Grassroots perspectives of gentrification and community-led design: the social relations underlying the design of housing

Tom Morton

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Abstract
The UK housing crisis is the result of neoliberal-value’s decades long shift in emphasis, away from viewing commodities as holding use value and toward viewing them as holding exchange value. The consequent effect of this shifting emphasis on the design of housing is that housing is increasingly designed to maximise its exchange value rather than meet a growing need for affordable and accessible housing in the UK. This “gentrification by design” exacerbates the housing crisis, leading to growing rates of statutory homelessness and housing need. Seeking modes of designing housing which foreground its use value, this thesis asks how community-led design (CLD) can facilitate the building of a community’s capacity to tackle gentrification, examining the intersection between CLD as a design practice driven by the use-value of buildings and space, and gentrification as a phenomenon driven by their exchange value. To investigate this intersection a series of case studies with CLD initiatives were undertaken, combining semi-structured interviews with cultural animation, an art-based method of knowledge co-production which foregrounds participant perspectives. Analysis of the results shows that participants framed gentrification as a deliberate strategy of capital accumulation, emerging from an exploitative power dynamic existing between local communities and various sets of opposing actors. Based on these results, this thesis presents the theory that all cases – if they are to be considered genuinely community-led – must in some sense aim to materially alter the socio-spatial relations of power underlying the design of housing in a community’s favour.
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1 Introduction

‘Since money, materials, land and authority to act were necessary’ Giancarlo De Carlo tells us in his 1969 lecture ‘Architecture’s public’ (Jones, Petrescu and Till, 2013) ‘and since the ruling power was the only force capable of furnishing him with these means, the architect had to identify himself with it, even transforming himself into its operative appendage’. It is not difficult to conjure real life instances of the designed environment as an expression of the dominant ideology of the day. Where once church steeples would have controlled London’s skyline, today the headquarters of financial services shroud their grounds (Harvey, 2013). Participation in design has a robust custom of challenging this dynamic. Born out of the co-design traditions emerging from the 1960’s, participation in the designing of technologies, products and services, or the built environment has multiple strands associated with terms such as participatory, cooperative, or community design (Zamenopoulos and Alexiou, 2018; Sanoff, 2008).

This study centres on a particular set of practices, called community-led design (CLD) which exist at the intersection of these design traditions. Whether concerned with co-designing services, technologies or space, the defining characteristic of CLD is that it is not a top down design process but a design process emphasising the leadership of a community, initiated and steered at its grassroots (Arnstein, 1969). This can manifest across a spectrum of settings and social contexts, often taking the form of political activism (when a community designs in opposition to changes/lack of change in their environment and/or services), self-help (when a community designs for its own benefit) and in response to opportunities presented by government policy (when a community takes advantage of a policy initiative to take charge of the design of their environment). But in all instances, it is at its core a process of a community taking responsibility for and engaging with their environment as designers (Alexiou, Zamenopoulos and Alevizou, 2013).

The thesis focuses on community-led design in juxtaposition to prevalent modes of development which result in the phenomenon of gentrification (Lees and Phillips, 2018; Smith, 1979). If, as De Carlo suggests, the built environment is a material manifestation of the dominant ideology of our time, then gentrification is the juncture at which the design of buildings and spaces meets neo-liberalism (Smith, 2002). If neoliberalism is the application of market principles to all sectors of society (Davies, 2017; 2016), then expressed in its most fundamental terms, gentrification is the exploitation of a differential existing between the actualised rent of any given site, versus its potential rent under a different use (Smith, 1996; Harvey, 2019). The tangible effect of this is that the social character, aesthetic, and design of buildings and space are altered.

This phenomenon is perhaps felt most sharply in the design of housing. House building in the UK has been steadily rising since around 2014, following a six-year slump after the 2007/8 financial crisis. New development has been so sustained that the number of additional dwellings has almost returned to its pre-crash peak (see Figure 1), yet the country is still struggling with housing shortage. In 2016/17 net additional dwellings were up 0.92% on the previous year, with the vast majority of gains resulting from new builds (HCLG, 2018). These additional homes failed to have any impact in terms of lowering the rates of statutory homelessness, with households in temporary accommodation rising over the same period by 8% (DCLG, 2017). This rise in statutory homelessness cannot be explained away as population growth, with the average rate of annual change sitting far lower at 0.6% (World Bank, 2019). Part of the explanation is that the number of vacant dwellings rose faster than...
houses were being built – a 2.7% increase – creating the situation in which the number of vacant properties (605,891 dwellings) vastly surpasses the number of statutory homeless (82,310 households) (HCLG, 2018). In short, we are building new developments, but they are not developments that are designed with the purpose of housing those who need it.

If it is not housing need that has fuelled the sustained growth in housing stock, then what has? As Figure 1 shows, since the late 1980’s additions to the housing stock have come largely from the private sector, with new developments of social housing by local authorities all but disappearing. This transition is to what David Harvey terms the ‘speculative city’ (2019), where housing development acts as part of the machinery of capital accumulation. In fact, the UK’s National Planning Policy Framework (HCLG, 2019) places ‘significant weight’ on new developments supporting economic growth. This attention to growth shifts the emphasis away from housing’s use-value and onto its exchange value, with the speculation of investors driven by the differential existing between the current value of land’s use and its potential value under a different use/improvement. This is known as the ‘rent gap’ theory of gentrification (Smith, 1979), a process which leads, in its worst cases, to the displacement of a land’s use and/or its inhabitants.

![Permanent new build dwellings completed, by tenure, England 1946 to 2017. Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government 2018](image)

So, the explanation for the continued housing crisis is (at least in part) the financialisation of the housing market. However, each new housing development has been produced by architects and designers. Acting as De Carlo’s ‘operative appendage’ to the ubiquitous power of financialisation, the development of housing is designed to maximise the highest return on investment. In these contexts, CLD initiatives offer alternative models of development, initiated and steered by grass roots community organisations who, as non-profits, foreground the use-value of urban environments to the communities who live in
them. Unlike government sponsored programs in the UK such as the Localism Act (Bevan, 2014; Brownill and Bradley, 2017; Gallent, 2013) in which localities may be invited to participate in the design of their environments, CLD, by the implication of community leadership, makes non-statutory interventions into the built environment fundamentally challenging the political settlements of design practise with their own radical interpretations of design of housing and the social relations underlying it. If exchange-value driven design has - at least in part – produced the gentrification of our urban environments, this thesis seeks to understand what we can learn from design practises unmotivated by the realisation of profit and which endeavour toward the formulation of new social relations in the design of housing.

The key research question of this investigation can then be formulated as follows: How do community-led design initiatives approach and counterbalance gentrification? Gentrification is framed in the literature briefly outlined above as a deliberate strategy emerging from a set of exploitative relations between “communities” and various sets of opposing political actors. It is necessary then to understand the aspects of the political at the intersection between gentrification and CLD. How is a political polarity - an ‘us’ vs ‘them’ dynamic (Mouffe, 2000; 1999) - established? How do participants define their communities, how do these communities relate to their opposers, and does the construction of the political in their work alter the power relations which create gentrification? Where this thesis challenges the assertion that the political is absent from design thinking and practise, it aims to investigate the extent to which design is capable of materially altering the exploitative power relations underlying socio-spatial issues like gentrification. In this regard pre-existing considerations of the political in design provide a starting point.

Therefore, in investigating the answer to the overarching research question it is necessary to investigate a number of sub-questions:

1. How do CLD’s understand gentrification?
2. What are participants’ understanding of the intersection between gentrification and CLD?
3. Do CLD’s have a theory of social power? If so, what is it? (What power do communities have?)
4. How does their theory of power inform their design practises and/or outputs?
5. Can their design practises and/or outputs build power within communities?

This thesis shares the criticisms of Seitz (2019) and others with regard to the application of design and design thinking to the solving of social issues (Julier and Kimbell, 2019; Julier, 2018). Social issues are not the sole result of a lack of innovation or creativity as the theory and practise of design thinking schools at Potsdam, Ideo and the Stanford d.school would suggest. The eradication of the political can be considered at best as creating a theoretical blind spot in our understanding of social issues and at worst deliberately leading us away from confrontation with the powerful vested interests who benefit from their proliferation. However, where this thesis challenges the criticisms of Seitz and others is in their assertion that design practise is absent of the political; pointing to the diversity of co-design practise and in particular agonistic and adversarial design (Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard, 2014; DiSalvo, 2012). Yet Seitz does successfully issue a challenge for design to point to where the conditions from which social issues emerge has been materially altered. This thesis seeks to
address this gap, aiming to provide the beginnings of a framework through which we can investigate the impact of design processes on the material relations and conditions in which socio-spatial issues like gentrification emerge.

Viewing CLD practise and the design of buildings and/or space through the lens of social power, it is necessary to describe aspects of theory and practise which underlie CLD that can be considered to alter the relations of power around objects of design. Such information to a degree could be collected through a desk research, based on the descriptions of each case’s practise and design outputs on their websites and in other information spaces they generate. But in order to develop a rich understanding of the theories and practises underlying CLD it is better to gather data directly from the practitioners of CLD themselves. From participants we can gain an in-depth and - in each case - specific understanding of their assumptions about key concepts like gentrification as a phenomenon; but also, community, leadership, social power, and design. These participant descriptions of theory and practise can then be interpreted by the researcher to distil from them common aspects across cases which may hold within them the potential to alter power relations around objects of design.

To investigate these lines of enquiry, the study used cultural animation (CA) with participants from five CLD initiatives. CA is a method of knowledge co-production, where the aim is to bring participants’ basic assumptions about their lives, their work, or their environment out into the open to be interrogated and discussed collaboratively (Kelemen and Hamilton, 2019; Kelemen, Surman and Dikomitis, 2018). This is achieved by mediating discussion through art-based activities such as the creation of artefacts, creative writing exercises, or drama games in an attempt to “animate” narrative data which may have become fixed, inviting participants to engage with questions about their lives and work from reinvigorated perspectives. In the metaphorical space that this animation creates it is possible for new insights and lines of inquiry to be made by participants, facilitators, and researcher collaboratively. Asking participants to think about abstract concepts in metaphorical spaces can be informative as individuals tend to think about abstract ideas metaphorically in the same sense as when we engage in discourse about them(Casasanto and Bottini, 2014). This is revealing of the ways our interactions with the material and societal environment structure our mental existences. This set of assumptions are then used as a lens through which to analyse data from the interview stage.

Additionally, a set of interviews with members from each initiative’s steering group were conducted in order to formulate a more complete picture of CLD practices. The interviews helped investigate the context in which different CLD initiatives undertake their work, their theories around what they hope to achieve, as well as any actions they have taken so far. This generates a picture of how precisely (if at all) it can be said that the community leads in each case and what the defining characteristics of CLD practice are in each context.

In sum, this set of case studies uses the basic assumptions of CLD practitioners to outline aspects of CLD practice which have the potential to build communities’ capacity to tackle gentrification.

The thesis is organised as follows: Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 will first provide the context of the investigation by reviewing key literature around co-design and gentrification, Chapter 3 will delineate the methodological approach of the thesis in more detail. Chapter 4 will present in detail the cultural animation workshop and its results and Chapter 5 will present the semi-structured interviews with CLD initiatives. Finally, in Chapter 6 and using these case studies, the thesis will conclude with some theoretical insights about
CLD practice and its ability to initiate a political resettlement of social relations and discuss limitations and future work.
2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This review explores how the social relations of neoliberal political economy are embedded in the production of buildings and spaces. It outlines the conceptions of value which produce gentrification, exploring the main strands of academic thought in the area, before investigating its interactions with design. The review engages with criticism of design’s capacity to innovate solutions to social issues like gentrification, turning to the traditions of co-design as a set of practises which are self-consciously concerned with the ethical and the political in design. From these traditions, two cultures of co-design are identified; consensus culture and dissensus culture. The exploration of these cultures is toward understanding and defining aspects of practise associated with community-led design which, with its emphasis on community leadership, this thesis identifies as a mode of co-design practice which can endeavour to work outside of the social relations of the neoliberal political economy and the systems of value which produce gentrification.

2.2 The embedding of social relations: political economy, gentrification, and design

If we accept De Carlo’s assertion that designers are the operative appendages of the dominant ideology of their time, then we accept that the design outputs they produce have embedded within them the social relations of their production. This section will review the academic discourse around gentrification, offering the view that we understand contemporary gentrification processes as the embedding of neoliberal political economy and conceptions of value into the design of housing. It will trace the changing theoretical understandings of gentrification over time and how these understandings have changed in relation to the dominant political economy of the day, before moving on to review the interactions of the political with design.

If we are to demonstrate that the social relations of a political economy are embedded in buildings and spaces, we would expect to see not only their aesthetic quality change over time, but peoples’ relationship to those buildings and spaces to alter also. David Harvey (2019; 2016) frames these shifting socio-spatial relations in the UK as the transition from social democracy, Fordism, and Keynesian political economy (where wage-led economic growth in predominantly the manufacturing sector foregrounded the spending power of workers) to post-Fordism and neoliberal political economy (where finance-led economic growth necessitates the continuous creation of new markets). Harvey describes the built environments produced by these political economies as in the first instance the ‘city of use value’ and in the second the ‘city of exchange value’. In the first instance, the political economic conception of housing placed a greater emphasis on its use value. Where, under Keynesian political economy, growth was stimulated via increased spending power through full employment of the population and rising wages, the provision (often by the state) of low-cost/affordable housing was of value in that it provided secure housing to workers, freeing up disposable income, which they can then spend in the economy. The city of exchange value by contrast is concerned with the creation of a housing market where, under neoliberal political economy, growth is driven by financial speculation on the value of housing both in its forms as a commodity and an investment. The value of housing in the latter instance is not primarily that it can be used to house people, but rather that a housing market can be used to stimulate economic growth. In fact, Harvey goes on to highlight that
the advance of neoliberal political economy’s extraction of exchange value moves beyond simply the privatisation of housing (i.e. right to buy) to the financialisation of housing (i.e. buy to let). Gentrification then - as a phenomenon associated with the built environment – must also fit into these transitioning political economies and as the social relations of a political economy transition, the characteristics of gentrification should alter also.

This thesis maintains that gentrification is necessarily concerned with social relations as organised around class and their interactions with the urban environment. The configuration of these social relations is shaped by shifting power dynamics between classes. Indeed, Harvey argues that urbanism cannot exist without uneven power dynamics, maintaining that reciprocity and symmetrical groupings do not allow for the ‘concentration of social product necessary for urbanism’ (Harvey, 2010). Gentrification, it seems uncontroversial to assert, is a phenomenon explicitly concerned with class relations. So perhaps counter-intuitively, Ruth Glass’ (1964) early analysis of processes of gentrification first emerged in the mid-1960’s under what is identifiably Fordist production and the Keynesian political economy. Glass coined the term gentrification in her analysis of changing aspects of London. Her initial observations are economic and centred on the consumption of commodities. Glass remarks that:

‘There are far more soft and hard drinking and eating places than there used to be (and they are open for longer hours). The shops are crammed with personal and household paraphernalia which had previously been neither in mass production nor for mass use... Superficially, class distinctions in looks, clothes and in domestic equipment have narrowed considerably...’ (Glass, 1964 p.20)

Here Glass is highlighting changing aspects of London’s economy as well as narrowing aesthetic signifiers of class. The scene described above is characteristic of Fordist production and Keynesian political economy, in which the increased spending power of the working classes facilitates economic growth through the consumption of mass-produced commodities. The mass production of commodities of course extends to the mass production of housing where gentrification in this context is described by Glass as an unintended by-product of post-war urban regeneration of working-class areas. Post-war mass house building and slum clearing in part creates the narrowing of class signifiers (certainly in housing) described above. Crucially, this regeneration was at large state-led and crucially state-owned, with the express intention of housing the working classes. At the peripheries of this state-led/owned regeneration is where Glass identifies processes of gentrification. Glass describes this gentrification as;

‘Shabby, modest mews and cottages - two rooms up and two down - have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences... [the] current social status and value of such dwellings are...enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed.’ (Glass, 1964 p.53)

At first glance, Glass’ analysis of gentrification places an emphasis on the consumption choices of the middle classes (i.e. middle-class individuals buying and renovating low cost
inner-city housing. This is perhaps the archetypal understanding of gentrification (Butler, 2002; Butler and Robson, 2001). But on closer reading, Glass’ explanation as to why a changing trend in middle-class consumer preferences was emerging has its basis in the Keynesian political economy and the rising spending power of the working classes. Glass posits that;

‘As real incomes and aspirations rise, as people get married earlier and live longer, existing households split up, and there is a higher ratio of households to population, with a consequent increased demand for separate dwellings...the competition for space thus produced is bound to get out of hand, and lead to a spiral of land values’ (Glass, 1964 p.23)

In this passage we can see that Glass’ explanation for the trends in middle class consumption of housing have a material basis in the value of land and are not in fact based in non-tangible consumer preferences. Middle-class consumer desire for inner city housing in this analysis is driven by its rising exchange value. This thesis maintains that the extraction of exchange value from land, buildings and spaces is the crucial dimension of gentrification processes. A process which alters characteristically as shifting political economic conceptions of the value of housing increasingly foreground exchange. But before discussing this dimension of gentrification in detail, this review will first distil from the literature the central theories which describe the broader aspects of processes of gentrification.

2.2.1 Gentrification by consumer sovereignty and the transition to post-Fordism: power, social relations, and the deployment of capital

Of the academic discourses around gentrification since Glass this thesis will focus on three main strands of thought. The predominant theory, as detailed above, is gentrification by consumer sovereignty. Focusing on middle class gentrifiers’ preferences in their consumption of housing as a commodity, this theory highlights changing tastes in the middle classes that drive a return to urban living from suburban living. One particularly interesting investigation into this aspect of gentrification is Butler and Robson’s (2001) research into gentrifiers in South London neighbourhoods. Using Bourdieu’s typologies of social, cultural, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 2011) the paper examines three case studies comprising census data and a series of interviews with 75 gentrifiers to explain variations in the upgrading of gentrified areas of inner-city London. The authors assert that differences in the nature of gentrification can be understood as variances in the deployment of capitals by middle-class residents (note that whilst trends in census data set the context for this research, the unit of analysis here is individual gentrifiers).Whilst acknowledging that the middle-class presence in South London neighbourhoods like Brixton is ‘established and maintained’ through economic capital, the attention of the research is on the systems of ‘situated’ reciprocity exercised in the consolidation of affluence (Butler and Robson, 2001). Here Butler and Robson describe the capacity afforded to the middle-class communities of South London through their networks of social relations.

‘This is an almost ideal type of horizontal-perpendicular synergy [the upward mobilisation of assets through social capital], in which a well-educated and resourceful community with a strong affective attachment to its locality actively promotes its interests through participation in a local
This ‘horizontal-perpendicular synergy’ relates to the capacity of the gentrifying community to exercise influence over political actors through their social networks. This capacity, combined with economic capital, can be deployed in the endeavour toward the ‘general upgrading of the area’ through an ability to ‘act collectively’. Butler and Robson’s use of the term ‘force’ is key here, as this deployment of economic and social capital is a form of social power which is not afforded to the excluded working-class communities in this instance.

