liverpool at least, CLT development may inadvertently divert resources away from other state projects. The political economy of urban governance and the local state is an important avenue for future enquiry, to assess the prospects for mutual housing as an alternative form of public ownership.

In this light, co-ops and CLTs appear better suited as bespoke solutions addressing specific socio-spatial problems – social innovations geared towards problem-solving (Moulaert, Martinelli, et al., 2010) – than mainstream tenures of choice. Most socially innovative campaigns in Liverpool were initiated out of reaction to a threat. There is perhaps nothing more motivating than the spectre of your home being demolished, or your neighbourhood irreversibly remodelled. The co-op movement showed how fragile the social impetus for collective dweller control can be once the immediate threat had been extinguished and the collective excitement of political campaigning long faded. One of the biggest challenges facing the expansion of mutual housing as a mainstream tenure of choice resides in convincing potential residents to forfeit some of their equity share and accumulative property rights for other, more intangible benefits deriving from collective control, social justice and security of tenure. The elephant in the room is the system of private property rights under the ‘ownership model’ (Singer, 2000a): individual homeownership is ideologically entrenched as the most desirable option, almost a precondition for neoliberal citizenship (Gurney, 1999; Kemeny, 1982; Rolnik, 2013); and a central strategy of economic security for ‘acquisitive’ homeowners (Davis, 1990), in a period of welfare retrenchment and uncertainty.

The greater potential of the CLT model, however, is the more even balance struck between individual and collective property interests: safeguarding individuals’ right to a share of equity, which can be tweaked according to context (Davis, 2010b). A large part of the challenge is therefore branding: marketing models cleverly so that they swim rather than sink in the
discursive mainstream. The Mutual Homeownership Society (MHOS) model used by the NAHC co-op is a good example of how cooperative housing can be rebranded within the ideological constraints of the ownership model. But there is a flaw in the CLT model which makes it particularly difficult to market as an option to middle income aspiring homeowners. The ‘dialectic of value’ enables low income residents to realise a form of homeownership within a CLT, but thereby prevents them from realising the equity of their investments (Engelsman et al., 2015; Stein, 2015). Upon leaving a CLT, residents may lack the necessary resources to afford a similar house elsewhere, owing to the discrepancy between their equity share in the CLT – whose value is decoupled from the market to ensure security of tenure – and the general rise in property prices. For low and middle income people alike, this ‘liquidity trap’ may amount to a kind of spatial entrapment.

This is a serious problem with the model which requires further empirical research as embryonic urban CLTs develop over time. Comparative work is required to understand how CLTs function in different urban contexts: East London and Brixton CLTs facing hyper-speculation (Bunce, 2015) compared with those, such as in Liverpool, addressing disinvestment and abandonment. As an institutional innovation securing against speculation, gentrification or further economic decline, the CLT model is well-designed; but unless it becomes more popular, and replicates in multiple locations, it may adversely isolate individuals in place. This just goes to show how realising ‘elective fixity’ (Paton, 2013) and ‘common rights to place’ (Blomley, 2008; Ward, 1985) throws up as many contradictions as it resolves: a double-edged sword when wielded in a market system dominated by private property.

Returning to the opening remarks of this thesis, it is clear that we are still wrestling with how to resolve those persistent problems of spatially-concentrated deprivation and uneven urban development debated in the Housing Question a century and a half ago. The words of Engels (1872: 32; 73-4) resonate down the decades:

How is the housing question to be solved then? In present-day society just as any other social question is solved: by the gradual economic adjustment of supply and demand, a solution which ever reproduces the question itself anew and therefore is no solution…

The same economic necessity which produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place also. As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers.
One thing is certain, if they are to move beyond being just an ‘isolated solution’ to the housing and neighbourhood questions – beyond the bounds of Liverpool – mutual housing alternatives need to be more systematically explored, through critically-engaged research, trans-local experimentation and centrally-coordinated but democratically-delivered state support for renewed public ownership. Despite the many contradictions of mutual alternatives – in being dialectically produced within capitalism – each discrete experiment, if not a step taken towards the resolution of these contradictions, nonetheless plants a seed from which the next may grow, learning from the last, building on the lessons of history.
## Appendices