To gain insight into the impact of this exercise of social and economic power on working class communities, we can turn to John Betancur’s (2011) discussion of gentrification and low income racial/ethnic groups. Focused on neighbourhoods in Chicago, the study draws on 40 interviews with individuals in ‘critical positions’ of leadership/decision making or change with a particular emphasis on ‘neighbourhood based fabrics’ which Betancur uses to differentiate between social relations in their forms as a use value (neighbourhood based fabric) and an exchange value (social capital). Sharing an environment, according to Betancur, develops certain common ground between users regardless of social class. However, the social relations embedded in the environment begin from separate starting points. Where the gentrifying middle-classes tended to see social relations as commodities, the incumbent low-income communities emphasise their value as a utility. Betancur describes the incoming middle-class communities understanding of gentrification and their networks of social relations in the following:

‘They described gentrification as place-enhancement and neighbourhood fabric as cultural encounters, organisations and events that increased the status of place, sharing of amenities, shopping, information and close association with decision-makers and police. Along the way they referred to former residents as a threat on property values, safety and quiet...their social fabrics and priorities of place did not include basic services or need satisfaction...’ (Betancur, 2011 p.392)

Here we are confronted with an example of conflicting systems of value sharing both symbolic and actual space. Middle-class community members are - as noted by Butler and Robson— more able to exercise a horizontal-perpendicular synergy of social capital, whereas lower income community members rely on their networks of social relations as a system of support constituted in place. Both groups are stakeholders in their localities, yet one group has greater leverage in terms of their capacity for exchange and mobility. Gentrification’s danger then lies, according to Betancur, not in displacement alone but also in the erosion of low-income communities’ neighbourhood-based fabrics.

The above highlights a gap in consumer sovereignty’s analysis of gentrification. Whilst the deployment of middle-class economic capital is undoubtedly a central feature of our understanding of gentrification, it is not fundamental to its processes. What is fundamental is the power dynamics and the social relations at play. As Butler and Robson observe, it is the situated reciprocity - i.e. how relations between political actors and the gentrifying middle classes are organised – and not the deployment of economic capital which consolidates the gentrification of the neighbourhood. The social relations of Betancur’s low-income communities on the other hand are organised into place-based systems of support. This illustrates an imbalance of power between the two social classes where the threat to
working class communities posed by gentrification is not only physical displacement in the final instance, but a political exclusion from decision making and the promotion of their interests. How then do we arrive at this power dynamic from the Keynesian political economy of Glass, where gentrification was described as an unintended consequence of the promotion of working-class interests and Fordist production.

The second key framework for understanding gentrification details precisely this transition away from the Fordist mode of production. Domestic mass production of commodities in western countries meant that manufacturing was a substantial section of the UK economy. This in combination with Keynesian political economy’s reliance on rising wages to stimulate growth meant that workers — as those providing the necessary labour for Fordist production and thus economic growth — had significant leverage in the economy. This leverage was exploited by trade unions and the broader labour movement to build forms of working-class power. But as western economies transitioned away from the domestic mass production characteristic of Fordism and toward service-based economies and neoliberal political economy’s focus on financialisation, workers were relied on less as producers of commodities and more as consumers of them. This amounts to an erosion of workers’ leverage in the economy and thus an erosion on forms of working-class power.

How then does this transition help frame our understanding of gentrification? As post-Fordist production shifts reliance on producers to consumers, the emphasis in the design and planning of buildings and space shifts also. In his case study of the urban redevelopment of Roubaix, Max Rousseau (2012) details how a consensus developed in planning policy located around an urban economy centred on the ‘new middle class’ or the ‘creative class’. He attributes this emerging trend to the influence of the neoliberal approach to urban redevelopment, pointing to;

‘[The] groups of the working class which have been socially and economically marginalized or purely excluded with the coming of the post-Fordist employment market find themselves this time politically excluded – a political exclusion that constitutes the preliminary to their physical exclusion.’ (Rousseau, 2012 p.63)

Here again Rousseau highlights that prior to the physical exclusion of the working classes from urban spaces, there is a political exclusion. The restructuring of the urban economy that Rousseau highlights excludes an increasingly redundant working class, who no longer provide necessary labour for production, and consequently have reduced political leverage as well as reduced spending power in the economy. In effect, this necessitates the urban economy centring on the ‘new middle class’ for two reasons. First, they are the social class who have the resources to spend into the urban economy and second, because the erosion of the working-class power built on Fordist production reduces their political influence over how investment/reinvestment of capital into the urban environment takes place. It is important to understand then where decision making power in this regard is situated and, in whose interest, capital is deployed.

In the case of Roubaix, Rousseau notes the dominant influence of neoliberal political economy in the urban environment. This thesis shares an understanding of neoliberalism with William Davies (2014; 2015), in that what makes it “new” is that it differs from classical liberalism’s laissez-faire approach. Classical liberalism conceives of society in public, private, and civil sectors, and contends that the state should not make interventions into anything other than public life, leaving the private market to regulate itself through competitive
market principles. Neo-liberalism on the other hand advocates the application of the competitive market principle to all sectors of society, with the neoliberal state facilitating the continuous creation of new markets (Davies, 2016; 2017). This understanding of neoliberal political economy can indicate to us where decision making power over the deployment of capital into the urban environment is situated and its role in our understanding of gentrification. Where Glass’ early conception of gentrification takes place under Keynesianism and a state which planned and regulated the economy to produce full employment and wage-led growth, the shifting dynamics in the balance of class power in the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist production creates a new political settlement and set of social relations underlying gentrification and the production and consumption of urban environments.

Neil Smith (Smith, 2002) posits that gentrification in its contemporary form is the result of this paradigmatic shift from the state as regulator of the market, to the state as agent of the market. Processes of gentrification in this neoliberalised urban environment are – far from Glass’ unintended by-product of state-led/owned urban regeneration - utilised as an urban economic policy. Smith argues that the gentrifiers of today are governmental, corporate, or corporate-governmental partnerships, which use gentrification as a strategy to compete economically in the global market (a case supported by Sassen (2013; 2015)) - to evidence this incidence of what we might term ‘statutory gentrification’, Smith points to the partnerships between local government and private capital in the 1990s. He states that;

‘The 1999 British regeneration manifesto, apparently watchful of the environmental consequences of continued suburban sprawl, declares that over the next twenty-five years, 60% of new housing provision should occur on “brownfield” sites – that is, on urban land that has already gone through one or more cycles of development. Clearly this initiative will be aimed at older urban areas that have undergone sustained disinvestment’ (Smith, 2002 p.444)

This highlighting of ‘sustained disinvestment’ is central to Smith’s ‘rent gap theory’ of gentrification (Smith, 1979). As with Glass’ initial assessment of gentrification’s cause - ‘a spiral of land values’ - Smith’s theory is based not in the non-tangible consumer preferences of gentrifiers, but in the material understanding of economies of land, buildings, and space. According to Smith’s theory, gentrification is driven by a differential existing between rent actualised from any given building or site and the potential rent that could be extracted under a different use or “upgrade”. It is this differential that attracts investment and consequently raises rents and living costs. The difference then between the 60′s and now is who is exploiting the rent gap and how it is being exploited. Smith’s argument is that gentrification is not the consumption preferences of the middle classes, but rather – as detailed above – an economic strategy deployed by the neoliberal state.

This is not to say that the consumption preferences of gentrifiers have no role to play in gentrification, rather that these preferences are created for and not conceived by them. An example of this incidence in the regeneration of brownfield sites was the emergent trend of “loft living” in the 1990s. It draws a striking interrelation between (neo)liberalisation by the state in town and country planning legislation which led to the gentrification of former industrial sites and the aesthetic trends of gentrification by capital. How gentrification is marketed to gentrifiers is striking, as whilst loft living was framed in counter cultural terms as fashionable amongst the ‘creative classes’/‘new middle classes’ of New York (Hamnett
and Whitelegg, 2007) the language of regeneration, Smith argues, ‘sugar coats’
gentrification as it removes the inherent discussion of class and social power (1996). This
discussion is key: if as Smith contends gentrification is not an accident but a strategy, then
rent gaps (as with consumer preferences) do not appear but are created. What is being
sugar coated is what Smith terms the ‘revanchist city’ (1996) that '[c]apitalism requires the
destruction of value in order to create gaps’ (Jess, 2018). The case here is that the
interrelation between the creation of middle-class aesthetic tastes and gentrification
through (neo)liberalisation by the state, is the exploitation of working-class neighbourhoods
and destruction of their use value.

The aesthetic dimension, however, provides a central lens. Whilst the design of
environments may well sugar coat gentrification, it nevertheless embeds the relations of
class and social power into buildings, spaces, and landscapes. This landscape change is the
focus of Lees and Phillips’ (2018) work on gentrification. Citing it as the defining
characteristic of contemporary gentrification processes, they provide the following
rationale.

‘Landscape change has been a central, if rather neglected, aspect of
gentrification... often invol[y] state- and developer-led new-build
gentrification of extensive areas...gentrification [has] evolved into a vehicle
for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes, involving not
only transformations in housing but also integration with developments in
recreation, consumption and production. Gentrification... [has] changed in
scale and form, such that ‘the narrow residential rehabilitation projects
that were so paradigmatic of the process in the 1960s and 1970s’ now
seem quaint in comparison with many new-build developments’ (Lees and
Phillips, 2018 p.81)

In this passage we are provided with a description so distinct from Glass’ gentrification
- which Lees and Phillips describe as “sporadic gentrification” ‘whereby gentrification was
occurring in localized patches through the mediated agency of property owners’ – that
instead we see Smith’s state and developer-led gentrification playing out in the wholesale
transformation of neighbourhoods as a strategy for economic growth. Lees and Phillips
identify four emergent understandings of the landscape of gentrification in academic
discourses. These are: ‘landscape as material/physical world’, ‘landscape as a symbolic text
or way of seeing’, ‘landscape as lived space’, and - crucially to this review’s understanding of
gentrification – ‘landscape as space of social life and social relations of power’. This is the
crux of framing gentrification as the embedding of the social relations of the dominant
ideology of the day into buildings and spaces.

The question then arises whether or not there is any alternative. Here the literature
offers some suggestions. In Jess Steele’s (2018) reflections on the community-led
regeneration of Hastings pier, self-organisation and collective action are identified as
potential solutions to redress imbalances in social power. Steele offers that:

‘Self-renovating neighbourhoods offer an emerging model of high-impact
collective action, a kind of ‘insurgent regeneration’ which is ‘concretely
reshaping the spaces of exclusion’ and in the process expanding the notion
and practice of citizenship’ (Jess, 2018 p.478)
The central point of this passage revolves around the concrete ‘reshaping of the spaces of exclusion’. Here – as in Lees and Phillips - the gentrification literature has begun to interact with the gentrified object, the buildings and spaces in which the social relations of a political economy are embedded. Here is where the discourse begins to intersect with the design literature, as we have arrived back at De Carlo’s conception of the designer as operative appendage to the contemporary dominant ideology. This review can now turn to the design literature to explore how it tackles issues of the political, social power, and the built environment.

2.2.2 Design, neoliberalism, and power: social issues and innovative solutions

In this section the review will explore the literature around design’s interactions with neoliberalism. It will highlight discussion around design solutions to social problems, before engaging with criticism of the use of design and design thinking to solve these issues. This section will set the context for discussing specifically co-design as a set of design practices self-consciously concerned with design ethics and the political in design.

As with gentrification, the social relations of a political economy and its conception of value impacts upon design. Thus, designers design commodities with shifting emphases on their use value or their exchange value to varying degrees. Guy Julier in his article *Design and Political Economy in the UK* (2009) associates the tipping point in design’s shifting conception of value as in line with the UK’s neoliberal turn. Julier notes that:

‘In the 1980s, this move was motivated by a straightforward, more generalistic notion of “design for profit”, meaning that notions of integrity of the object, or “good design”, became subservient to their exchange value.’ (Julier, 2009 p.223)

As with Harvey’s highlighting of the embedding of the social relations of a political economy in specifically housing – and the neoliberal advance from privatisation to financialisation – here we see the “design end” of the embedding process and neoliberal value’s shifting emphasis to exchange. Julier’s exploration of political economy and design mirrors Harvey, in that the shift to exchange value-led design advances beyond simple extraction of exchange value through the commodity form and toward the extraction of speculative exchange value through financialisation, with Julier adding that:

‘Design also became about value in potentia. Just as financialisation is concerned with the search for sources of value, so design could signal future wealth.’ (Julier, 2009 p.224)

The identification of design’s creative potential to innovate continuous sources of exchange value is – to Julier – demonstrable of the notion that design and economics are ‘inseparably intertwined’. Julier even points to design’s rise to prominence as being specifically intertwined with neoliberalism’s rhetorical focus on creativity (Julier, 2017; Julier and Kimbell, 2019). As Harvey tells us in *Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction* (2016), the central rhetorical case of neoliberal political economy is that:

‘[H]uman well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.’ (Harvey, 2016 p.22)
Julier argues that within this political economic framework, decision makers look to innovation as a solution to social issues rather than to confrontation with political inequalities or failings highlighting ‘links made between economic downturn and rise of participatory design methods for social innovation’ (2017).

However, there are discourses in the design literature which advocate for design’s capacity as a political force in itself as opposed to De Carlo’s operative appendage. With a particular focus on sustainment, Tony Fry’s Design as Politics (2010) develops a case for ‘sustainment sovereignty’ as a design solution to issues around climate and ecological collapse, which Fry delineates as follows:

‘Design, as it is world building, is political. Design, once no longer directed by capitalist imperatives, can be deployed to create new ontologies that support the reign of Sustainment instead; thus transformed, design can become a “redirective, futuring practice.” Instead of design solutions Design as Politics confronts unsustainability’s cultural and political foundational causes from a philosophical perspective.’ (Fry, 2010)

Here Fry recognises that design is inherently political. In his view the aim of designers should be to disentangle themselves from ‘capitalist imperatives’ shifting their focus from the innovative to the political. Fry takes social issues – in the case of (un)sustainability at least – to be at their foundation political. Though whilst claiming ‘design as politics’ can be a confrontation with the political, Fry fails to offer us a practical way that differs from design’s interactions with the neoliberal political economy (namely that design’s creative potential can innovate solutions to all social problems). Instead what Fry offers is education, stating that:

‘[The] pivotal role of education and learning in this process...illustrates that current mainstream Western education (with few exceptions) 'has failed to unlock the intellectual and creative potential of the majority of school students’ (Fry, 2010)

Whilst this analysis of a collective failing to address issues of sustainability may be accurate, a turn toward education lacks Fry’s promise of confrontation with capitalist imperatives and the foundational causes of social issues. Educational institutions of the kind where designers are trained are bound up in class relations, have a relationship to the neoliberal political economy, and crucially a neoliberal establishment who set – in a de facto sense or otherwise – curriculums and fund educational resources (Davies and Bansel, 2007). Fry may be correct in his view that the role of education is pivotal, however this analysis alone offers no explanation as to how this can counter the power of capital.

What Fry’s work does offer us is an understanding of the fundamentally political nature of design. In Fry’s terms design is ‘not neutral: it either futures or defutures, sustains or destroys’ (2018). Whilst Fry’s focus is sustainability, his analysis nonetheless chimes with Smith’s revanchist take on gentrification – capital destroying value to create gaps – and in fact brings us full circle to De Carlo and designers as operative appendage. But Fry also calls on action and a need for;

‘Getting design out of its prison house currently as it is trapped by the “who and what” it serves and the restricted practice of: “the profession,” service provision and the divisions of knowledge of the Eurocentric
epistemologies upon which it has been made parasitic. Here is a normality to be broken (up, free from and down)’ (Fry, 2018 p.175)

Both Fry and De Carlo frame design as being trapped by the ‘who and what it serves’ and Fry points us toward a need for rupture with it. Though Fry’s focus on ‘futural transformation of design knowledge and education, designers, and design practice’ (2018) is unsatisfactory as it seems to direct us toward a sort of “design technocracy” with a focus on designers as possessing some kind of elite knowledge to identify the solutions.

One example of the application of designerly skills to the solving of social issues is the expansion of design thinking. Beginning in the mid-2000s in consulting firms such as IDEO and in “d.schools” design thinking sees the solutions to issues – initially in business and management – as lying in creative thinking and innovation (Gobble, 2014; Thompson and Schonthal, 2020; Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2012). But as the application of design thinking expanded into other areas and in particular as it was applied to innovating solutions to social problems, criticism began to emerge as to how appropriate a method it was. Tim Seitz’ work ‘Design Thinking and the New Spirit of Capitalism’ (2019) argues that ‘design thinking reduces the horizon of social possibility to fit the objectives of corporate product development and marketing’. Citing solutions developed in projects such as the Potsdam d. school’s ‘Who am I’ card - which aimed at empowering homeless people to advertise their skills and knowledge – Seitz asserts that design thinking frames a social issue such as homelessness as ‘the consequence of individual shortcomings’ and in the process ‘erase[s] structures of social and political power’. Design thinking as a conceptual framework, Seitz claims, ‘is simply incapable of analysing social issues as the result of exploitative relations or conflicts of interest’. For this reason, Seitz would dispute Fry’s insistence that the problem in design lies in education’s failure to unlock intellectual and creative potential and instead offers that design’s problem is the erasure of the political altogether. Seitz offers efforts made in the vein of Fry such as Redesign Democracy - another Potsdam d.school project aimed at tackling social issues – criticising the project as a ‘creative elite…themselves not personally affected by the problems they seek to “solve”’.

It seems Seitz then shares a view of design’s interactions with the political more akin to Julier than Fry. But in matching Seitz’s criticism, Julier directs us to a gap in both their discussions of the political and design. Where Julier highlights ‘links made between economic downturn and rise of ‘participatory design methods for social innovation” (2017), he offers us an avenue of investigation which this review contends can match Fry’s call that design be ‘not about reforming business as usual but overcoming it’(2018).

2.3 Two cultures of participation: co-design, the political, and power

In this section, this review will challenge the assertions of Seitz and Julier that design necessarily erases structures of social and political power whilst at the same time addressing the gap of a practical ‘how’ left by Fry. In the literature reviewed so far, our attention has been twice drawn to co-design though from divergent starting points. Where Julier suggests that participation is used to ameliorate economic downturn without altering the social relations underlying it, Steele offers it as an opportunity to concretely reshape spaces of exclusion. It is necessary then to investigate the traditions of co-design in regard to their capacity to challenge power dynamics and work outside the social relations of the neoliberal political economy.
Born out of traditions emerging from the 1960’s, participation in the designing of technologies, products and services, or the built environment has multiple strands associated with terms such as participatory, cooperative, or community design (Zamenopoulos and Alexiou, 2018; Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard, 2014; Sanoff, 2008). Noting the rise of participatory design processes in the 1960s and 1970s, Henry Sanoff in his essay ‘Multiple Views of Participatory Design’ (2008) outlines a brief history of the traditions of participation. He draws particular attention to two prominent examples of early participatory methods in the US and Europe.

Community consciousness in the 1960s led to the direct involvement of the public in the definition of their physical environment and an increased sense of social responsibility constituted a new movement. Following this movement, community design centres aiming to offer design and planning services to enable the poor to define and implement their own planning goals, were established in the United States and the United Kingdom. They were influenced by Paul Davidoff’s advocacy model of intervention. Similarly many design and planning professionals rejected traditional practice. Instead they fought against urban redevelopment, advocated for the rights of poor citizens, and developed methods of citizen participation. (Sanoff, 2008 p.58)

In this early tradition of co-design, the intent was aimed specifically at ‘the poor’ with a group of trained professionals advocating on behalf of their interests in the deployment of capital into the built environment. This mode of co-design occurred following the advent of post-modern approaches to design, an early rejection of modernist design and planning modes of spatial equity and uniformity in favour of an ‘exuberant diversity’ through individual preferences in style (Jacobs, 1961). This tradition of co-design has its basis in a strong cultural conception of the rights of individuals as citizens to collaborate in the creation of their environment. As Sanoff states, ‘volunteer citizen participation continues to be one of the key concepts in American Society’ (Sanoff, 2008).

Advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965; Grooms and Frimpong Boamah, 2018; Reardon and Raciti, 2019) was used in an attempt to give poorer communities a judicial presence where they lacked the means to affect architectural and planning developments in their environment. It was through this intervention into traditional planning practices that the more recognisable manifestations of collaborative planning and community architecture began to gain legitimacy and agency in both research and practice. Characterised by their rejection of representative/aggregative forms of democracy in the urban environment, and a strong trend toward deliberative/rationalist modes of decision making, we can think of these as part of the “consensus culture” of participation. Advocacy planning as a tradition can be thought of as in line with Fry’s “design technocracy”, as the power driving change is in the hands of a set of skilled and trained individuals. As detailed above, this set of skilled individuals - in contemporary design - are generally speaking trained in the institutions of the neoliberal political economy and with a set of internal and external class relations. If we are to address the gap in Fry’s call for rupture, participation as advocacy alone seems insufficient.

In Europe, co-design culture - whilst still born out of the social consciousness of the 1960s/70s - advanced along a separate evolutionary branch. As Sanoff notes:
In northern Europe participatory design grew out of work beginning in the early 1970s in Norway when computer professionals, union leaders and members of the Iron and Metalworkers Union strove to enable workers to have more influence on the introduction of computer systems in the workplace. (Sanoff, 2008 p.58)

In Scandinavia this socio-technical approach to design (Bjerknes et al., 1987; Bjögvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2012; Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard, 2014; Bodker, 1996; Gustavsen, 1987) arose from the values of social democracy in post-war Europe and during Keynesian political economy. As might seem intuitive, this tradition places an emphasis on power relations, whilst still making moves away from representative/aggregative democratic systems of governance. Here participant power is derived from collectivisation (in these instances in the form of trade unions) and decisions are made through processes of agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 1999) so can be thought of as part of the “dissensus culture” of participation. The dissemination of the creative potential of agonism over time (Latour, 2005) moved the socio-technical designers in Scandinavia out of the industrial world and into the urban environment, where the focus of dissensus was moved away from process and toward design artefacts and the disruptive aesthetics of design activism (Markussen, 2013). Scandinavian participatory design is perhaps the most notable gap in the work of Julier and Seitz. Far from erasing structures of social and political power, Scandinavian participatory design is consciously concerned with centralising it in co-design practise. Having framed both consensus and dissensus culture in Sanoff’s work, this review will now explore both cultures in more detail, asking how each can redress the exploitative social power relations underlying the neoliberal political economy. Below the two cultures of co-design (consensus and dissensus) are explored in more detail.

2.3.1 Consensus Culture in co-design practise

In the UK, participation in design processes were cemented in legislation early on in their inception, with the 1968 ‘Town and Country Planning Act’ being an early example of state-mandated public involvement in the planning process. From then to the ‘Localism Act’ of the coalition government of the last decade, co-design in the UK has existed in legislative terms, despite - and perhaps because of - the advance of the neoliberal political economy. The continued presence of co-design initiatives in the UK has been attributed by some to their general adherence to modes of consensus building participation propagated by the disciplines of community architecture and collaborative planning. Community architects Knevitt and Wates explained this proliferation of participatory initiatives by aligning them with the emerging neoliberal political consensus in the 1980s and ‘90s.

‘[While] community architecture demands a radical change in the relationships between those involved in development, it transcends traditional Left/Right politics…In this respect, community architecture is part of a much broader pattern of change – often referred to as the Third Way’ (Knevitt and Wates, 1987 p.21,22)

The ‘Third Way’ referred to in this passage entails the philosophical abandonment of adversarial left/right politics, in favour of a synthesis of the neoliberal application of market principles to all sectors of society and social democratic fiscal policies of “tax and spend” (Giddens, 1999; Hale, Leggett and Martell, 2018; Arndt, 2013). The belief here is that
processes of ‘radical change’ were undertaken whilst avoiding what might be the expected power struggles and resistance through methods of consensus building. In these kinds of initiatives in community architecture participants meet as ‘users’ or ‘stakeholders’ or sometimes as ‘clients’ – i.e. as individuals, with common interests or concerns – thus removing preconceived attachments to collective identities of class/gender/race etc. that so often are the harbingers of conflict. From this starting point, it is argued, progressive and effective consensus can be reached between participants. It is of note that Knevitt and Wates’ community architecture and the third way aligns with Smith’s work on gentrification by corporate/governmental partnerships. If the aim of this review is to seek out methods of co-design which can confront the neoliberal political economy, then this third way approach must be called into question.

In more recent examples of co-design practice, the effect of consensus building has been called into question. In the article ‘Reconnecting People and Planning’ Nick Gallent (2013) scrutinises the impact that community groups were able to achieve under planning policy in the UK prior to the enactment of the ‘Localism Act’. By analysing the engagement between parish councils and local planning authorities in South-East England, he posits that we can glean clear indications of how future collaborative planning might function. Following a series of interviews and focus groups with stakeholders, the research found ‘a great deal of frustration’ with community engagement processes. It revealed ‘[no] significant appetite for extended community responsibility’, in fact communities ‘appeared overwhelmed’ by current levels of engagement with Gallent attributing the apparent lack of enthusiasm to being ‘underwhelmed by the quality and authenticity’ of participation. Here Gallent points to the comparative enthusiasm for these projects amongst policy makers, noting:

‘It is the possibility of bringing community groups into a ‘partnership’ with external actors and building consensus around policy and development decisions that has been lauded by the UK coalition government as a means of reducing local conflict’ (Gallent, 2013 p.378)

Consensus around policy and development and a reduction in local conflict, it could be argued, are aspects of what Sanoff terms the ‘dark side’ of consensus (2008). Sanoff places participation in design within consensus culture, believing that ‘[the] key to making community design work effectively is a range of techniques for enabling professionals and citizens to creatively collaborate, where voting is replaced by consensus decision making’. However here he offers some qualification of the terminology.

In the political world, consensus usually means that a significant majority of people support a particular proposal. In small group situations consensus is usually thought of as unanimity in agreement. There is a dark side of consensus in that it protects the system from change and results in homogeneity. (Sanoff, 2008 p.65)

This latent capacity of consensus culture to reproduce systems of homogeneity is delineated in the ‘Ladder of Citizen Participation’ (Arnstein, 1969) in which the potential for participation to be used as a tool for manipulating citizens in to a de-facto ‘non-participation’ can be utilised to gain consent and ‘enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants’ of their opposition’. This ‘dark side’ of consensus and its capacity to be utilised as an exclusionary tool has been acknowledged even by some proponents of consensus building.
In ‘Reinventing Public Participation’ Richardson and Connelly (2005) address the relative limits of consensus in the practices of collaborative planning. They highlight the normative processes of consensus building and their practical implications, asserting that ideals of consensus – i.e. unanimity in agreement - are untenable and involve pragmatic exclusionary decisions. Before the justification of what they term “pragmatic consensus”, Richardson and Connelly first outline three crucial dimensions of an ideal consensus. These are:

‘That ‘decisions are reached through mutual consent rather than voting, with each participant given the power of veto’.

That ‘everyone with an interest and who is prepared to cooperate participates in the process’.

That ‘a deliberative process is constructed based on principles of fairness, openness and trust’’ (Richardson and Connelly, 2005, p. 88)

However, they concede that as the process unfolds in practice the ideal consensus is compromised along the lines of the ‘exclusion of people’, ‘exclusion of issues’, ‘exclusion of outcomes’ rationalised as the pursuit of a ‘pragmatic consensus’ having accepted that an ideal consensus is an unattainable goal. Here Richardson and Connelly outline what pragmatic consensus might look like in practice.

Pragmatic consensus building [sic] usually requires a limited selection of stakeholders to be either identified or invited to participate, and so, conversely, a choice of who to exclude. This raises three interrelated issues – the ‘location’ of consensus, the choice of potentially affected people, and the relationships between those ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the process. (Richardson and Connelly, 2005, p. 91)

The ‘location’ of this consensus manifests in varying forms including:

- ‘Closed Partnership’ – in which the consensus includes different categories of agents and representatives from an exclusive subset of stakeholders.
- ‘Agency-based’ – where following stakeholder consultations a small group of agents or a local authority develop consensus.
- ‘Representative group-based’ – where different representative groups build “genuine consensus” without the involvement of policy makers (often ineffectual according to Richardson and Connelly).
- ‘Citizen-based’ – as above but open to participation from individual citizens.

According to Richardson and Connelly, each of these typologies entail qualitatively different processes each with separate rationales of exclusion. In effect these processes of exclusion often nullify participation leading to ‘consultation fatigue’ where the perceived benefits of participation are not deemed worthwhile by participants, thus leading to self-exclusion of stake holding individuals. Richardson and Connelly posit then that the difficulty in consensus building lies in improving the ‘legitimacy’ of the consensus, they suggest, a balance of ‘restricted consensus building’ and ‘consultation to involve a wider population’. In
consensus building processes, participants meet not as antagonists with separate and unchanging concerns but as ‘stakeholders’ with a common interest in an object of design, the rationale being that agreement can be reached through the commonalities inherent in a shared environment. Richardson and Connelly thus maintain that participation’s potential as a tool for achieving social justice relies on judgment of individuals in the deployment of the exclusionary process. But it is here that there is a theoretical blind spot. Beneath the reasoned criticism of consensus building in practice, there sits the unaddressed presence of social power relations. Absent from Richardson and Connelly’s observation is the discussion of who decides where the location of consensus should lie and by extension, who possesses the authority to exclude stakeholders in pursuit of a pragmatic consensus. Additionally, if people are to meet as ‘stakeholders’ then there is a semantic clarification necessary in what qualifies as a ‘stake’; raising further questions concerning affected parties with “no stake” or disparities where one participant may have a greater “stake” than another, creating the potential for one individual to enter the process with superior leverage.

In the dissensus culture of co-design however, the Scandinavian participatory designers evade antagonism through the harnessing of social power relations. In addressing the antagonism of social power relations head on, it perhaps offers a potential to improve the quality of co-design processes, for which Gallent and Richardson and Connelly had found participants wanting.

2.3.2 Dissensus culture in co-design
Where an unacknowledged manifestation of social power in participatory processes is found, we should not assume conspiracy, or the existence of ‘agents’ representing the ‘dark side’ of consensus, orchestrating the social reproduction of hegemonic norms. Rather social power is manifest in all our associations, as through our systems of value and meaning we create uneven playing fields in which participation takes place. Collaborative planner and proponent of consensus culture Patsy Healey (1997) summarises that ‘sometimes this power to dominate is obvious, visible power at the first level...[but] it may also be invisible, deeply ingrained in our social practices and modes of thought’ (p. 112). From this standpoint, we enter into participation with the weight of predetermined social norms and references affecting our interactions with other stakeholders in the process.

Here, Scandinavian participatory design offers thought-provoking insights into practices of participation, namely in its contentious belief that ‘controversy’ and not ‘consensus’ are to be ‘expected around an emerging object of design’ (Bjögvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2012). The tradition’s elevation of dispute around objects of contention has its basis in agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 1999), a theoretical opposition to the politics of rational deliberative democracy as delineated by the collaborative planners and community architects. Recognising the necessary processes of exclusion outlined by Richardson and Connelly, Chantal Mouffe constructs her opposition to rationalist consensus in the following terms:

‘[The] question, pace the rationalists, is not how to arrive at a consensus without exclusion, since this would imply the eradication of the political. Politics aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is always concerned with the creation of an “us” by the determination of a “them”. The novelty of democratic politics is not the overcoming of this us/them opposition – which is an impossibility – but the different way in
which it is established. The crucial issue is to establish this us/them discrimination in a way that is compatible with pluralist democracy.

(Mouffe, 1999 p. 10,11)

Here antagonism between agents in a democratic process is deterred through the construction of ‘agonism’, i.e. participants as ‘adversaries’. Mouffe elaborates that an ‘adversary’ can be thought of as a ‘friendly’ or ‘legitimate’ enemy. ‘Friends’ as they share a ‘common symbolic space’, ‘enemies’ because ‘they want to organize this common symbolic space in a different way’ (Mouffe, 2000). But to organise these oppositions in pursuit of democratic designs, agonistic pluralism’s central point of diversion with rationalist modes of consensus building is the belief that there exist certain ineradicable disagreements that cannot be resolved through rational deliberation. The aim then, in the context of participatory design is to empower a multiplicity of voices around objects of design (Bjögvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2012).

In exploring the conflicts and resources in systems development through collective resource projects, Bodker detects the relations of power at play in her work ‘Creating Conditions for Participation’ (1996). The project actors in this research comprised several different groups within different organisations (including management, workforce etc.) with a focus on resource acquisition for the whole organisation as well as the groups within it. In observing the processes of participation Bodker perceived that:

The issues of power and resources are in many cases never considered; users are selected to participate without support from peers. They cannot set up their own investigation, and often they cannot even call a meeting with fellow workers during working hours. In the end management has the power to decide what to do, in which cases the enrolled users are trapped...They work in an organization that has and enforces certain structures and (power) relations. (Bodker, 1996 p. 217)

Unlike early projects in Scandinavian participatory design undertaken under the Fordist mode of production in which workers had considerable leverage through collectivisation in trade unions, in the mid-90’s under the consolidation of the neoliberal political economic consensus Bodker was confronted with ‘strongly individualised’ difficulties and opportunities and much more atomised work places. Advocating new collectives between groups and the utilisation of conflicts inherent in the organisation, Bodker asserted that room could be made for groups and individuals to act and the quality of the process could be improved. The approach developed strategies for workers to impact the design and application of computers in the workplace, accepting that ‘the design process as such creates new conflicts, because it opens up new possibilities and “threatens” existing structures and procedures’. The chief democratic benefit of empowering groups to act in the eyes of the Scandinavian participatory designers, is that it removes the reliance on practice, tactics, and formal power structures, placing the onus on ‘the force of the better argument’ (Gustavsen, 1987).

Bodker’s research demonstrates an example of a preoccupation in socio-technical design with participation in the process of design, as well as the object of design. Gustavsen (1987) describes this fixation as a shift in democratic emphasis from one of structure, to one of generation. Through methods of knowledge co-creation with factory workers and unions in Norway, Gustavsen details new systems of collaboration and participation which enabled
‘shared influence’ between researchers and participants, in Gustavsen’s terms ‘with regard not only to the settlement of practical issues but also to the broader meaning and aims of the changes’. In contrast to Richardson and Connelly’s call for individuals to implement structures of collaboration intuitively, what Gustavsen advocates is for participants to generate and design their own processes. Here he delineates two crucial rationales underlying this shift toward generation of the design processes by participants.

First, people become much more committed to their own solutions than to those of others. Second, their own solutions tend to include elements that may seem small or unimportant to an outside observer but, in fact, make a significant difference to those involved. (Gustavsen, 1987 p. 89)

The effect of increased commitment in participants noted here, conceivably offers one route to refining processes of participation and altering their quality in ways that tackle the lack of participant enthusiasm, self-exclusion, and consultation fatigue noted by the collaborative planners. The critical variance between the cultures is that instead of attempting to apply methods and structures to design processes, Gustavsen places emphasis on building participant groups’ ‘generative capacity’, i.e. their capability to create design solutions. This he describes as a kind of ‘metalearning’ (though other Scandinavian designers use the term ‘design-after-design’ (Bjögvinnsson et al., 2012)) in which each time people or social groups/systems learn something ‘of a concrete nature’ they in turn ‘learn to learn’ (Gustavsen, 1987) thus empowering them to learn in new situations and environments.

The building of social groups’ and systems’ capacity through processes of metalearning, has led Scandinavian designers Bjögvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren to call for a revival of ‘Things’ taken in the archaic Germanic sense (Ding) meaning a meeting or an issue of concern (Latour, 2005). The paper ‘Design Things and Design Thinking’ (Bjögvinnsson et al., 2012) builds the case for the creation of ‘design Things’, which are defined as socio-material assemblies that engage participants as designers in the design process. These ‘design Things’ are viewed entirely through the lens of agonistic pluralism in that their goal is to ‘empower a multiplicity of voices in the struggle for hegemony’ and to find ‘constructive controversies’ within social contexts. These controversies take the form of what in design activism is referred to as ‘acts of communication’ (Markussen, 2013) characterised as an aesthetic act that introduces heterogeneous subjects into the social field of perception in an effort to disrupt socio-cultural modes of inhabiting the everyday world (in this instance taking the form of video games, public transport etc.). However, as with Gustavsen’s call for practices of metalearning, Bjögvinnson et al. (2012) suggest that a move can be made from creating a ‘design project environment’ to creating a ‘design infrastructure’. To this effect, action research in ‘design living labs’ was undertaken with immigrant communities in Malmo, with the emphasis being placed on processes of ‘active cooperation’ between researchers and ‘the researched’.

An active cooperation can be thought of as an antidote to the situation described by Bodker (1996) in which “top down” democratic structures result in participants being unable to ‘set up their own investigations’ or ‘call meetings’. Bjögvinnson et al present ‘design infrastructuring’ as a solution to this inequitable power relation in the following;

Our goal [was] to ensure that (1) these processes set precedents in ways that allow those participating to set up their own infrastructuring and
The dynamic shift described here is perhaps a logical progression for the Scandinavian participatory designers. The paper concludes that a move is needed from the role of a designer being to create an environment in which a project can take place – as in early participatory design – to a broader role of supporting a groups capacity for design in the future or ‘infrastructuring design Things’. This can be thought of as a common-sense evolution in the context of co-design as it promotes the further devolution of power to participants and as a result engenders the empowerment of new voices in design.

Whilst participatory design, as a mode of design practise within the dissensus culture, offers us a set of design practices which do not erase structures of social and political power – addressing the criticisms of Julier and Seitz – it is nonetheless a method of participation in which the role of the designer’s expertise is dominant. This still leaves the ethical question posed of Fry’s “design technocracy” open, in that those initiating and facilitating participation are a skilled set of trained designers. This begs the question as to whether, whilst foregrounding social power, participatory design can redress power imbalances. As the forms of working-class power participatory design was initially organised around have eroded and participatory design has moved into the urban environment, what forms of power can it now be organised around. This question is central to this thesis, as if we accept designers as De Carlo’s operative appendages to the neoliberal political economy and we accept that the neoliberal foregrounding of the extraction of exchange value via the design of urban environments - in particular in housing – creates gentrification, then if we are to address the issue of gentrification and the resultant housing crisis, we must ask how the political settlement of social relations can be reconfigured. It is at this level that what we call “community-led design” practices begin to emerge, which in Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation signify a move from ‘tokenism’ to degrees of ‘citizen power’.

2.3.3 Community-led design

Community-led design (CLD) - as an emergent term - has no clearly defined set of characteristics in the literature, encompassing many of the co-design aspects inherent in the practices of collaborative planning, community architecture and Scandinavian participatory design. This thesis aims to take steps towards CLD as a distinct set of practises where the emphasis is placed in the first instance on projects initiated and steered by community organisations as a mode of producing housing outside of the social relations of the neoliberal political economy. This thesis is attracted to CLD as a spectrum of co-design practises -semantically at least - concerned with power. Much of the language around co-design practise implies a power dynamic - i.e. collaborative/participatory - in which expertise - and a particular form of institutionalised expertise in design – is placed in the leadership role. In light of design’s relation to neoliberal political economy outlined above, if there is to be a co-design practice capable of answering Fry’s call for confrontation with social issues political and foundational sources then it must in some sense alter the social relations underpinning design. This means our focus is on CLD sitting in the upper typologies of Arnstein’s ladder; those of ‘partnership’, ‘delegated power’ and ‘citizen control’ (Arnstein, 1969). CLD in the UK is used to refer to everything from protest groups and self-help communities to collaborations between local authorities and NGOs. In this section, the
review will explore the literature around CLD in an attempt to refine aspects of its practice present in the academic discourse.