### A: Participants and interview details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Participant role</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Community organisers, activists, members and other residents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Kirkby co-ops</td>
<td>07/03/14</td>
<td>2 hr. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Langrove co-op</td>
<td>10/06/14</td>
<td>1 hr. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>NAHC founder/Granby CLT</td>
<td>11/11/13</td>
<td>1 hr. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>NAHC member/Granby CLT and Homebaked CLT</td>
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<td>1 hr. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>NAHC member/Granby CLT</td>
<td>04/04/15</td>
<td>1 hr. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>Granby CLT</td>
<td>26/05/14</td>
<td>2 hr. 20</td>
</tr>
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<td>Granby CLT</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Little Klondyke CLT</td>
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<td>Professional co-op development managers, architects, and community workers</td>
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<tr>
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<td>MIH co-op project manager</td>
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<td>Public sector professionals, local politicians, councillors and council officers</td>
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<td>Councillor, Liberal</td>
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<td>Housing Corp. officer</td>
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<td>P6</td>
<td>Council: regeneration assistant director</td>
<td>29/05/14</td>
<td>55 min.</td>
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<td>P7</td>
<td>Council: HMR divisional manager</td>
<td>17/06/14</td>
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<td>H4</td>
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<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Duration</td>
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<td>H7</td>
<td>Plus Dane development director</td>
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<td>50 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H8</td>
<td>Plus Dane enterprise director</td>
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<tr>
<td>H9</td>
<td>Independent housing consultant/researcher</td>
<td>15/07/14</td>
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### National NGO directors, policy experts and consultants

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<td>CDS Co-operatives</td>
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<td>N3</td>
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<td>Empty Homes Agency/National CLT Network advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>N7</td>
<td>SAVE Britain's Heritage, independent consultant</td>
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### Scoping interviews

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<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Liverpool CLT/co-op activist</td>
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<td>S5</td>
<td>Planning consultant, Liverpool tour guide/historian</td>
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### B: Participants contacted but unable to interview

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<th>Role/positionality</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scoping interviews</td>
<td>Michael Parkinson</td>
<td>Professor, University of Liverpool</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Brown</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, Liverpool; Chair, Merseyside Civic Society</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sir Peter Hall</td>
<td>Professor, UCL; President, TCPA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Lloyd</td>
<td>Professor; independent consultant/researcher in urban development</td>
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<td>1970s co-op movement</td>
<td>Sophy Krajewska</td>
<td>Co-op development director, CDS; Liverpool Vision; independent consultant/writer</td>
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<td>Langrove</td>
<td>Paul Mangan</td>
<td>Chairman of co-op</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Henry Corbett</td>
<td>Leading activist; Reverend of St Peters Church; husband of Jane Corbett</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granby CLT</td>
<td>Tracey Gore</td>
<td>Chief Exec, Steve Biko Housing Association, partner of CLT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joe Macfarrag</td>
<td>Local resident/activist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homebaked CLT</td>
<td>Jeanne van Heeswijk</td>
<td>Artist/architect/originator of project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Maria Brewster</td>
<td>Artistic director; CLT activist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peter Woods</td>
<td>Board member, local resident</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sue Humphreys</td>
<td>Board member, local resident</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Jayne Lawless</td>
<td>Activist, local artist, project manager</td>
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<td>Little Klondyke</td>
<td>Alan Lunt</td>
<td>Director Of Built Environment, Sefton Borough Council</td>
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<td>Liverpool City Councillors</td>
<td>Ann O'Byrne</td>
<td>Cabinet Member for Housing</td>
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<td>Jan Clein</td>
<td>Lib Dem</td>
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<td>Liverpool Council</td>
<td>Pauline Davis</td>
<td>Former Managing Director, Merseyside HMR Pathfinder</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heather Jago</td>
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<td>Nick Kavanagh</td>
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<td>Ken Perry</td>
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<td>Mike Watson</td>
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<td>Bridget Waters</td>
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<td>Steve Coffey</td>
<td>Chief Executive, Liverpool Mutual Homes</td>
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<td>Phil Earl</td>
<td>Director of Policy, North West Housing Services (NWHS)</td>
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<td>Kevin Wan</td>
<td>Director of Finance, NWHS</td>
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<td>John McGuigan</td>
<td>Client Services Manager, NWHS; Company Secretary of Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH)</td>
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<td>National policy experts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nick Wates</td>
<td>Community architecture activist/expert/writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ciara Leeming</td>
<td>Independent investigative journalist into HMR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C: Sample Interview Questions:

1) **General views and personal experience:** Firstly, I'm interested to hear about your role and personal experience with mutual housing initiatives.
   - Are there any other examples in Liverpool’s history you might add that I have missed? Is there a hidden history of alternative housing in Liverpool, such as a squatting movement?
   - Do you see any connections between the various models of alternative housing provision through Liverpool’s history? Have any influenced any others, either historically or contemporaneously?

2) **Strengths and weaknesses of mutual ownership models:** I’m interested to hear what you think are the strengths and weaknesses of community ownership of housing in comparison to that delivered by the market, state, or other third sector housing associations like large RSLs.
   - What effects does community ownership have on the local community in terms of its social cohesion, its place identity, and its economy?
     - Are there any adverse effects for the surrounding neighbourhoods; or any problems caused for wider governance of the city?
   - Does community ownership contribute in any way to positively defining the boundaries of a community, neighbourhood or locality?
     - How does this differ between members and other local residents?

3) **Catalysts and conditions of genesis and development:** I am interested in your views on what the main push and pull factors are that provoke the genesis and shape the development of campaigns, as well as the initial conditions and contexts in which such ideas first emerge. I also want to explore how ‘success’ is defined for such initiatives in comparison to large-scale regeneration and mainstream provision.
   - **Push Factors:** What are the main community motivations for the establishment of campaigns?
     - **Radicalism:** How important is political radicalism or a local sense of injustice in the motivations for mutual ownership of housing?
     - How far are initial radical intentions strengthened or compromised as campaigns progress and institutionalise?
     - How would you define a ‘radical’ housing intervention?
   - **Pull Factors:** What are the main political and economic catalysts provoking these initiatives?
     - How have internal motivations and external catalysts coincided and interacted in particular periods to produce different initiatives?
   - What else is needed for campaigns to emerge and develop successfully?
   - **Success:** How should we judge the ‘success’ of community-led initiatives for mutual ownership of housing?
     - Does this differ at all to the criteria for success of larger scale state-led regeneration programmes? How successful have these programmes been in Liverpool’s history?

4) **Politics and the role of the state:** I’d like to turn our attention to the role of the local state and city politics in helping or hindering the development of these initiatives.
   - Why do you think Liverpool so often appears at the forefront of innovation in housing and urban regeneration policy?
   - **Local state:** How does the local state act to create the context or conditions for mutual housing initiatives?
And to engage with and advance their ongoing development?
How has this changed over Liverpool’s history and across successive political administrations?
When have been the most fertile periods for the development of mutual ownership of housing, and why?

- **National state:** How do national and EU policies act to create the conditions for the initiation and ongoing development of mutual housing projects?
  - How have national and local policy environments interacted to create conditions?

5) **Technical and procedural processes:** I’ve talked about the general issues, and the wider political context of mutual ownership. Now I’d like to focus in on the nuts and bolts of how campaigns for such projects as CLTs ever get off the ground.

- **Land:** How have campaigns for CLTs sought to acquire land for mutual ownership of housing?
  - Who is the land previously owned by and what are the motivations for asset transfer to community groups?
- **Funding:** What are the sources of funding for land acquisition and development of housing?
  - Are there any conditions attached to this financial support?
- **Governance:** How are governance processes agreed upon and set up, and who do they best serve?
- **Stakeholders:** Who are the stakeholders involved in developing CLTs?
- **Partnerships:** How successful have campaigns been in building partnerships with external organisations?
  - How much influence do other campaigns, intermediary organisations, professional partners and funding agencies have on their development?