Examples of co-design practice attributed to CLD in the UK sit abreast both the cultures of participation as outlined above. The project ‘Valuing Community-Led Design’ (Alexiou, Zamenopoulos and Alevizou, 2013), through creative workshops with academic and non-academic participants, aimed at co-creating a conclusive definition of the term as detailed below.

[A] process through which local people are engaged in, and become responsible for, developing their environment including buildings, open spaces, services, and neighbourhoods. (Alexiou, Zamenopoulos and Alevizou, 2013 p. 5)

Within this delineation of CLD it is suggested that there exist numerous roles for communities in the design process. These can be as a ‘user group’ in user-centred design practices, as a ‘client/mediator’ typical in neighbourhood planning initiatives, or as co-creators which is suggested may be the ideal. Viewed from within this definition, CLD in the UK sits comfortably within the ethos of consensus culture, not differing wildly from definitions proffered by deliberative rationalists and containing within it aspects of the liberalisation of services and space prevalent in government policy towards participation (i.e. communities becoming responsible for the environment as in the ‘Localism Act’, and through collective responsibility less reliant on public services (Parsfield, 2015)). This review would challenge the notion that the community’s role in the ideal CLD practice would be as co-creator. Whilst this role could comfortably be classed in Arnstein’s ladder as a form of leadership, it seems logical that community control or community as hegemon must be taken as our ideal. However, in employing techniques involving hands-on design activities with creative outputs, the methodological emphasis of the research was placed on differing disciplines and standpoints co-creating in workshop discussion. Here the ‘meaning’ and ‘scope’ of CLD as a theoretical term was ‘explored and challenged from multiple perspectives’. The instances of ‘multiple perspectives’ in the CLD landscape begins to show some fragments of the processes of agonistic pluralism, which situates CLD in the UK in a more complex field of theory and practice than at first glance. The presence of dissensus culture in CLD is confirmed in the paper’s admission that:

All participatory processes are intrinsically fraught with conflict, and these conflicts should be recognised and acknowledged, for the challenges but also the creativity they bring. (Alexiou, Zamenopoulos and Alevizou, 2013 p. 6)

Here we arrive back at the Scandinavian practice. With conflict and its creative potential in a design sense foregrounded we move a step closer to developing new sets of social relations in design. There is a conscious effort in this research to move away from ‘one-dimensional process[es] of consultation’ and ‘helping involve people in decision making throughout the design process’ to ‘ensure more democratic outcomes’ (Alexiou, Zamenopoulos and Alevizou, 2013). We can take the above striving for decision making power for communities and the democratisation of designing environments as a central pillar of any distinct CLD process. Where other research uses the terminology of community leadership to describe ‘playful activities...in which local governments can connect with non-engaged members of
the community’ (Lam, 2013), this review asserts a distinction between engagement and leadership.

Vera Hale (2017) invokes the capacity of community leadership to specifically develop more sustainable urban futures in her paper Good Places Through Community-Led Design in which she highlights some of the challenges for communities and designers wishing to develop CLD practice. What is of note for the purpose of this research is Hale’s identification that ‘as communities become more transient with fewer geographical boundaries, society’s impetus to act collectively has become weakened’. This insight draws a strong connection with the post-Fordist analysis of gentrification and the erosion of working-class institutions and power. Scandinavian participatory design for instance – as our closest design practice to altering social relations – was initially undertaken with trade unions, with clear forms of leverage and power. The participatory designers’ move into the urban experience creates a gap in terms of a working-class institution to engage. The closest Hale’s work comes to addressing this issue is a call for changes in behaviour of both communities and design practitioners with ‘community need[ing] to become a more active citizen willing to take control of their surroundings and events happening around them’ on the one hand and ‘practitioners need[ing] to choose to relinquish control over the final project and hand the decision-making process over to others’ on the other. This dichotomy presents an interesting dynamic for CLD in its current instantiation, on the one hand calling on professional designers to relinquish control whilst simultaneously maintaining that:

‘The role of the professionals is still central to the whole participation process because of their in-depth knowledge of bureaucracy, legislation, design and development... Part of the new role would be to guide the community through the design processes and help them understand each step of the way.’ (Hale, 2017 p. 162)

Whilst this above framing may still be some way from our ideal of community control, it presents an intriguing starting point for this thesis and the challenge of disentangling design from the social relations of our political economy. If we do not accept design – in particular in the urban environment - as doomed to embed neoliberal social relations into buildings and spaces, gentrifying whole neighbourhoods in the process then our focus must be on redressing power imbalances so that the working-class communities affected are better able to advance their interests in the design of their environments. The literature demonstrates a need to explicitly investigate this gap in the CLD discourse. Does CLD work to solve social issues like gentrification? Is CLD seen as related to politics and power? Do CLD projects meet Fry’s call for confrontation with these powers? In short, are there aspects of CLD practice that foreground the political in the agonistic sense that are absent from the literature?

2.4 Conclusions

This review delineated two cultural systems of value that underpin the co-design practices associated with the urban experience. Both consensus and dissensus practises in co-design offer insights into the challenges associated with the creation of equitable design outcomes in the pursuit of social justice. However, I posit that consensus culture’s evasion of the political contains within it the potential to reproduce/enable the hegemony of social power relations. By turning to the theory and practice of dissensus culture in contrast, through its
emphasis on creating forms of power more compatible with democratic processes, there is an opportunity to explore the capacity of community-leadership to tackle socio-spatial issues such as gentrification.

For CLD to meet its semantic implication of community leadership it must redress power imbalances fundamental to neoliberal political economy and that this aspect of CLD holds the potential to tackle social issues such as gentrification. It makes this assertion having presented the academic discourse around design’s relationship to the neoliberal political economy and engaged with criticism of design’s ability to tackle social issues at all. Where it challenges these assertions, it turns to the traditions of co-design and their discussions of the ethical and the political in design practise. Having delineated two cultures of participation in co-design – consensus/dissensus – it offers Scandinavian participatory design as an example of design practise which rather than erasing structures of political and social power foregrounds these structures in the endeavour for design solutions. But where participatory design has taken steps into the urban, this thesis aims to move the discourse away from participation and toward community-leadership in design as a practice which can work to reconfigure exploitative social relations underlying design processes by granting communities new decision-making powers and democratising design.

This research is set against a background of unexplored terrain for CLD, presenting an opportunity to understand more fully its processes in relation to the political and its ability to create empowering design solutions for communities and their material environment. Following the critical literature review the research questions of the thesis can be refined as follows:

How do community-led design initiatives approach and counterbalance gentrification?

To respond to this core question there are a number of sub-questions which need to be taken into account which are related to the theoretical and contextual dimensions of this study.

The sub-questions are the following:

- How do CLD’s understand gentrification?
- What are participants' understanding of the intersection between gentrification and CLD?
- Do CLD’s have a theory of social power? If so, what is it? (What power do communities have?)
- How does their theory of power inform their design practises and/or outputs?
- Can their design practises and/or outputs build power within communities?

In order to respond to the above question, the methodological focus of this research is centred on knowledge co-creation with participating groups. The methodology of this study is presented in more detail below.
3 Methods

3.1 Approaching the question: How can CLD approach and counterbalance gentrification?

This thesis began by discussing the housing crisis, pointing to a diverse set of socio-spatial issues associated with it, such as a crisis of affordability in the housing market and rising rates of housing need and indeed homelessness. This thesis has also proffered an explanation for the housing crisis. Rather than an accident of the whims of the free market, housing crises are created deliberately in order to absorb surplus capital and encourage “healthy” economic growth. The analysis of gentrification and the housing crisis in this thesis rests on the assertion that these socio-spatial issues emerge from an exploitative set of power relations which underlie the current hegemonic mode of designing housing. This thesis turns to CLD in order to investigate how these relations may be altered by different modes of practice. Social housing which lies outside this market driven dynamic could offer a useful avenue of investigation, however the design of social housing as a practice does not alter social relations. Therefore, it is necessary to look at practices that alter or indeed subvert established unequal power relations.

In participatory design broadly construed, the implication is that one actor or set of actors is a participant in another controlling actor’s or set of actors’ design project. In CLD however, the implication is that the social relations underlying the current mode of designing buildings and space have been in some sense subverted. Here the implication is that power is still imbalanced, but the imbalance is in favour of a community however defined. The question then is to what extent can CLD live up to this claim? Is there within CLD practice the capacity to alter the relations of power underlying the design of buildings and space which are a gentrifying force?

To explore these issues, this research adopts a constructivist paradigm, basing its assumptions about reality in the multiple perspectives of its participants (Mutepa, 2016; Yvonna and Egon, 2016). It seeks to generate knowledge through the interpretation of these participant perspectives. Specifically, insights are generated through knowledge co-production activities with participants (Frantzeskaki and Kabisch, 2016; Kelemen and Hamilton, 2019; Bell and Pahl, 2018) as well as interpretations made by the researcher. Co-production of knowledge with participants is a crucial dimension of this research as the – often untrained – practitioners of CLD are treated as experts of their own experience and can therefore contribute essentially in the construction of knowledge around matters that are important to them. Co-production, increasingly, is seen as a solution in terms of a research’s relevance and impact as it also provides participants with an opportunity to ‘learn and reflect from their experience’ (Durose et al., 2011).

3.2 Research design

This research utilised a multiple case study approach to answer its research questions. The case study approach allows the study of social phenomena using a range of tools for data collection (Yin, 2018). Case studies require at least two methods of data collection, which this research achieves through a combination of data collected from individual participants in semi-structured interviews and data collected from participants in a knowledge co-production workshop.
The investigation into the intersection between gentrification and CLD began in consultation with national CLD charity The Glass-House Community Led Design (Glass-House). The Glass-House were an ideal collaborator on the research as they work explicitly within the discipline of CLD and do so nationally, across the UK. This meant that their expertise and networks could provide access to a broad spectrum of CLD cases, in a range of contexts and cities. Introducing to them the research focus provided an opportunity to begin to identify a list of potential CLD cases to study. At later stages in the research, similar consultations were undertaken with the Architecture Centre in Bristol, arts collective Assemble, and ‘utopian regeneration agency’ Spacemakers. In each case the selection criteria – detailed below - were explored with experts, and a number of potential case initiatives were identified. Initially these cases included historic CLD cases (i.e. cases in which the CLD work had been completed), and ongoing cases (in which CLD was in the midst of being undertaken). Beginning with a broad set of potential cases, outreach was then conducted to find a suitable number of cases who were willing to participate.

After a lengthy outreach process in which a diverse range of CLD cases were approached, a sample of 6 cases was selected. These were as follows:

1. London Community and Neighbourhood Cooperative (LCNC), a housing cooperative who are in the process of designing an inter-generational apartment complex in West London.
2. The ‘We Can Make Homes’ project (WCMH), who designed a transferable accommodation module as an innovative solution to the problems of accessing housing in low density neighbourhoods in Bristol.
3. The Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust (GCLT), a project to rebuild derelict streets of terraces in Toxteth Liverpool.
4. The Wards Corner Community Coalition (WCC), a project to produce an alternative and rival design for the redevelopment of an indoor market in Tottenham, in North London.
5. The Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative (FCI), a community organisation constituted to impose demands on the redevelopment of a post-industrial brownfield site in Edinburgh, Scotland.
6. St Anne’s Redevelopment Trust (StART), a Community Land Trust project working to redevelop a former NHS site in Tottenham, North London.

3.3 Criteria for selecting participating groups

For the purpose of this research it was necessary to adopt a stringent definition of CLD in order to filter potential cases. It was decided that for a case to meet the criteria of being genuinely community-led, the project must be a self-initiated act. In practice this relates to grass-roots projects based in beliefs and desires or projects that are reactions to contextual changes in the socio-spatial landscape (Zamenopoulos et al., 2016). This understanding of CLD excludes responsive acts that are supported or initiated by state sponsored programs such as the Localism Act in the UK.

Secondly the cases needed to be undertaking design work within the context of development/redevelopment of housing and where gentrification processes can be identified. This paper shares a materialist understanding of gentrification with Smith’s rent...
gap theory as described above. However, in many of the cases interviewed the conception of gentrification also included post-Fordist understandings of gentrification as the transition from industrial/productive economies to service-based/consumption economies (Rousseau, 2012; Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007), as well as post-modern revaluations of urban space (Hackworth and Smith, 2001). This meant that in each case the site of design or area that the case is attached to, must in some sense be understood by participants as facing gentrification. In most cases this was very visible gentrification, with former industrial areas and/or small businesses being redeveloped as luxury flats, student housing, and chain stores. In other cases, gentrification was less obvious but was understood in a more abstract sense by participants as an issue affecting their community (often issues around affordability or conscious attempts to avoid gentrification as an area redevelops) and by extension affecting their work.

Finally, effort was also placed in including cases from different areas across the UK, and to incorporate initiatives of different sizes and governance structures (from the more formal to the more informal). Below a rationale for each cases selection is provided:

**London Community and Neighbourhood Cooperative (LCNC).** Participants coded – LCNC1 and LCNC2. London Community and Neighbourhood Cooperative (LCNC), is a housing cooperative initiated in reaction to unaffordable housing in London. A self-help group, they aim at building an alternative living/ecological community; they are a community of interest working collectively in the cultural context of home education (the otherwise club) and the information spaces they have online. Their work is currently uncontested, in part due to the fact that they have as yet no fixed site, but they intend to self-build an inter-generational apartment complex for their members (bridging producer/consumer gap). Expert consultations have served to facilitate design ideas. As an organisation, LCNC has an entirely open structure and is committed to ideal consensus decision making. They are politically motivated by innovation and sustainability (particularly in ecological terms) and are self-bounded in their work as a membership who contribute by generating, evaluating, and organising design ideas.

LCNC began within a social network of home educators who – conscious of their own aging and disabilities – endeavoured to set up a housing cooperative as a self-help initiative to support one another in the face of unaffordable housing and the potential for social isolation. As home educators, the group were keen to build a community space as a permanent home for the ‘Otherwise Club’ - a non-profit organisation providing education and training within the home education community in London – and a place where their community could live intergenerationally in order to build a network of support. Upon undertaking the task of establishing a housing cooperative, LCNC began to incorporate a broader spectrum of socio-spatial issues affecting London into their thinking, highlighting a lack of affordable housing and homelessness in the city.

LCNC were selected as a case study as they are fully self-initiated as a housing cooperative. As at the interview stage of the research they had no site set in stone, their understanding of gentrification exists in the abstract; being concerned with a general lack of affordable housing in the communities they live in as opposed to a clear and immediate gentrification of a specific location.

**We Can Make Homes (WCMH):** Participant coded – WCMH. Knowle West Media Centre’s (KWMC) ‘We Can Make Homes’ project was undertaken in response to KWMC members’
call to find solutions to the problem of accessing housing in the working-class area of Knowle in Bristol. To this end the project was undertaken by a partnership formed between the council, the city’s Universities, KWMC, and residents of Knowle West. The project aims at identifying a series of ‘micro-plots’ across the area, on which their Transferable Accommodation Module (TAM – a small straw bale living space) can be built, and as a result seeks to connect with willing landowners to roll the project out. Operating primarily out of two local cultural assets, the Knowle West Media Centre building and a local community centre (granting them access to physical co-working spaces) they have created a series of information spaces (website, open days, research papers) and a transferable resource in the form of the TAM. As ‘We Can Make Homes’ has been undertaken in conjunction with the City Council it is formally uncontested and since it has produced the TAM in conjunction and with the aim of housing local residents it can be straightforwardly established that they are a community of place. Bristol based architectural practise White Design fulfilled the role of expert, developing abstract design ideas into the TAM, though artists Bizewski and Goodman facilitated the interior design with local residents, with furniture being made at the KWMC’s ‘The Factory’.

‘We Can Make Homes’ is a representative project of local people working in close partnership with the City Council and Bristol University. Being politically motivated by sustainability of affordable local housing for residents, they work to build consensus around the ‘micro-plot’ solution to the local housing shortage. They are self-bounded in their work, with the collective facilitating and enabling the process of design with local residents who generate, evaluate, and organise the design ideas. WCMH were selected as a case study as the project was initiated by KWMC as a community organisation and their work is explicitly concerned with the housing crisis in an increasingly gentrified city.

Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust (GCLT): Participant coded – GCLT1 and GCLT2. Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust was initiated by community members in reaction to the sustained disinvestment of the Toxteth area of Liverpool. Their work aims to rebuild the community in the since derelict streets of Granby, by gaining control of local housing assets and developing plans to oppose disinvestment and demonstrate an alternative model of incremental redevelopment; an act of self-help to improve the living space and sense of well-being for the remaining residents who make up the Community Land Trust (CLT). The rebuilding of this community is tackled on multiple fronts: aside from the provision of housing, there exist the ‘Winter Garden’ a cultural space where artists can exhibit and community gardeners work; an initiative for information sharing online, in print, and through walking tours and the Granby Workshop, a resource space that offers training and produces design artefacts. The Granby 4 Streets project is formally uncontested, attracting thus far only minor online dissent and some conflict between community members and the local authority. This lack of contestation is helped in part by the low occupancy rate in the area and the fact that the CLT is made up of the only remaining residents connected as a community of place. The CLT engaged the expertise of architects from multi-disciplinary collective Assemble to translate their abstract design ideas into finished design outputs.

GCLT were selected as a case study as they are a self-initiated design project, steered by a grassroots community organisation (in this instance a CLT). The project is explicitly concerned with gentrification highlighting concerns around redevelopment and prefers to use the language of “rebuilding”. The group has anti-gentrification clauses in their constitution, meaning that occupants of houses designed by the CLT must demonstrate
some historic connection to the area and that houses designed by the CLT must be sold affordably (with affordability set against median local incomes).

Wards Corner Community Coalition (WCC): Participants coded – WCC1, WCC2, WCC3. WCC is a self-initiated collective of stakeholders connected to the Latin Village market in Tottenham London, an area undergoing rapid redevelopment under state sponsored schemes such as the Haringey Development Vehicle (Haringey Development Vehicle, 2016). The marketplace consists of a 6,500 square feet of retail space left derelict for 40 years on its first floor, with an indoor Latin market on its ground floor. A publicly owned building, the site was offered to a private developer by the council as an attempt to generate revenue following austerity cuts to the local budget. The proposed plan would redevelop the existing site into 196 residential units and 40,000 square feet of retail space with no social housing planned for the site and the Latin market replaced in the plan by chain stores such as Costa Coffee and Pizza Express.

WCC was selected as a case study as it is a fully self-initiated act of designing on the part of a grassroots community coalition. The site of design – the Latin market – is experiencing the disinvestment/reinvestment cycle where a rent gap is being exploited through redevelopment to realise the sites higher potential rent.

Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative (FCI): Participants coded – FCI1 and FCI2. FCI is a CLD initiative based in the area of Fountainbridge in Edinburgh. The location of interest to the initiative is a brownfield development on a former brewery site, a post-industrial area very near to the centre of Edinburgh. The 11-acre site had been cleared, having changed owners a number of times – including once being owned by Barclays until the 2008 financial crash. The impetus to form the Canalside initiative came when the council bought the land into public ownership to build a school in one corner of the site, with initial plans to build offices on the rest. FCI’s objection to the proposed development of additional office buildings was that it would extend Edinburgh’s business sector into the socially mixed and fragmented communities surrounding the canal, an area that was already experiencing recent high-end development including office space, student accommodation, and hotels. It was of particular concern in relation to the community of Tollcross, an area subject to disinvestment and austerity cuts to local services such as its community centre, leaving the canal unmaintained and resulting in a loss of community projects locally. In response, FCI campaigned to form a “sounding board”, a forum comprising 50% community members and 50% “power brokers” (council and developer). Using this forum FCI work to impose their design aims on the site.

Fountainbridge is an area experiencing the disinvestment/reinvestment cycle as delineated in the rent gap theory of gentrification. As the formerly industrial area makes the post-Fordist transition from production economy to consumption economy, the increased land value of such a central site begins to create a differential between the actualised site rent and its potential rent under a different use. As a publicly owned site, disinvestment in the form of fiscal austerity incentivises the local authority to become property developers, speculating on the exchange value of the site in the hope of ensuring a financial return. In practise this means a change in land use, replacing the industrial buildings with office space and hotels. This economic transition from production to consumption has in turn created a fragmentation of the surrounding communities formerly connected by the brewery. The already socially mixed communities – along lines of class and ethnicity – now have the
additional factor of being faced with a gentrification frontier as the ‘new business sector’ expands into the former industrial area.

FCI was selected as a case study as it is community-led in the sense that the design process – and indeed the characteristics of that process – was initiated and steered by FCI as a grassroots community organisation. Additionally, and as detailed above, the site of contestation is at risk of gentrification, evidenced by high end development of office spaces, student accommodation, and hotels in the surrounding area.

**St Ann’s Redevelopment Trust (StART):** Participants coded – StART1, StART2, StART3. StART is a self-initiated coalition of stakeholders associated with the St Ann’s Hospital; a site marked for housing redevelopment with the inclusion of only 14% affordable accommodation in the plans. The group of Haringey residents and workers initiated a community-led process for the housing development, highlighting “genuinely” affordable housing, health and wellbeing, and green spaces in their designs. The CLT was formed as a closed partnership between stakeholder organisations Haringey Needs St Ann’s Hospital and the Mary Ann Johnson Housing cooperative. As with WCC, StART is a Tottenham based organisation, in an area undergoing significant and heavily contested redevelopment under state sponsored schemes such as the Haringey Development Vehicle (Haringey Development Vehicle, 2016).

StART were selected as a case study as they are a self-initiated design project, steered by a grassroots community organisation. The area of Haringey is undergoing rapid redevelopment, under heavy contestation from the public in the area. StART were initiated in response to the plans to build housing at the site of design which they claim would be unaffordable for the community of Haringey.

3.4 Limitations in the selection of cases

The primary limitation associated with the selection of cases was the general availability of target cases to participate in the research. In the first instance this meant that there were two cases which were identified in consultations with the Glass-House who were not able to be contacted to take part in the research. The plan in the consultation stages was to interview participants from cases in which the final designs had been completed, in order to collect data relating to participants perspectives on their theory and practise following a project’s completion. In the end neither case was able to be contacted, representing a gap left by the final selected cases which were all undertaking ongoing design work. With regard to the second point, the availability of cases meant that not all cases were able to participate in both stages of the research. WCMH were unable to attend the workshop so StART were brought in to bolster the number of participants at the workshop stage into a suitable focus group. StART had not taken part in the interview stage of the research meaning that the two data sets could not be pooled entirely. Instead both sets of data were treated separately, with the workshop generating themes, language, and concepts around the intersection between gentrification and CLD and the interviews providing case specific data in which common aspects of CLD data could be identified.

3.5 Methods: a research in two stages

As mentioned, the research conducted two types of activities: a series of semi-structured participant interviews and a cultural animation workshop. Narrative data collected from
participants who are practitioners of CLD represents the most detailed and complete set of data that can be collected within the timeframe of the research. But if this data set is to reveal aspects of CLD which can tackle gentrification then insights must be in some sense generalisable. Whilst again - given the timeframe and the nature of qualitative data – it would not be possible to establish a data sample of a size sufficient to make assertions that are generalisable to all CLD initiatives, look across multiple cases of CLD, begins to allow common aspects of CLD theory and practise to emerge.

With this in mind, the research was designed in two stages. First participating cases would take part in semi-structured interviews in order to build an understanding of specific details in each case, including the context in which their work is undertaken, the end goals of their CLD projects, as well as any steps they have taken on the way to achieving these goals. In the second stage of the research a focus group made up of all participating cases would be invited to a workshop in which the intersections between gentrification and CLD would be explored collaboratively. Interviews needed to be only semi-structured as the aim was to elicit participant perspectives of the research questions. Therefore, the interviews needed to be descriptive and exploratory, with participants describing aspects of their work including the context in which their work is undertaken, the theory underlying it, and any actions they had taken so far. In order to collect data of this kind, closed question formats such as questionnaires would be insufficiently descriptive of aspects of CLD, and even a structured interview would not give sufficient flexibility for the researcher to explore with participants any unexpected themes or concepts arising.

The workshop stage is rationalised by the fact that this research takes participants to be experts in the particular details of their own work and their experiential knowledge of how it intersects with socio-spatial issues like gentrification. For this reason, it was deemed necessary to in part produce data, process it, and elicit knowledge collaboratively with participants at a workshop. This research employs the cultural animation method (CA) to elicit this knowledge. CA is a method of knowledge co-production, where the aim is to bring participants’ perceptions about their lives, their work, or their environment out into the open to be interrogated and discussed collaboratively (Kelemen, Surman and Dikomitis, 2018; Levinson, 2020; Kelemen and Hamilton, 2015; Kelemen and Hamilton, 2019; Lam et al., 2018). This is achieved by mediating discussion through art-based activities such as the creation of artefacts, creative writing exercises, or drama games in an attempt to “animate” narrative data which may have become fixed, inviting participants to engage with questions about their lives and work from reinvigorated perspectives. In the metaphorical space that this animation has created it is possible for new insights and lines of enquiry to be made by participants, facilitators, and researchers collaboratively. Asking participants to think about abstract concepts in metaphorical spaces can be informative as individuals tend to think about abstract ideas in the same way as when they engage in discourse about them (Casasanto and Bottini, 2014). This is revealing of the ways our interactions with the material and societal environment structure our mental existences.

This stage of the research acts as a focus group of CLD practitioners gathered to examine the phenomenon of gentrification as it intersects with their work. This allows for multiple perspectives to be gathered relating to the same problem (Colucci, 2016; Stewart and Shamsadasani, 2014). As opposed to a more traditional focus group, the CA method is used in an attempt to elicit responses by asking participants to occupy metaphorical spaces which are not only revealing to the researcher but to the participants themselves. Where participants may give “rehearsed” responses to research questions when asked directly –
often being accustomed to explaining their work to funders, policy makers, at conferences etc. – art based methods may be revealing of participants’ basic assumptions about their work, which only lengthy participant observation or ethnographic studies can sufficiently dip into.

In combination, semi-structured interviews across multiple cases and a focus group of CLD practitioners exploring the phenomenon of gentrification using the CA method, provides a detailed and descriptive set of data illuminating a spectrum of CLD practises and the basic assumptions of participants about how this intersects with gentrification. In the following sections I will provide specific detail of the design of each research stage.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

At the interview stage, members from each initiative’s steering group were invited to take part in a face-to-face interview. The interview involved the completion of a resource which consisted of five components (see Figure 2), with the aim of collecting data relating to different aspects of a CLD project. In this section a rationalisation for each component is provided:

**Where you were:** This section of the interview gathers data relating to the socio-spatial context in which the CLD project is undertaken. This includes participants’ perceptions of any socio-spatial issues that were problematic at the time of the project’s initiation, as well as how they perceive the relevant social relations to be configured.

**Where you hope to be:** Here is where data relating to participants’ theories about their work (social power, social change, CLD) are gathered. By outlining an envisaged future that they hope to achieve through their work, participants reveal potential re-configurations of the socio-spatial landscape as well as specific outcomes of development.

**The players:** In this section key stakeholders are identified. This includes discussing the relationship of these stakeholders to the development site and how they relate to one another.

**The project:** Here the actions taken as part of the project are recorded. This in part includes the creation of a timeline of events or a map of a journey, but also how decisions were made/achieved and what has been created towards the project’s completion.

**The transitional qualities:** Finally, the attributes of the project are discussed in relation to how the work of the CLD initiative will help make the movement from where participants were, to where they hope to be. These may be material properties of the final outputs of the project, though they may also be characterised by re-configured relationships or symbolic properties.
In short, this resource seeks to understand how context informs participants’ theory - a theory which is the basis of an alternative model of planning - and in turn how this theory informs their action. The fact that these activities are community-led, means that by their very nature these insights are based in the pragmatic and experiential knowledge of community members affected by developmental issues such as gentrification. These experiential perspectives contain within them potential solutions to developmental crises, based in a lived experience of the phenomenon.

*Mathematically, the resource is completed by participant with the researcher.*
This set of interviews uses the perspectives of CLD practitioners to outline aspects of CLD practice which have the potential to build communities’ capacity to tackle gentrification. The interview stage was important in reaching the workshop stage of the research as it allowed the researcher to gather detailed data sets in a kind of secondary filtering process which enabled confirmation of the selection criteria in each case as well as a process of selecting cases invited to join the focus group at workshop stage.

3.5.2 Advantages and limitations of semi-structured interviews
In each participating case, interviews were conducted at the location/neighbourhood of their CLD project and at a time that was convenient to participants. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. After initial introductions, interviews began formally with participant and researcher completing the resource together. At times this meant the researcher asked questions and provocations and the participants completed the resource themselves but at other times the researcher acted as scribe, writing down participants’ contributions with the participants correcting and moving post-its to ensure the highest level of accuracy.

A total of 6 CLD initiatives took part in the interview stage of the research with one initiative (‘New, New England House’ in Brighton) being excluded from the final thesis as it was the only case which did not work in some sense around housing. One participant from each case volunteered to take part, usually a senior member of the CLD project (whether formally or informally so) with a good level of expertise and understanding having been involved in the project from its early stages. For GCLT however two participants were interviewed separately. This is due to the fact that an Assemble architect (coded GCLT2) was interviewed first and recommended an interview with a community member. Both data sets were pooled to provide as rich an understanding of the case as possible. This means that we are collecting a particular kind of data from participants, usually a considered understanding of their work which has been developed over time and through collaboration with other members of the project. It is possible then that there are members of each case who would disagree with the understanding presented at the interview stage (in fact some of these disagreements did emerge within organisations at the workshop).

The interviews are best described as semi-structured. All interviews used the same resource in Figure 2 to collect a similar set of data each time. However, conversation within each interview would at times follow emergent lines of inquiry as a result of the open-ended and discursive nature of the questions. Interviews typically lasted about two hours, with audio recordings being used, alongside the physically completed resource and photographs of the resource (on account of its moveable components such as post-its) for analysis and interpretation by the researcher at a later date.

3.5.3 Cultural animation workshop
Cultural animation (CA) was selected as a method of knowledge co-production owing in part to the researchers experience in facilitating workshops with the Community Animation and Social Innovation Centre (CASIC) at Keele University and with New Vic Borderlines who have developed this methodology to engage with communities and co-produce knowledge (Lam et al., 2018; Kelemen, Surman and Dikomitis, 2018). As the organisations representing the foremost expertise in this method, both CASIC and New Vic Borderlines were consulted during both the planning and the analysis stages of the research, with practitioners of the method from New Vic Borderlines facilitating the workshop.
If data gathered at the interview stage has helped to illuminate aspects of CLD theory and practice which hold the potential to tackle socio-spatial issues like gentrification, it is necessary then to develop an understanding of participants’ perspectives of the problem itself. To investigate these lines of enquiry, participants took part in a cultural animation (CA) workshop. The use of narrative to gain a deeper understanding of participant perspectives is not uncommon in organisational research, including using creative writing to explore potentially dangerous or taboo dilemmas (Feldman, 2004; Gabriel and Connell, 2010). In CLD research these narratives are important to understand, as notions of community and leadership can be difficult to pin down. This research shares an understanding of community with Benedict Anderson (2006), who claims that all communities are “imagined” and should not be analysed in terms of falseness or realness but ‘in the style in which they are imagined’. Communities exist as sociological groupings which in their most fundamental terms are either self-selecting or arranged around structures. In CLD, communities must first constitute themselves into an organisation capable of designing. These can be cooperatives, residents’ associations, coalitions etc. As part of the process of organising, the community is “imagined” backwards in time, creating a narrative identity which can build a unified sense of community within their organisation. In this sense, it is the stories that people tell themselves about the work that they do that is the unit of analysis.

As a form of knowledge co-production, the data created in these workshops is in part processed collaboratively with participants - allowing them an opportunity to analyse and interpret insights generated about themselves and others - but also independently by the researcher relating the insights and/or enquiries generated in the workshop to prior knowledge of the literature and of participants’ work. All of the activities in the workshop were designed by the researcher utilising techniques common to the CA method and were undertaken following three detailed briefing sessions with facilitators. The aim of these sessions was to ensure that facilitators had a comprehensive understanding of how the activity was to be deployed, what data the team were hoping to collect, and as a result what provocations were permissible/necessary.

In this research the aim of the CA workshop was along two lines of inquiry. First it was necessary to understand participants’ basic assumptions about gentrification and its intersections with CLD. This meant understanding individual participants’ assumptions, but also how they perceive gentrification as an organisation, and in turn whether or not these assumptions were applicable to the experiences of the other individuals and organisations in the room. Second, the workshop aimed to gather participants’ assumptions about what the solution to these problems might look like. This line of enquiry covered both how they perceived the solutions to the problem of gentrification, as well as how the power relations between stakeholders and their relations to the sites of design could be structured differently. These basic assumptions about gentrification and the power relations underlying it form elements of each organisation’s approach to CLD. In describing their views about these phenomena, participants outline the theory underlying their design practice offering an opportunity for design researchers to understand what motivates their desire for community intervention.

The CA workshop data in this sense creates a baseline understanding of gentrification, its intersections with CLD, and broad aspects of models of future development by generating a set of generalisable assumptions across participants as CLD practitioners. Gentrification is defined by the researcher and in the literature as the crucial dimension that explains the
socio-spatial issues associated with the housing crisis. By generating data around participants’ understanding of gentrification, we allow them to define the problem based on their own basic assumptions. In essence we generate data around participants’ basic assumptions about their own practice. In the workshop we then use participant assumptions about gentrification and CLD to envisage alternative modes of designing buildings and spaces. In turn all this set of assumptions can be used as a lens through which to go back and analyse data from the interview stage. For this reason, although the interviews came chronologically before the workshop, they are presented in the thesis last. This presentation is to demonstrate the order in which data analysis was undertaken, rather than the order in which data was collected (i.e. themes distilled from workshop data are used as lenses through which to analyse interview data).

3.5.4 Advantages and Limitations of the cultural animation method

This research is aiming to make a contribution to the CA literature by hypothesising that CA is capable of collecting data which is revealing of participants’ basic assumptions about their work. In this sense the use of the CA method here is experimental but bolstered with data collected using more traditional interview methods. Despite the experimental nature of the application of CA in this instance, it still bears some advantageous qualities.

One of the key advantages of the CA method is that it collects a large amount of data in a relatively short time frame (in this instance one day). This includes: narrative data in group discussion; performative data in the groups interactions and undertaking of the CA tasks; the artefacts themselves which are produced in the workshop; the presentation of these artefacts by participants (representing consensus of language and themes between participants); the collaborative processing and interpretation of these artefacts by participants and researcher; and the researcher’s own observations of participants in situ. For the purposes of this research where an in-depth understanding of participant perspectives of the intersection between gentrification and CLD is required, the collection of such a large amount of data in such a short space of time is a significant advantage of the method.

Of course, the CA method carries with it a number of limitations. As a focus group, the insights gleaned at the workshop represent a consensus developed between participants as to an agreed set of themes and language. These themes and language can be used as a lens through which to analyse and interpret data gathered at the interview stage of the research. However, this agreed set of themes and language is by no means generalisable. The sample of participants who take part in the workshop is too small to make assertions about CLD practise in general. Any findings to come out of the workshop then must be treated as starting points for future research. This is in addition to the nature of the findings being highly interpretive. This limitation is in part overcome by the fact that some of the interpretation of the data is undertaken collaboratively with participants. This validates the interpretation of the data by allowing the participants to offer explanations of their own and one another’s contributions.

3.5.5 Data collection: tools and materials

In the CA workshop, data was collected using multiple tools. All participant discussions were recorded using audio recording devices and the proceedings were filmed to capture any performative data. Additionally, the artefacts which participants produced were photographed to allow the researcher to analyse and interpret them at a later date. Finally,
the researcher undertook the role of outside observer with CA practitioners from New Vic Borderlines facilitating the workshop as designed by the researcher and following extensive briefing sessions prior to the workshop. The researcher took notes in situ in order to record immediate reactions and spontaneous observations. The researcher’s notes consisted mainly of data of interactions between participants and between participants and facilitators. The main purpose of this was to capture observations which may be missed by audio/visual recording.

For the interview stage of the research the main tool for collecting data was the bespoke interview resource outlined above. Of course, interviews were also recorded for analysis and interpretation by the researcher later, as well as the completed resource itself being photographed. The primary materials for the research were resources completed by hand or with pen and paper by participants. The CA workshop also required a random selection of “props” which were provided in kind by research partner New Vic Borderlines. Any additional audio/visual equipment was provided and /or operated by a technical advisor.

It is worth noting that except from the data collected at interview and workshop, other materials collected about the cases were used for analysis (although to a lesser degree). This includes graphic renderings of developments and photos taken by participants of their work, which are available on their websites and were selected on an ad hoc basis where relevant. Insights gleaned from these materials are used to supplement analysis and interpretation of data collected for this research and are in no sense the primary focus.

3.6 Method of data analysis

As discussed, data collected at the CA workshop were in part processed by participants in collaboration with the research team. Care was taken to include feedback sessions throughout the workshop in which participants could explain their work and interventions/new lines of inquiry could be made by other participants or the facilitators in order to achieve the highest possible level of understanding and accuracy. Following the workshop, crucial moments in the audio recordings were transcribed and the researcher then undertook a qualitative content analysis in which all of the data collected were coded and categorised – including audio and visual recordings of feedback – through which key concepts and themes could emerge “bottom up” and be interpreted with patterns of thinking being identified. These concepts and themes - distilled from the workshop data – were then used as a lens through which qualitative content analysis and coding of transcribed interview data could be undertaken. Each theme was analysed in the interview data to gain a deeper understanding of participants perceptions and motivations. Owing to the fact that both sets of data were collected utilising semi-structured questioning, the data was already organised into a structure around each of the questions at both workshop and interview stages.

Whilst both stages of the fieldwork utilised physical objects to create images, analysis was largely based in participants’ language and their justifications and explanations of these images. This is a kind of narrative analysis, focusing on the stories participants tell about their work, identifying common tropes, and interpreting their meaning. In addition to an analysis of their language, the observations of the researcher made in situ and peripheral to field work offered another set of data to pool with those collected from participants directly. The aim here was to undertake a kind of discourse analysis looking at communication between participants and participants and the research team, including language and non-verbal interactions within the context of the workshop and interview.
stage. However, at times insights were also gained by the researcher in relation to images and written passages from participants’ websites.

3.7 Validity

In both the CA workshop and at the interview stage of the research, validity is established in a number of ways. In the first instance, knowledge co-created at the CA workshop has validity in practice, meaning that ‘through the careful contrivance of context and material, actors can perform opportunities for understanding through which truth can be inferred and validity can be reconstructed’ (Li and Ross, 2020). This is reflected in the workshop debrief with participants in which FCI2 highlights the value in understanding a ‘view of the bigger picture’ between participating cases. Some aspects of the knowledge created however, hold transactional validity (Cho and Trent 2006) defined as ‘an interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted’ (p. 321). This validity is primarily demonstrated in the CA data in which an interactive process is undertaken between the research team and participants and the collected data is to some degree processed collaboratively. Through this process we are aiming at the highest level of accuracy possible by revisiting the data that has been collected to then interpret it together. In a similar vein, validity across interview and workshop data may also lie in its impact. Impact validity defined by Massey and Barreras (2013) as the “extent to which research has the potential to play a role in social and political change or is useful as a tool for advocacy or activism”. Given that this research addresses gentrification and CLD’s potential to tackle socio-spatial issues, it seems reasonable to view the validity of its findings as being useful for activism. This is again evidenced in the workshop debrief, where participants highlight a feeling of being ‘energised’ to return to their communities and work and the building of connections between CLD initiatives to support one another’s work (in particular between the London-based CLD initiatives).