6) **Future prospects**

- **Liverpool’s future:** How much scope within Liverpool’s current and future urban governance structure is there for radical housing initiatives to emerge and gain traction?
- **Beyond:** What are its future prospects of becoming a more mainstream sector of housing provision and an alternative to large-scale regeneration?
D: Participant information sheet and consent form

University of Manchester
School of Environment and Development

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a PhD research project looking into community ownership of housing in Liverpool. Before you decide to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask for more info, or if there is anything that remains unclear, before deciding whether to take part. Thank you for considering being a participant.

What is the title of the research?

Mutual ownership of housing and the politics of locality

Who will conduct the research?

Matthew Thompson, PhD Planning, First Floor, Arthur Lewis Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the research is to find out how radical interventions in affordable housing and urban regeneration have been initiated and successfully established over Liverpool’s history, with a particular focus on mutual or community ownership. Liverpool has been chosen as a city with a particularly rich history of such initiatives. I hope to understand why certain models of mutual ownership have gained traction in Liverpool’s history as a way to provide insight into the future prospects for alternative housing models and community-led development more generally. I am interested in how community groups have campaigned for community-owned housing projects and also how local politics, external organisations, economic processes and government policies have all influenced their development in different ways.

Why have you been chosen?

You have been chosen because you have been directly involved in, or have experience or relevant knowledge of, campaigns to acquire land for community housing, and also that of local politics and the various government regeneration programmes over Liverpool’s recent history.

What would you be asked to do in taking part?

To be interviewed at a time and location of your choice. If you consent to an interview, I will briefly introduce the research and we will discuss the issues it raises through your own experience.

What happens to the data collected?
All data will be stored securely, accessible only to me, the principal investigator, for the purposes of study towards a PhD in Planning at the University of Manchester.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All information provided will be transferred onto my computer as soon as possible, and will be encrypted and password protected. All voice recordings, photographs and handwritten notes will be stored securely in a cabinet only accessible to me. Written transcripts will be coded to ensure anonymity of all participants, which will be fully maintained in publication in order to protect your identity.

What happens if you do not want to take part or change your mind?

It is totally up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to participate in the study you will be given this information sheet to keep as reference and be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw from the research at any time you want.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No. All participation is voluntary.

What is the duration of the research?

The research period will run until late 2013. For our interview, I ask for up to around an hour of your time.

Where will the research be conducted?

The research is being conducted in and around Liverpool, mostly in Vauxhall, Everton, Bootle, and Toxteth. For interviews, I can travel to your workplace or meet you at any other public venue of your choice at a time convenient for you.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The research is part of a PhD thesis, a copy of which will be kept in the University of Manchester library. I also hope to publish my findings in academic journals and present these at various conferences.

Contact for further information

My postal address is given above; email is: matthew.thompson@manchester.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong?

You can contact me at any time in reference to your participation in the research. If you want to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you can contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
University of Manchester
School of Environment and Development

Mutual ownership of housing and the politics of locality

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please read the consent form and initial it:

1) I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet and have had
the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had
these answered satisfactorily.

2) I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am
free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason

3) I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded

4) I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant ___________________________ Date ________________ Signature ___________________________

Name of person taking consent ___________________________ Date ________________ Signature ___________________________
E: Table of all co-ops in Merseyside (where information available)

Co-ops no longer in operation are highlighted in italics.

**Rehab co-ops:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year est. (built)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>Development Agency, Architect, and Funding Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Granby</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1972 (dissolved in 1987)</td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td>SNAP Stock inherited by MIH, LHT, Toxteth Park co-op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canning</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td>SNAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodge Lane East</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>South (97 Lodge Lane, L8)</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princes Park</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>87 (plus 44 hostel)</td>
<td>MIH NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holyland</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td>NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lark Lane</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn &amp; Yates Streets</td>
<td>Rehab (4 new build)</td>
<td>1976 Corn street yate street</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>NHS Housing Corp.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alt</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Alt road</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>NHS Housing Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Gingerbread</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1978 (for lone parents)</td>
<td>scattered</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demeter</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>South (Kelvin Grove)</td>
<td>6 flats</td>
<td>CDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holt Road</td>
<td>Rehab (6 new build)</td>
<td>1980-1 Holt Road</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>CDS Snelham Summers and Binks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington Fields</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1980 (Dissolved into HLA in 1986)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>CDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenleaf</td>
<td>Tenant manage Co-op</td>
<td>(1981 Dissolved in 1992)</td>
<td>14 flats</td>
<td>CDS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSEY (cooperative schemes for the elderly)</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1983 (by number of other co-ops)</td>
<td>South (Knotty Ash and Devonshire Road)</td>
<td>CDS Ainsley Gommon Wood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathedral Mansions</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>South (Huskisson Street, L8)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>LHT Housing Corp. &amp; English Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxteth Park</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>1987 (by 48 tenants of Granby Co-op)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>CDS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First generation new build co-ops:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weller Streets</th>
<th>New build</th>
<th>Year est. (built)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>Development Agency, Architect, and Funding Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Client/Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesketh Street</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>South (35 Newland Court, L17)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>CDS Innis Wilkin Ainsley Gommon Housing Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Albert Gardens</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>South (9 Prince Albert Mews)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>CDS McDonnell Hughes Liverpool Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leta/ Claudia</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>North (Mere Green Centre)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>MIH Wilkinson Hindle Halsall Lloyd Liverpool Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirlmere</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>North (Thirlmere Green)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>MIH MIH Urban Services Liverpool Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dingle Residents</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>South (1 Riverview Walk, L8)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>CDS Innis Wilkin Ainsley Gommon Housing Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton Crescent</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>South (Caryl Gardens/ Grafton Crescent)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>CDS Brock Carmichael Associates Liverpool Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Street</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>South (28 Britannia Crescent, L8)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>CDS Brock Carmichael Associates Liverpool Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorefields</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>South (17 Shorefields Village, L8)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>CDS Innis Wilkin Ainsley Gommon Housing Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Crescent</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>South (35 Southern Crescent)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>CDS Wilkinson Hindle Halsall Lloyd Liverpool Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dingle Mount</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Neighbours</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Street</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Gardens</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerrard Gardens</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>North (100-plus)</td>
<td>LHT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Gardens</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>North (About 130)</td>
<td></td>
<td>MIH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eldonian Village</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>North (? Eldonian Way)</td>
<td>310 total 145 (ph. 1) 15 (St Gerard Close) 150 (ph. 2)</td>
<td>MIH Wilkinson Hindle Halsall Lloyd Housing Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownlow Hill</td>
<td>New</td>
<td></td>
<td>South (7 Chrisward Close)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>CDS Parry Boardman and Morris Housing Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation new build co-ops – Kirkby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowsley Residents</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1984 (1988)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Huyton (29 St Michaels Court)</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS Ellis Williams Partnership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southdene</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1984 (1987)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kirkby (15 Firstone Grove)</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS McHugh Stoppard Knowsley Council</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cherryfield</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1984</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kirkby (19 Adrians Way)</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS Gerald R Smith and Partners Housing Corp.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rusland Road</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1985 (1989)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kirkby (10 St Lawrence Grove)</strong></td>
<td><strong>37 on two sites (St Martin’s Grove)</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS Carl Thompson Associates Housing Corp.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Springwood</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1985</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kirkby (9 Springwood Gardens)</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS Gerard R Smith and Partners Knowsley Council</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Westvale</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1985 (1991)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kirkby (23 Manor Grove)</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS Brock Carmichael Associates Housing Corp.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hamlet Village (prev. Mornington Street)</strong></td>
<td><strong>New build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1986 (1990)</strong></td>
<td><strong>South (Mornington Street, L8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS Wilkinson Hindle Halsall Lloyd Housing Corp.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Langrove Community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rehab and new build</strong></td>
<td><strong>1987 (30 original) (1993 Phase 2)</strong></td>
<td><strong>North (69 Langrove Street)</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>CDS (MIH) Housing Corp. &amp; Merseyside Task Force</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-1988 new generation co-ops:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Westhead</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Park Brow</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valewest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. James Village</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vauxhall (Athol)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linslade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigdalen Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Vale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Croft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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