Throughout this research, through participant observation, structured interviews, and the researcher’s interpretation of data collected, our aim is to produce knowledge about the theories, structures, and shared beliefs of CLD practitioners. As a researcher I have approached this study abductively (Stefan and Iddo, 2012; Dubois and Gadde, 2002), beginning by distilling ideas from existing literature, before beginning a simultaneous and continuous process of conducting fieldwork and revisiting arising themes and concepts in the literature. It is necessary in this regard to understand that the issue of gentrification was introduced by the researcher, with some participating cases having no formal considerations of the issue prior to taking part in the research. In that sense the focus of the research and in particular the CA workshop were to an extent leading, which may have influenced results. However, aside from inviting participants to consider the intersection between their practise and gentrification, all the research findings are based in the perspectives of participants and the researcher’s interpretation of those perspectives which relied on lenses and frames distilled from the literature.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Participants were identified through a combination of desk research and consultations with national third sector organisations who work in partnership with CLD initiatives (i.e. The
Glass-House) as discussed in section 3.3. Having identified possible case initiatives, the researcher aimed to seek permission to make contact via e-mail or by telephone. Once work with case initiatives was under way, participants who could be relevant to workshops were identified based on their role within the project, aiming to include participants from across project roles. All contact with members of case initiatives were conducted via project leaders who acted as gatekeepers in this research.

Detailed information about the project was provided to participants before asking for consent. These were completed before any data collection process had started. The forms were distributed and collected through the usual channels of communication within each case initiative (e-mail, in person etc.). Ethical procedures were followed and ethics consent was acquired from the Open University’s Research Ethics committee. Participants were given assurances around the use of personal data and were informed that they can withdraw at any point during the research. Data was collected at a time and place suitable to participants. Interviews were undertaken often at the headquarters and/or project sites of case initiatives, which included private, corporate, and institutional premises. All data relating to participants was anonymised using acronyms for each case and with each participant being coded with a number and stored securely at the Open University.
4 Cultural Animation Workshop

4.1 Introduction

In the context of this research the aim of the CA workshop was threefold. First it was necessary to understand participants’ basic assumptions about gentrification. This meant understanding individual participants’ assumptions, but also how they perceive gentrification as an organisation, and in turn whether or not these assumptions were applicable to the experiences of the other individuals and organisations in the room. At a later stage in the research these assumptions about gentrification would be related to the literature to see if there was any basis in theory to support their understanding. Secondly it was important to understand participants assumptions about the internal and external relations of their organisation. How participants perceive these relations to be configured has the potential to inform both the infrastructure of their own organisations and in turn how these organisations relate to external groups and the wider community. Not only does this line of inquiry enable us to understand the basic assumptions underlying how these groups organise but it also provides an insight into participants' understanding of power and their relationship to it. Finally, the workshop aimed to gather participants’ assumptions about what the solution to these problems might look like. This line of enquiry covered both how they perceived the solutions to the problem of gentrification, as well as how internal/external associations could be re-configured. As with the rest of the data collected in the workshop, it is possible that these basic assumptions about the solutions to these problems can inform the work undertaken by each organisation.

4.2 Workshop design

The workshop was organised in 5 steps as Figure 3 shows:
These steps are explained in detail below.
4.2.1 Cinquain 1: the problem

In the first instance our aim was to understand participants’ basic assumptions about gentrification. To gather these insights participants were asked to collaboratively create a cinquain in two groups (one cinquain for each group), with each group including a mix of participants from the organisations in the room. A cinquain (as shown in Figure 4) is a five-line poem, commonly used in CA research to gather an informally agreed set of language and themes with which to discuss the topic of the workshop. Participants are tasked with first gathering words and terminology from the group to define and describe a problem – in this case gentrification. To engage with this task participants, discuss the causes of the problem as well as the outcomes of the problem in their allocated groups. The second stage of the cinquain exercise invites participants to select from an assortment of items and props one object for each of the words they have selected, to act as a symbol of that concept (as shown in Figure 5).

This activity produces data in four ways. First participants discuss the problem between themselves as they decide collaboratively on what words to include in the cinquain. Here they relate personal experiences and the experiences of undertaking their work as organisations. Then there is the cinquain itself, which broadly represents an agreed set of themes and language generated collaboratively across individual participants and organisations. Once there is agreement in terminology a second round of discussion and negotiation takes place, now as part of the selecting of objects where our aim is to probe further into the basic assumptions at play. By asking participants to consider their chosen terminology from a symbolic layer of abstraction, our aim is to uncover more nuanced meaning and discover any potential divergence in understanding between participants. Finally, groups then present their work back to other participants in the room, justifying and elaborating on the themes and language they have chosen collectively.

Line 1: One-word title (What is the Problem?)

Line 2: Two words which describe line 1

Line 3: Three words which depict what can be seen, heard, and felt as a consequence of the problem

Line 4: Four words which have caused the problem

Line 5: One alternative word for line 1

Figure 4. A typical structure for a cinquain in cultural animation
4.2.2 The button game: co-creating the picture of here and now

Our second aim was to generate insights into participants' basic assumptions about the internal and external associations of their organisations. Here the ‘Button Game’ activity common to CA was used. In this exercise participants are asked to first sort a variety of buttons, before using the sorted buttons to create collaborative maps depicting communities, workplaces, or environments (see Figure 7). In the context of this research participants were asked to form two groups comprising a mixture of participants from different organisations to create maps of CLD in the UK as it is today, using different buttons and objects to represent different aspects of the socio-material landscape. The aim of mixing the groups across organisations (as opposed to having each organisation produce a map of their own community) was to collect generalisable data about the role of CLD projects within a socio-material landscape. Facilitators were given the following instructions to enable the activity:

Use the buttons (tape etc.) to create the picture of your communities as they are now. A map of CLD in the UK today.

Use the different groups of buttons to represent the different aspects of your communities. Think who is involved in this picture (think broadly).
What does the map look like?
Think of ALL the assets/characteristics which come together to create the picture.
Create a KEY/LEGEND for your map.
What connects these communities? Show the connections?
When using the button game data is produced in three ways. First participants discuss collaboratively how they will create the map, this includes sharing experiences of their internal processes and practises, and their external relationships with local authorities, social power and the wider community. Then there are the maps themselves which are processed as data by participants, facilitators, and the researcher collaboratively during the workshop. This is done by participants “visiting” one another’s maps and feeding back explanations and insights. Here it is possible for participants to begin to provide insight into one another’s work, including the configuration of their internal/external associations and infrastructure based on participants’ own experience in a reflexive/exploratory sense.

4.2.3 Cinquain 2: co-creating a picture fit for the future
The final aim of the workshop was to gain insight into participants' basic assumptions about what the solutions to these problems might look like. This might include possible actions, models for future engagement, or highlight current barriers to the work participants undertake. As at the start of the workshop participants are asked to create a second cinquain, following the same process as before. Here participants are invited to discuss how the image differs from the first cinquain, exploring what are the common themes that are arising, what is the common language that is being used, and if any actions have been identified. This stage of the workshop consolidates generalisable themes and ideas. It also
presents an opportunity to gather data that could inform necessary actions to improve CLD practice or improve the interactions between CLD projects and outside actors, as well as the wider community.

4.2.4 Debrief
At the workshop’s close a debrief session was undertaken with participants in a question and answer format, with the researcher putting questions to participants for feedback. Debrief questions were as follows:

- What have you discovered or rediscovered about yourself, your own project, or other projects today? What were some key moments?
- Being in the room you have worked/co-created/made connections. What can you do with these connections? How can you take them forward? How can you support each other? How can you all stay connected?
- This group has worked well together. There are other communities that are at the beginning of these journeys, how can the work we’ve done today, your experiences and knowledge be shared with them?

This section of the workshop also included the explanation of how the material gathered at the workshop would be used – i.e. form part of a research thesis, be presented to conferences etc. Here it was also ensured that participants were aware that any materials produced from the workshop data would be made available to them.

4.3 Data analysis
As discussed in the methodology chapter, workshop participants comprised ten members from across five CLD initiatives. Between them they represented three cities – London, Liverpool, Edinburgh - they included:

- London Community and Neighbourhood Cooperative (LCNC). Participant coded – LCNC.
- Wards Corner Community Coalition (WCC). Participants coded – WCC1, WCC2, WCC3.
- Granby 4 Streets Community land Trust (GCLT). Participant coded – GCLT.
- Three members of St Ann’s Redevelopment Trust (StART). Participants coded – StART1, StART2, StART3.

For the completion of the cinquains participants were grouped as follows:
- Group 1.0 – FCI1, WCC1, WCC2, StART1, and StART2
- Group 2.0 – FCI2, LCNC, GCLT, WCC3, and StART3

When participants were mixed again for the button game, they were grouped as follows:
- Group 1.1 – FCI2, WCC1, StART1, StART3, and LCNC

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The data collected from the workshop was divided into three categories: data relating to assumptions, data relating to context, and data relating to action. Data relating to assumptions covers the bulk of the data that was intended to be collected, and details participant perspectives across a range of discussion topics (gentrification, governance, activism etc.). Data relating to context was collected to some degree incidentally and covers participant discussions of circumstantial information relating to their projects, their communities, or their socio-material landscape more broadly. Lastly the data relating to action - again largely collected incidentally - covers participant discussions of any actions they had already taken at the time of the workshop. This third category of data, whilst not directly relating to the basic assumptions underlying participants’ work, does provide insight into those assumptions by evidencing the daily enactment of their organisations’ work. The focus of this workshop was of course data relating to assumptions, with the other two data sets being of more interest in the interview chapters.

In this section I will present the written work and artefacts produced by participants in the workshop, as well as detailing key moments in the discussion and feedback facilitated through these activities. Having presented this data I will argue that the central assumptions of participants in informing their work are rooted in their assumptions about gentrification, their assumptions about the role of CLD, and their assumptions about the nature of their relations to power. In turn this set of assumptions inform the nature and style of action each organisation chooses to undertake. I will then place these actions within two categories of reconfiguration of the social relations underlying the design of housing which are direct reconfigurations of the social relations which create gentrification and indirect reconfigurations.

4.3.1 Cinquain 1
Here I analyse the data produced by both groups in the creation of their first cinquain. I will categorise their work under a unifying theme for their discussion, having provided a rationale for each categorisation. At the end of this section I will place each group’s basic assumptions about gentrification alongside one another in order to compare and contrast their work.

4.3.1.1 Group 1.0
When tasked with creating a cinquain around the problem of gentrification, there was an unexpected degree of neutrality. Three participants across two organisations (StART2 and WCC1 and 2) were interested in viewing gentrification in binary terms as potentially positive and negative relative to perspective. Whilst there was some disagreement - with StART1 challenging the view of gentrification as a neutral concept - the discussion nonetheless continued on this basis. Group 1.0 produced their problem cinquain as follows:

(The problem)
Change

(Two words that describe the problem)
Benefit profit
The group chose to articulate gentrification as a problem relating to ‘change’, and there was broad agreement around taking this as a starting point across all five participants. From the outset this word was presented as a binary concept in a group exchange that went as follows:

StART2: I know it’s not one word it’s two but social cleansing, or unaffordability...
WCC1: Well it’s also change, which can go in either direction
StART1: I like change.
WCC1: It’s also home. Because they’re sticking this 23-storey tower block at the end of my road, against all our…whatever we’ve tried. I have to think about that positively, I have to think that that’s home for 500 people in this very small space, I’ve got to think of it in those terms.
WCC2: Well change is a very wide meaning isn’t it? That could cover everything. Profit is another one. They wouldn’t be doing this without profit, that’s what it’s for isn’t it?
StART2: So, change is good, but when it’s not for your community, when it’s bringing in a completely different group of people who have different resources to your community then it sets up a tension which is negative. So, change goes both ways...

This passage alludes to a responsiveness amongst participants to ‘change’ as required or desirable in their communities. This is stated particularly in relation to housebuilding, as rationalised by WCC1 as ‘homes for 500 people’. However, the neutrality of this change is swiftly brought into question by WCC2 by drawing attention to the profit motive driving housebuilding. This immediately establishes an interesting binary in assumption, with WCC1 highlighting the use value of development, and WCC2 highlighting the exchange value of development, or more broadly, gentrification as a problem of land value. The passage later indicates that assumptions about gentrification do not only relate to a change in land value, but also a change in the configuration of socio-material networks. In StART2’s terms external networks or ‘communities’ whose introduction into a locality - and the consequent redistribution of resources within said locality – creates tension between networks. This can be taken more broadly as viewing gentrification as a problem of external network dissensus.

Line two of the cinquain consolidates the assumptions around land value and external network dissensus. StART1’s suggestion that the problem of ‘change’ be described as ‘benefit and profit’ was expanded upon by WCC1 in feedback.

Change being binary is both benefit and profit, both of those can go in either direction. It can go out of the community and into some Swiss bank
account, or it can be benefit coming back into the community. (WCC1 feedback – Cinq 1 grp 1)

This statement merges the assumptions around land value and external network dissensus into an understanding that competing conceptions of value (offshore finance vs community wealth creation) exist across competing external networks. In discussing the outcomes of this change - what can be seen, felt, and heard - the group expanded upon this assumption.

WCC1: Shadow, because of these 23 stories, that is literally going to throw a shadow to the end of my road.

FCI1: And that goes under profit. Definitely under profit. Shadow under profit.

WCC1: And that's because they were allowed to build. So, we said "well maybe 12" but the greed meant that they just kept adding more...

StART2: I see community, because we have an empty space at the moment, and I see a community building on that space. In all its complexity.

StART1: Maybe we can feel community? And see shadow...

WCC2: So, it's what you see, what you feel, what you hear?

FCI1: People.

StART1: It's kind of...

WCC1: 57 languages.

FCI1: People?

StART2: Yes, something about the languages....

WCC1: What’s Spanish for community?

StART2: Comunidad. But it’s something around language, lingua...


In the opening interchange, WCC1 and FCI1 highlight the dominance of exchange value in driving housebuilding accrediting it as the driving force in design decisions such as maximising the number of units on any given site. In a later exchange StART2 begins to expand upon her alternative view of use value. Her statement that she sees an empty space on which a community can build, is an assumption that land holds not only use value, but a kind of speculative use value. Here this speculative use value, which may drive ideation in CLD processes, is set against the kind of speculative exchange value that drives financialised development (i.e. use value drives CLD networks, exchange value drives development networks). There is some discussion here of the demographic makeup of these networks. Where WCC1 referred to the ‘Swiss bank accounts’ in the group’s feedback, here reference is made to the ‘57 languages’ that can be heard in Tottenham. It becomes clear in the feedback that the perceived ethnic diversity of their networks is viewed as a strength. In selecting objects to represent the language in their cinquain, the group decided that for the
words ‘community’ and ‘juntos’, they would use an LED torch and a pan flute respectively (See Figures 8 and 9). In both cases the items were chosen as representations of collective power, with WCC1 describing the LED torch to the workshop by saying that ‘there are lots of little lights in there, and when they come on, they form a powerful thing that works as a group’ (WCC1). The group’s assumptions about collective power are unexpectedly included in line four of the cinquain, where four actions that have caused the problem are identified.

*Figure 8. ‘Juntos’ -Spanish meaning ‘together’- represented by a pan flute*
Curiously when asked by the facilitator for four actions which have caused the problem, WCC1 offers the word ‘dancing’. Here she explains that ‘every now and again we do actually have dancing’, referring to the protests held at the Wards Corner site by Latino market traders. It is reasonable to assume here that this train of thought follows on from the group 1.0’s discussion around collective power or ‘juntos’, and it is possible then to suggest that the insinuation is that activism on the part of the local community is one of the actions which has made the change caused by gentrification problematic, particularly given the group’s desire to portray a balanced or neutral exploration of gentrification. This may also explain the group’s inclusion of ‘collaborating’ as one of the causes of problematic change. However, the group does not discuss the causes of gentrification for long before returning to the topic of land value.

FC1: It’s greed. Good greed and bad greed. It’s greed for money and profit, but it’s also greed to have a community.
StART2: So, it’s a desire. Yes, it’s a thing that motivates you.
FC1: So, it goes both ways again. So, it can go along with change.

The above passage connects community activism as discussed prior, to the conversation around land value. FC1 argues that ‘greed’, motivated by the exchange value of land is one of the causes of the problematic change. However here it is also noted that participants and their organisations are also motivated by a desire for personal reward. Again, we are presented with participants’ assumption of an external network dissensus, with outside networks on the one hand motivated by material personal reward (money, profit etc.) and CLD organisations on the other motivated by non-tangible personal reward (community, sense of place etc.). This inter-network dissensus is denoted again in the groups highlighting of ‘building’ as one of the causes of problematic change. Here the group relates ‘building’ to competing interpretations of land value with WCC1 noting the necessity for it, but dissatisfaction with how it is undertaken in the feedback, positing that ‘(i)t is providing new housing, but it is also of course destroying other buildings’.

In the final line of the cinquain the group have to offer an alternative word for the problematic change that these competing interpretations of land value have created. The group chose the word ‘stay’ as a consequence of the following discussion.

WCC1: Stay? Because the social cleansing is stopping people – people are being sent to South End.
StART2: And we want them to stay. And we’re staying, we’re not going away. We’re going to hang in there until –

FC1: But they’re still going to have to work in the city. They’re still going to have to work up here. I mean even if it’s only a service community, you’re going to have to come all the way in from South End on a very low income and all the rest of it. To come in and –

StART2: Work in the centre. But that’s why they need to stay. Besides which, this is their home and their community, and they shouldn’t be
Here the group outlines their perception that the logical conclusion to development driven by exchange value is displacement. Not just geographical displacement, but social displacement, and cultural displacement as well. Again, the choice of neutral terminology is of intrigue here. A connotatively negative word like displacement could have been used here, but the group highlights here their desire to stay as part of what makes the ‘change’ problematic (i.e. if they were happy to leave, there would be no problem).

In summary, group 1.0’s basic assumption about gentrification is to view it as a problematic change. They describe this change as being connected with land value, which presents itself as both exchange value driven high-density development on the one hand and use value driven human-centred development on the other. As they perceive it the change in their communities has become a problem as these competing interpretations of use vs exchange value struggle for hegemony, localised in their cases to a single site. Ultimately, they view the hegemony of exchange value as driving the design of urban development and leading to social cleansing and displacement.

4.3.1.2 Group 2.0
This group whilst having the same number of participants as group 1.0, included two extra organisations on account of GCLT and LCNC members attending the workshop as the sole representatives of their organisations. Group 2.0 produced their problem cinquain as follows:

(The problem)
Erasure

(Two words that describe the problem)
Invisible violence

(What can be seen, felt, and heard)
Disruptive death despair

(4 words that have caused the problem)
Greed capitalism paternalism arrogance

(An alternative word for line one)
Obliteration

The group chose to understand gentrification through the lens of ‘Erasure’. As with group one this could be taken as viewing gentrification as a problematic change. However, here the emphasis is placed on physical and social removal in the first instance as opposed to at the end as an alternative view of the problematic change. As their object for this word the group chose a brush (figure 5), ‘not to paint something on, but to brush it away. To rub it out’ (LCNC). Their rationale behind this image was based in their discussions around social exclusion.
GCLT – Gentrification to me also means isolation, because it’s the opposite of everything we are trying to do. So, it isolates people.
StART3: And hence division...

LCNC: It disperses, but it encloses as well.

In this passage gentrification is understood as a problem of social exclusion that presents itself in the extremes as both displacement and isolation. The group describe this perceived problem of social exclusion as a form of ‘invisible violence’ where the nature of that violence is seen as literal, to people, buildings, and space. In line three of the cinquain when discussing the outcomes of social exclusion, the group includes first ‘disruptive’ as an aspect of this ‘invisible violence’. FCI2 connects disruption to *The Shock Doctrine* (*Klein and Smith, 2008*), a theory which posits that crises can be exploited to push through controversial policies while citizens are too distracted by disorder to resist. GCLT associated this disruption with disinvestment – a significant problem in her community – broadening the scope of this social exclusion to include economic exclusion as well. In this case, communities being excluded from investment which she connected to ‘despair’ - a sense of helplessness in the face of socio-spatial issues which seem outside of a person’s control - stating ‘[you] can see it (despair) you can feel it. You can see it in what happens to the area, you see the rubbish building up, you see the neglect’. Disinvestment is a crucial dimension in Smith’s rent gap theory of gentrification (Smith, 1979), in which economic withdrawal from a site or area precipitates cataclysmic re-investment and consequent gentrification, through the creation of a differential between the speculative exchange value of land on any site and its capitalised value. This would place GCLT on a gentrification frontier, an area predisposed to gentrification through the existence of this rent gap, an insight GCLT makes
herself when remarking that the surrounding streets are heavily gentrified - ‘it’s highly gentrified on Princes Avenue’ (GCLT). The discussion of the outcomes that are the result of this social exclusion ends with the following exchange.

LCNC: It’s dehumanisation, it’s that taking away of everything -
FCI2: I would agree with that as well because thinking about people being on their own and thinking “I can’t go on with this”, the whole process is making us more isolated.
StART3: Can we say something about the fact that this is literally killing people? Not just dehumanising them.
LCNC: It is yeah.
StART3: So, what we can see is people crumbling away.
GCLT: Well people actually die, because they are forced out of where they live. We’ve lost our members. So, I’m happy to use it.

The causation of early death that the group attribute here to economic and social exclusion, they define as resulting from physical displacement, with GCLT offering anecdotal evidence of her personal experience of death within her membership. There are some data sets to support this, with reports noting an increase in deaths of people who are homeless or in temporary accommodation (ONS, 2019).

In line four of the cinquain we see the first crossover with group 1.0, as group 2.0 discusses the causes of social exclusion. As with group 1.0 ‘Greed’ is included as a cause, however in group 2.0’s work it is accompanied with ‘capitalism’ which is the first time that ideology has been explicitly linked to either discussion. The perceived problems of this ideology are considered in terms of ‘paternalism’ and ‘arrogance’ which was explained by WCC3 in feedback.

It is believing that they have the solution, they are in the right. The common people don’t have enough intelligence to sort out their own problems. Paternalism in the end is a form of discrimination...There is a favourite phrase of the developers that someone always has to suffer. But it’s never them. (WCC3 – feedback)

Here WCC3 delineates his understanding that the problem with paternalism is not just hierarchical, but that the nature of the hierarchy - as he perceives it - is predetermined along socio-economic lines (‘developers’ and ‘the common people’). He then goes on to offer an example of the ‘arrogance’ of these hierarchical relationships and their exploitative practises. The implication here is that it is not the ideology or the hierarchy alone that is the problem, but the social relations that exist within those hierarchies as a result of ideology.

In the final line of the cinquain the group centralise the social relations embedded in hierarchical power as they offer the word ‘obliteration’ as an alternative word to epitomise social exclusion. When selecting an object to represent this obliteration they chose a blank scroll (see Figure 6), providing the following rationale.

StART3: This is the social contract which has been obliterated. These are the laws; this is the charter. It’s gone, we don’t have it. We fought hard for it. The magna carta. Kill the king.

LCNC: Charter of the Forests actually.
In this final stage of their cinquain the group articulate social exclusion as a breakdown in legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual (obliteration of the social contract). This explanation includes reference to the Charter of the Forest, a 13th century document granting rights of access to land held in common. In this final line of the cinquain the group expand on the exclusion caused by gentrification as they see it, to include not only social and economic exclusion, but exclusion from land and the practices of the state.

To summarise, group 2.0 - as group 1.0 - articulated gentrification as a problem associated with change. However rather than taking this change to be a neutral concept it was expressed through the explicitly negative lens of removal. This removal – or as they expressed ‘erasure’ - was understood by the group as a product of social exclusion, drawing particular attention to the isolation and the literal violence. The violence of social exclusion manifests as disinvestment in buildings and services, causation of early death, and a sense of helplessness in the face of forces beyond citizen control. Here group 2.0 comprehends the causes of gentrification and its social exclusion in similar terms to group 1.0, making reference to the financial incentive underlying design of urban development driven by exchange value under capitalist modes of production, though here adding their assumptions that hierarchy and exploitative social relations are also a contributing factor. Finally, they express a crisis of legitimacy in the actions of the state and refer to the removal of historic rights such as common ownership of land. In the next stage of the workshop participants explore these themes surrounding gentrification more specifically in relation to the work that they do as CLD initiatives.
4.3.1.3 Cinquain 1 summary
Participants' basic assumptions about gentrification can be broadly categorised as viewing gentrification as *value change* and viewing gentrification as *social exclusion*. Group 1.0 view gentrification as a set of socio-spatial issues resulting from the struggle for hegemony between two competing interpretations of the value (use vs exchange), whereas group 2.0 see the problems associated with gentrification as arising from social exclusion from the processes of the state, which arise through exploitative social relations.

![Cinquain 1: Gentrification]

*Figure 12. Data collected from cinquain 1*

4.3.2 Button maps
In the button mapping exercise, participants were invited to use all the objects on their tables (buttons, tape, etc.) to create a picture of CLD in the UK as it exists today. It was explained that maps could be more literal (geographic maps which include all of their organisations) or more figurative (topic maps connoting themes, problems, successes of CLD). Again, participants were split into two groups, however this time made up of a different mix of participants and organisations to the cinquain exercise. The rationale behind this decision was to again animate potential discussion across perceptions of gentrification. On the day of the workshop this re-mixing of groups pooled participants from cinquain 1.0 (gentrification as value change) with participants from cinquain 2.0 (gentrification as social exclusion).

4.3.2.1 Group 1.1
In the creation of their button map group 1.1 discussed the nature and form of power, CLD, and the relation between the two and wider society. It is interesting to note that in discussing CLD, one focal point was the ability of their initiatives to tackle social exclusion – a source of some disagreement even within organisations. The group made the curious decision of building a picture of a dog (see Figure 13). Evidently a figurative map, the initial justification for the decision was given that ‘(t)his is the council, the lap dog of the developers’ (StART3). Later the scope of this metaphor was extended to mean “the establishment” more broadly, and specifically the neoliberal establishment. The group explained the “neoliberal dog” to the rest of the workshop in feedback.
FCI2: We started out with a geographical map where somebody said that "Westminster was over here" but actually we decided that Westminster had been eaten by this larger neoliberal dog. And it's shitting on us profusely.

WCC1: The gold chain is capitalism pulling it along. It's the money people. The lead originally was facing the other way so was actually trying to restrain the establishment, and I thought no it can't be, it's got to be actually pulling it. Capitalism is outside the power of government...

LCNC: Exactly it's no longer democracy and it's not about people.

Figure 13. Group 1.1 button map. ‘The Neoliberal Dog’.

This extract provides us with insight into the group’s assumptions about power. Again, the speculative potential of financial gain in exchange value-driven development is highlighted though in this instance through the explicitly ideological lens of neoliberalism which is viewed by the group as an anti-democratic force existing externally to the power of the state.

The group placed themselves on the map as beneath a ‘trail of dog waste’ (FCI2), however did include their ‘big wins’ citing that ‘we still have hopes and dreams and aspirations (which are being "dumped on") but we have won things. We do have victories’ (LCNC). Having to identify where they saw themselves on the map began a dialogue about the scope of their aspirations and the possibilities for CLD initiatives to tackle the issue of social exclusion.

At this stage in the coproduction of the button map, we begin to see a combined view of our two basic assumptions – gentrification as value change and gentrification as social
exclusion. As the group discussed how the ‘broken buttons’ on the table should be classified, differences in outlook began to emerge.

WCC1: What about these guys? (broken buttons) ...

StART1: I think that’s definitely us.
WCC1: No, it’s the ones who are left behind by capitalism.
StART1: Well now that looks wrong...

WCC1: So, where does this go?
StART3: Separate and protected.
StART1: I don’t think it should be separate, I think it should be with us.
FCI2: Yeah.
StART3: It’s a minority.
StART1: So, you want to keep minorities separate?
StART3: Yeah, they deserve special treatment.
WCC1: It’s the homeless, jobless people that get forgotten.
LCNC: But it’s not just homeless and jobless it’s children, it’s disabled...

WCC1: It’s ones that we can’t resource ourselves
FCI2: What do you mean we can’t resource them ourselves?
StART1: Yeah, no I disagree with that.
FCI2: I disagree with that. I don’t quite know what you mean.
StART1: I think we can I think we have been told we can’t. They want us to think that we can’t.

The disagreement here, existing across and within organisations, is as to the scope of CLD’s ability to tackle socio-spatial issues such as exclusion and isolation. The disagreement appears to be along two lines. The first revolves around who the group includes in the category of ‘left behind’; is it limited to the homeless and unemployed or is it broader and includes children and people with disabilities? The second source of disagreement is as to the scope of their projects to provide resources for these groups (i.e. should these groups be included as part of their CLD work on the button map). In the end the broken buttons are included as part of the CLD initiatives, with the caveat that their work includes ‘special care’ for the broken. This can be thought of as viewing CLD as a social fabric, a kind of safety net for individuals impacted by socio-spatial issues.

In the creation of their button map the first group focussed on three clear topic areas. First the creation of their ‘neoliberal dog’ continued the discourse surrounding the legitimacy of state authority, based on the value change assumption of gentrification concluding that neoliberalism (the force driving this value change) is an undemocratic and therefore illegitimate force existing externally to state power. Following this, the group positioned CLD initiatives as organisations operating beneath the socio-spatial issues they associate with this value change, attempting to limit their impact. Finally, the discussion led2 to a consideration of the capabilities of CLD to resource those affected by these socio-spatial issues, with no clear consensus as to their ability to do so.
4.3.2.2 Group 2.1

The second button map (see Figure 14) – as with the group 1.1 – facilitated discussions around the nature of power, CLD, and the relation between the two. In addition, a further exploration of the social violence and disinvestment (as highlighted in cinquain 2.0) is undertaken and related more explicitly to gentrification.

Group 2.1 began their button map by creating representations of their individual projects. However, following an interjection from GCLT, they reached a decision to create a single map, representative of all their work in an exchange that went as follows.

*StART2:* I'm a bit conscious that in our project we have got a mix, but predominantly...maybe we have got a few other folks in there. Surrounded by a real variety. But I suppose we are connected to your project (WCC2) anyway.

*GCLT:* I don't know. I think we just do a big long line with all the buttons because we're all connected anyway. We're all joined together by action. So, say that was the Liverpool project, it would be joined tenuously to another project, it would be joined to Edinburgh. And basically, we're all full of lots of buttons...

*StART2:* Because actually we're all part of the same movement, we're all fighting the same neoliberal land value crap. So, we are joined very strongly...

*Figure 14. Group 2.1 button map.*
GCLT: I don't think there is anything specific about us. I don't think there is anything specific about anybody. Because all of these little things are changing a landscape. Lots of little communities that join up across the country to make a difference. We're fighting land prices, gentrification, capitalism.

This exchange begins with StART2 discussing her own project and stating that their work is connected to that of WCC – both being based in the same borough of London. However, GCLT states that she sees the work of CLD as a single movement against a set of social/ideological conflicts connected by action. There is agreement around this assumption, with some minor differences of opinion as to the strength of the connections between CLD organisations - with StART2 seeing the shared conflict as a strong connection and GCLT seeing it as more tenuous.

Naturally discussion soon turns to how their shared conflicts will be represented on the map. Here we begin to unearth participants’ assumptions about power relations, beginning with surface level assumptions before digging a little deeper. The discussion began with GCLT identifying objects on the table to be used to represent government.

GCLT: That’s probably government because it's all prickly.

FCI1: So, it goes in the centre as all the rubbish we have got to deal with.

GCLT: That’s the stuff that we’ve got to deal with, and we’ve maybe got to get something out of. It's very good that it's the shiny stuff, 'cause they're the ones that own everything. And those bits disempower that lot (CLD initiatives) …and there’s no connection between those in power and those without it…

Facilitator: Currently at the moment there is no connection between that (government) and the rest of it. I just wonder if there is anything in between those. Maybe small council members that have helped people out or that kind of thing?

GCLT: Well there is (some connections with power) but we can make our own decisions.

WCC2: Well we could have little lines.

StART2: In our case they’re powerless. The people who are helping us are completely powerless so we might as well not put them in…

(FCI1 has been and found thin strips of wire whilst the group have been discussing connections. He adds them to the map, connecting CLD initiatives with government)

GCLT: Ok now we've got our tenuous threads. Tenuous connections… our map is all the tiny organisations around the country, with government in the middle, with bureaucracies, grant agencies etc…
**WCC2**: Well it started off saying that these are the rubbish that you want to get rid of, and now you’re saying that these are the people with the power.

**GCLT**: Well these are the rubbish, the ones with the power because they’re not part of the community. They have the power, so we have to work with them which is why we have the tenuous threads.

The group include as part of those with power government and bureaucracies such as grant agencies, and list those with power as amongst the social/ideological conflicts that connect the work that they do. Interestingly GCLT acknowledges early on that ‘we’ve maybe got to get something out of it’, identifying interactions with these power brokers as reluctant but necessary. GCLT provides as the justification for this interaction, ‘they’re the ones that own everything’, highlighting the disempowering impact this power imbalance has on CLD initiatives in these interactions. In the first iteration of the button map the cluster of power in the centre of the map was completely disconnected from the circle of CLD initiatives around the outside (see Figure 15). This was initially a deliberate representation of the relations of power as delineated by GCLT (‘there’s no connection between those with power and those without it’). As a provocation, the facilitator drew attention to this arrangement of the buttons leading to an insight from StART2 that in fact they do have alliances with local government but that those allies themselves are ‘completely powerless’. This emphasises the tenuous nature of CLD’s relations with power as perceived by group 2.1.

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*Figure 15. An early iteration of the group 2.1 button map, with no connections between CLD and power*
The closing exchange of the above passage relating to the ‘rubbish’ and the ‘power’, lead the group to expand upon the discussion of disinvestment from the cinquain. When presenting their button map to the rest of the workshop WCC2 remarked on the disinvestment to the Wards Corner Site.

WCC2: It’s made to look rubbish deliberately; they wouldn’t let anyone use it. They made it look rubbish. They deliberately neglect it.

WCC1: This is what Spurs did at the top end, they ran down the area so that they could knock down all these terraces.

FCI2: That’s the other violence going on.

It is interesting to note at this point that there was unanimous agreement around the room with this remark. The exchange combines the assumptions about gentrification from the cinquains, of value change and social exclusion. The groups’ perception here is that the economic exclusion from investment is a deliberate tactic to create a rent gap between the value of the land and the value of the improvements on it – supported by Smith’s rent gap theory. Here social exclusion and value change unite to create a generalised picture of gentrification and its interactions with CLD.

In the creation of their button map group 2.1 described CLD as a single movement united by action against the neoliberalisation of space. They position CLD as in conflict with a set of power brokers amongst whom they include elected representatives and bureaucrats. Any interactions with these power brokers are viewed as necessary rather than voluntary. Assets and authority are concentrated with power brokers, disempowering CLD initiatives and rendering any connections with power brokers as fragile. The group – and workshop participants more broadly – perceive economic exclusion and disinvestment as deliberate tactics in the creation of a rent gap in order to encourage new development and economic growth.

4.3.2.3 Button map summary

The button maps created by workshop participants can be categorised broadly as viewing CLD as self-help and viewing CLD as a social movement. The self-help view of CLD sees its work as below the surface of socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification working to limit their impact by providing services and space not provided by the market or the state. It sees neoliberalism as the force driving the change in value which precipitates gentrification, an illegitimate form of power which exists outside the power of the state. Similarly, CLD as a social movement is viewed as a movement against the neoliberalisation of space, however this group placed state actors as part of a set of power brokers with which CLD is in conflict. This is a large concentration of power to the extent that it disempowers CLD initiatives who are forced to maintain tenuous alliances with power brokers. There was a shared perception across all workshop participants that economic exclusion/disinvestment is used as a deliberate tactic in the creation of a rent gap as part of an overarching urban strategy to stimulate growth through development.
4.3.3 Cinquain 2
Here I analyse the data gathered from the second set of cinquains produced at the workshop. I will outline the participants basic assumptions about how redevelopment can occur without gentrification. To undertake this task, participants returned to their original groupings so that pictures of redevelopment without gentrification can be made from both the perspectives of value change and social exclusion. Group 1.0 views redevelopment without gentrification as equitable change made through community engagement and economic redistribution. Group 2.0 views redevelopment without gentrification as an ecological change based in sustainability and economic control by communities.

4.3.3.1 Group 1.0
Group 1.0 decided to keep the word ‘change’ as the foundation of their second cinquain. There was a challenge to this decision from StART1, who questioned the necessity for change and expressed a desire to preserve community and culture stating that if it must be changed, it should be ‘consultative’ and ‘community-led’. Group 1’s second cinquain went as follows.

One word which represents a positive future
Change

Two words which describe it
Wellbeing engagement

What can now be seen, heard, felt
Light community juntos

Four Actions that create the change
Dancing feeding growing equalising

An alternative word for line one
Justice
In the second line of the cinquain, ‘change’ is now described in terms of ‘wellbeing’ and ‘engagement’. As with the group’s first cinquain, ‘wellbeing’ here centres on a different interpretation of the value, expressing a desire to subvert the exchange value of driving the design of urban development and re-centring on designing for health and welfare. In the above discussion around ‘engagement’, the group focussed on the need for transparent design processes with the inclusion of the term ‘light’, stating that ‘the one thing we can’t do at the moment is see anything’ (FC1). As their object for this word they chose an open doorway (see Figure 17), stating in the feedback that ‘[this] is our housing that has now opened up, to whoever wants to be involved’ (WCC1). This place the locus of attention on open design processes and community engagement as a legitimate mode of redevelopment.

When describing the outcomes of their vision of ‘change’ in line three, the group’s conversation was mainly focussed on economic redistribution. The object chosen to represent community was money (see Figure 18), with ‘feeding’ and ‘growing’ being expressed in terms of investment that could ‘equalise’. The word equalising was justified in terms of ‘power sharing’ by StART1, and the group chose to represent this action using a boxing glove (see Figure 20). However, this decision was the source of some disagreement in the group. It was WCC1 who suggested using the boxing glove, with FC1 remarking ‘it could be, it’s aggressive but...’ and StART1 agreeing that she didn’t like fighting. In the end the group reached the compromise that the boxing glove could be used to represent a metaphorical fight, though the disagreement was raised again in the feedback where GCLT - from group 2.0 - pointed out that the glove is designed to provide you with some protection in the fight. This equalising was expressed particularly in relation to economy, where the group referenced economic redistribution citing ‘all the money off in the Cayman Islands’ that should be ‘spread around’ (WCC1,) as a way of providing communities with the investment they need. In the final line of their cinquain the group decided that their alternative word for the ‘change’ they felt necessary, was ‘Justice’. For this they used a piece of rock (see Figure 19) stating that, ‘justice is our rock, where we want to end up, and begin from’, reinforcing the groups key focus on equality.
Figure 17. Group 1.0 chose an open doorway as symbolic of the concept of engagement.

Figure 18. Group 1.0 chose money as symbolic of investment.
To summarise, group one still recognises the need for change in their communities, however they identify that this change needs to be designed with the involvement of the community affected by it. The group predicts that the outcomes of a participatory change will be a transparent process involving any stakeholder who wishes to participate. It is noted that for this change to be created some redistributive form of investment into the community is required to help them develop. The group see that justice has to be both the foundation and the aim of any change that can happen without causing gentrification.

4.3.3.2 Group 2.0
The second group set out to define their cinquain for change as contrary to the situation that currently exists as they perceive it. They placed emphasis on maintenance of the built environment and the social environment and defined a need for transparency to raise awareness of citizens’ capacity to act. Democratic control of the economy was highlighted as a necessary action, with the legitimacy of the state being derived from citizen participation. Group 2’s cinquain for change went as follows.

One word which represents a positive future
Sustainable

Two words which describe it
Visible commonweal
What can now be seen, heard, felt
Creative life love

Four Actions that create the change
Reciprocity cooperation justice R.E.S.P.E.C.T

An alternative word for line one
Creation

Group 2.0 focussed on ecological change as opposed to equitable change. Keeping as their object for line 1 - but now to represent sustainability - a paint brush, stating that ‘instead of covering it makes new, and it makes new sustainably’ (GCLT). Interestingly, in describing this sustainability as ‘visible’, the group were discussing activism and that the success of their community-led design projects should be made visible so as to act as a symbol of the agency of communities and the potential in their role as active citizens. This is reminiscent of Markussen’s (2013) theories about design activism, in which he highlights the prospective power of design as an ‘act of communication’ where its outputs signify the capacity of citizens to undertake action. In this case what is specifically ‘visible’ is the ‘commonweal’, an antiquated Scots term meaning ‘the common wealth that we have to share’ (FCI2). This alludes the idea that redevelopment and regeneration have to be sustainable but sustainable in a way that is visibly for the common good.

In the third line, the outcomes of a sustainable model of redevelopment are delineated, highlighting again the creativity necessary for sustainability and illustrating a picture completely contrary to the first cinquain. Now the causation of early death has been replaced with life, and the feeling of despair has become a feeling of love. As with group 1.0, in line 4 of the cinquain whilst discussing the actions necessary to create change sustainably the question of money was raised. In their feedback the group stated of money that ‘we control it now; it is controlled by the commonweal’ (FCI2). In contrast to group 1.0, here the emphasis is on economic control by the community - as opposed to redistribution through investment – with the assumption being that it will be controlled by the ‘commonweal’ or common good. In the final line the group offered as an alternative word for sustainability ‘creation’. They chose as their object to symbolise this creation the same scroll as they used in their first cinquain, only now the social contract has been filled again, indicating the creation of a new social contract.

To summarise, group 2.0 views redevelopment without gentrification as redevelopment that is undertaken in a sustainable manner, that is evidently in the shared benefit of all. The outcome of this sustainable redevelopment should be to reverse the destructive trends of current models. The group viewed it as necessary in achieving sustainability, that some degree of economic control be given to communities as part of the establishment of a new social contract.

4.3.3.3 Cinquain 2 summary

In the two pictures of redevelopment without gentrification, the groups continued to work through the lens of change. What they created can be categorised broadly as equitable change (group 1.0) and ecological change (group 2.0). The picture of equitable change focusses on participation in the design process, with the group highlighting the redistribution of wealth through investment as a necessary action in achieving equity. The picture of ecological change assumes that sustainability is achieved through development...
designed in the best interests of all. It emphasises the creation of a new social contract that reverses the destructive forces of current models and highlights the need for some form of economic control by the community, perhaps in an effort to cut loose one of the threads tying designers to the ruling powers.

**Cinquain 2:**
**Redevelopment**
**without Gentrification**

**Cinquain 2: Group 1.0**
*Picture of equitable change*
- Open community engagement in design
- Economic redistribution through investment
- Equity in design process and outputs

**Cinquain 1: Group 2.0**
*Picture of ecological change*
- Sustainability as a founding principle
- Economic control by communities
- Creation of a new social contract

*Figure 21. Data collected from group 1.0 and 2.0 cinquains for change.*

4.3.4 **De-brief**
In this section I will detail the question and answer discussion that was undertaken with participants as a de-brief at the end of the workshop. The discussion mostly covered if/how participants found the workshop to be useful, if any use could be made of the connections made at the workshop going forward, and if/how the activities/insights from the workshop could be useful to other CLD initiatives.

4.3.4.1 **What have you discovered or rediscovered about yourself, your own project or other projects today? What were some key moments?**
WCC1 found the workshop to be experientially valuable and reinvigorating. She was reminded of work WCC had done early on in their project when the members’ drive was higher, describing the experience in the following terms.

*This is kind of very energising, I wish I could go home and drag those original hundred people back. Because it's really energising and gives me a sense of purpose. Whereas we’ve been plodding and plodding and plodding. For so long, coasting and we did several exercises like this when we were setting out and I normally never work like this, so it's quite challenging.*

When asked if there were any key moments in the workshop that she found to be energising, the button mapping exercise was highlighted. This was in part because the exercise is so simple to facilitate, but it was also noted that buttons have a narrative and human quality that enables emotional engagement.
Probably the buttons ‘cause I thought that is so easy to do. You know, I’ve got a button tin, I’m sure we’ve all got a button tin. And the thing about buttons is that we’ve all got family history that plugs into them.

On the other hand, FCI2 felt the benefit of the workshop was in situating the work of all the CLD initiatives in a wider political context. Highlighting a feeling of consultation fatigue, she nonetheless drew inspiration from the work of other initiatives in the room.

I’m quite interested in the fact that some of us started to share this view of the bigger picture, and for me that is really important because no matter how much we do this (and sometimes we love it cause it’s wonderful) but it just pains me that we do it again and again and again, so politically there has to be some action. And it’s always hard, but I was really encouraged by the Momentum thing (Wards Corner deselection of Haringey councillors in collaboration with Labour Party lobbying group Momentum) ‘cause I thought yes, if democracy is not working and I believe in it passionately, then get rid of them.

Whilst admitting that she often struggles to see the impact in workshops of this sort (having participated in them multiple times), FCI2 nonetheless points to the value in the participants building a shared view of the wider context. Other participants (StART3 and WCC1) echoed that the value of the workshop was not so much in the discovery of projects they were unaware of, but in the potential of the connections.

4.3.4.2 Being in the room you have worked/co-created/made connections. What can you do with these connections? How can you take them forward? How can you support each other? How can you all stay connected?

In the discussion around connections it was noted by FCI1 that it would have been advantageous to know which organisations were attending the workshop beforehand in order to know one another’s work better and plan potential strategic partnerships. It was also noted that StART and WCC already have some links, but plan to work together more in the future (members of WCC had requested that StART attend in order to build this relationship). There was some appetite expressed to build on the connections made at the workshop going forward with FCI2 asking how these connections can be built into a movement. StART3 gave this reply.

What we’ve got here is a National CLT organisation and in London we’ve got a London CLT organisation. And this is the way that we can make standards, but more importantly fulfil the promise of this day, which is to find out the great stuff that is happening…So, I would say, doesn’t have to be a national CLT but it does seem obvious. Let us get together in the national group we’ve got and try and make it make us into an industry with standards.

There was some objection in room to the idea of standardisation (particularly from StART1), with FCI2 suggesting that visiting one another’s projects might be a better educative activity. Here the group asked about potential funding opportunities to cover travel to visit each other at their project sites, with StART1 pointing out that ‘meetings conferences and
workshops are all great things, but we could also be travelling and meeting at each other’s campaigns’.

4.3.4.3 There are other communities that are at the beginning of these journeys, how can the work we’ve done today, your experiences and knowledge be shared with them?

StART2 stated that her organisation already conduct outreach with community groups in an effort to engage outside groups in the work that they do. GCLT added to this that hers and other community land trusts (CLT) stories are held by the CLT network as a resource that would be accessible to any new CLT’s being formed. FCI2 on the other hand stated that the experiences of the participants in the room could be used for political education.

One idea that existed in Scotland but never really got lift off was the idea of a people’s college. And it was not a real college it was an idea of political education from experience and it was like a virtual college... we need to get us all to kind of work out what’s going on and to kind of have summer schools and winter places which the OU might be supportive of. But something that's really powerful, not just learning about how councils work or something but a bit more of a - not to be rude - a higher level of stuff about community action and taking back control of our land.

Whilst groups in the room recognise part of the work that they do already is engaging with other community organisations, FCI2 is pointing to the potential of CLD initiatives using their experiential knowledge as a kind of training for organisations in their early stages.

In sum, during the debrief, 2 participants (WCC1, FCI2) indicated that the CA workshop was a reinvigorating experience, particularly for cases who have been active for longer periods of time and might be struggling with fatigue. It was also noted by WCC1 that the activities in the workshop are affordable and easy to facilitate, perhaps indicating that a transferable resource could be created to help organisations facilitate similar workshops themselves. FCI2 saw that most of the workshop’s value in participants building a shared view of the work that they do in a wider context and taking inspiration from the stories of other organisations in the room. Whilst some informal connections were made during the workshop (LCNC offering support to WCC in setting up a community kitchen) and previously established connections were built on (StART and WCC), suggestions as to how new connections can be used in future revolved around the setting of standards (StART3) - which was met with disagreement by StART1 – and as an educative network. As for the form this education could take two suggestions were made, first that workshop participants could visit one another’s projects in an effort to learn from various practises and the second was that workshop participants could set up training sessions such as summer schools to build the capacity of CLD organisations in their earlier stages.

4.4 Conclusions

The Figure below provides a summary of the data collected through the workshop activities:
Figure 22. Data as collected at each stage of the workshop.
The participants’ basic assumptions about gentrification can be interpreted as pointing to an understanding of gentrification as both value change and social exclusion. The value change view sees the problem of gentrification as a conflict between two competing interpretations of value – use value and exchange value – with exchange value ultimately holding hegemony over redevelopment. The social exclusion view of gentrification on the other hand sees the problem of gentrification as arising from the marginalisation of certain sections of society through a set of exploitative social relations, resulting in disinvestment in services and the built environment. Both views are consolidated in the understanding amongst participants that economic exclusion in the form of disinvestment is a deliberate tactic in the creation of a rent gap between the exchange value of a building and the speculative value of the land on which it is built.

Participants were unanimous in agreement that neoliberalism was the ideological force driving gentrification, defining their pictures of CLD in both cases as in some sense defined by it. In the button map created by group 1.1, the value change created by neoliberalism is viewed as an illegitimate form of power which exists externally to the democratic power of the state. In this picture, CLD is described as sitting “beneath” a set of socio-spatial issues created by this neoliberal value change, with some disagreement as to the ability of CLD to resource those worst affected by it. This can be thought of as viewing CLD as self-help, an attempt to provide some form of social safety net to limit the impact of the socio-spatial issues they associate with gentrification. Group 2.1 on the other hand created a picture of CLD as a single movement against the neoliberalisation of space. They described this movement as in conflict with a group of power brokers, with whom – as a result of what the group perceive to be a large concentration of authority and assets – CLD must have relations, though the efficacy and integrity of these relations is called into question.

In both groups’ co-creation of ‘pictures for the future’, a desire to fundamentally reconfigure the social relations underlying gentrification is expressed. This reconfiguration is expressed in terms of redevelopment being equitable and ecological. Both these visions of change wish to subvert the hegemony of exchange value in the design of urban development, situating the value of development instead in citizen welfare, democratic control, and sustainability. I posit that these central assumptions about gentrification, the role of CLD, and about the nature of their relations to power, inform the style of the actions each organisation chooses to undertake in their projects. The style of these actions can be categorised into two typologies; direct acts of reconfiguration of the social relations which create gentrification and indirect acts of reconfiguration of the social relations associated with gentrification. A direct reconfiguration can be classed as any design process or output in which an attempt is made to alter the social relations and power dynamics between actors as they design. An example of this could be a community organisation using methods outside of formal channels (such as direct action) to leverage a developer or local authority into donating land over which they would then have the authority to design. An indirect reconfiguration by contrast, can be classed as any design process or output which, whilst designed without altering social relations or power dynamics in the first instance, is designed with qualities which endeavour to embed new social relations or engender new power dynamics in an envisaged future. This could include housing complexes with communally owned/shared outdoor spaces, designed with the intention of engendering social relations of mutual aid.

A genuine reconfiguration of the social relations of production would vastly improve the capacity of community organisations to tackle socio-spatial issues such as gentrification.
Even in cases where a genuine reconfiguration is not possible, CLD may still offer opportunities to build more resilient communities capable of limiting the socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification through the designs toward self-help.
5 Semi-structured Interviews

5.1 Introduction

In the creation of workshop artefacts, participants broadly categorised their understanding of the interrelation between gentrification and CLD practise as a) competing interpretations of the value of urban space – use value vs exchange value – and b) the hegemony of exchange value and the resultant social exclusion from the marketplace, the processes and procedures of the state, and from urban space itself. In turn their view of CLD entails a) community self-help that is used to tackle the socio-spatial issues they associate with gentrification and b) the formation of social movements against the neoliberalisation of urban space. In both cases there was unanimity in agreement that the competitive market-based principles of the neoliberalisation of urban space were the underlying cause of gentrification. Both the above framings of CLD practise were made with the understanding that in order to tackle gentrification the tensions between these competing interpretations of the value of urban space must enter into confrontation as part of the construction of a new configuration of social relations (i.e. how actors relate to the sites of design and how these actors relate to one another in the design of housing). It becomes necessary then to understand how participants understand how the specific configurations of these relationships are attempted to be reconfigured through CLD practise.

At the interview stage of the research participants were asked to identify the key players associated with their CLD project. In some projects this identification of players was undertaken at a more detailed level of abstraction than in others (e.g. it is not only a local authority that is identified, rather specific actors/sets of actors within said local authority) but in all cases the key players can be categorised (and in several cases were so by participants) as existing at their most fundamental level as interactions between public, private, and civil actors. This combined with participants’ framing of gentrification as the neoliberalisation of urban space situates this research within the literature surrounding the relationship between neoliberalism and the civil or third sector. This civil sector is generally regarded as the sphere of society existing between private actors (the market) and public actors (the state) (Meegan et al., 2014). From this viewpoint the relationship of civil society to neoliberalisation becomes central, as under neoliberalism localism initiatives are seen to partner state actors with civil actors to build community consensus whilst applying competitive market principles to the sector (Larner and Craig, 2005). The question as to participants’ framing of CLD as some form of subversion of neoliberalism then becomes whether or not we understand these initiatives as accommodative compromise with neoliberal principles or as ‘interstitial spaces’ - locally situated subversion, appropriation, and prefiguration of its social relations (Williams, Goodwin and Cloke, 2014). Participants’ assertion at workshop, that CLD can be resistant to gentrification in the sense that it can act as community self-help and build social movements against neoliberalisation would suggest the latter, with CLD in this sense entering actors from across civil, public, and private spheres into a renegotiation of the distribution of authorities, capacities, and resources as part of the construction of new configurations of socio-spatial relationships which govern the production of urban space.

In the following, this thesis will analyse data collected from each case at interview stage using the resource in Figure 2.
5.2 London Community and Neighbourhood Cooperative

For the purpose of this chapter one of LCNC’s founders and member of the management team coded LCNC2 was interviewed.

5.2.1 Where you were

LCNC began within a social network of home educators who – conscious of their own aging and disabilities – endeavoured to set up a housing cooperative as a self-help initiative to support one another in the face of unaffordable housing and the potential for social isolation. As home educators, the group were keen to build a community space as a permanent home for the ‘Otherwise Club’ - a non-profit organisation providing education and training within the home education community in London – and a place where their community could live intergenerationally in order to build a network of support. Upon undertaking the task of establishing a housing cooperative LCNC began to incorporate a broader spectrum of socio-spatial issues affecting London into their thinking, highlighting a lack of affordable housing and homelessness in the city.

[W]e wanted to live in a different way because we are used to being different in thinking about home education and thinking about things differently... You know seeing as there is a housing crisis and a climate change crisis and a crisis of culture or sociality, or mental health... We have to live in a different way. There’s also issues of homelessness and migrants, people who need homes in some other kind of way. We thought “we want a place that can accommodate all these things”.

LCNC’s perception of the issue of gentrification exists in the abstract. Not being posed with any immediate threat of displacement - other than a lack of access to affordable housing – their work acknowledges the prevalence of developmental issues in the city of London and their work aims to build resilience against them pre-emptively as a ‘centre for resistance and resilience as gentrification happens all around us’.

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[Diagram]

Unaffordable housing
Mental health crisis
Homelessness
No permanent space for home education

Threat of social isolation
Climate crisis

WHERE YOU WERE
5.2.2 Where you hope to be

LCNC envisages a sustainable and socially-just way of living in the future. The theory underlying their design has its basis first in ecology, emphasising self-sustainability and alternative energy. To this end their plan is to build an intergenerational apartment building favouring a structural straw bale eco-build that includes water capture and space for urban farming. As part of their ecological theory the group see space as a resource and prioritise living in small but equitable units as part of their designs. The plans for the apartment building allocate 18 square metres per user (below the legal allowance of 37 square metres), with no load-bearing internal walls so that space can be distributed/redistributed evenly as members come and go. The justification for such small living spaces is that the arrears in personal living space is compensated for with communal space. LCNC emphasise well-being through communality both internally within their housing cooperative and externally, drawing a distinction between the ‘community’ (communities of interest such as home educators) and the ‘neighbourhood’ (the people who live in the locality). In order to achieve this internal/external communality LCNC constitute themselves as a multi-stakeholder cooperative, made up of residents who live in the intergenerational apartment building, users of the community space from the neighbourhood, and potential non-user investors who may invest in the future. LCNC has a clear constitution laid out in preparation for the cooperative becoming a reality, which LCNC2 lays out as follows.

So, the housing coop will manage the residents’ part of it. But then we have this users category... Users have 30% of the vote and that means anyone who uses it. But when you join you have to say whether you are a user or a resident. Also, we have non-user investors who have 10%, that’s just to give people a bit of a say a bit of a voice. So, the investors would be people who say lived in America and thought it was a great project and wanted to say here’s 10,000 pounds or whatever. So, the residents have a 60% vote because they have the most to lose and their money pays the mortgage. So, they can never be outvoted so it’s really the residents who run it. But we hope - blue sky - that the community space will kind of run itself so it will never come to this. Usually that’s true in my experience of running organisations except in a crisis. Like if there is a takeover and you have to go back to the rules. But mostly decisions are made by whoever is using it really. So, there’ll be workspace that residents or neighbours or anyone can use. It’s very important that it feeds into the local neighbourhood. That’s why we’ve got neighbourhood and community in our title...So, we’re hoping we’ll have both types of people in and out of the place all the time. I think there will be some tension between the residents and the people who come and use it, but we’ll have to figure that out.

Communality and its connection to well-being form part of LCNC’s picture of sustainable and socially just living in the future. Through communality they hope to design and
construct a support network for community self-help. This fabric is made up of informal resources of face-to-face contact (childcare, help with shopping, etc.) and also part of the formal structures of LCNC. The cooperative aims for these formal structures to include the provision of financial support through a mutual aid fund - available to both residents and users – and for the community space and workshops to offer formal/informal training and education. Each of these underlying frameworks - ecology, equity, and communality - form part of LCNC’s vision of living sustainably in the future.

Intergenerational apartment complex

Large communal space

Mutual aid fund

Structural straw bale

WHERE YOU HOPE TO BE

Water capture

Small living units

Urban farming

Eco-build

Formal/informal training and education

Figure 24. Data relating to theory as collected by LCNC2 and researcher

5.2.3 The players
Citing LCNC as the first key stakeholder in this project, LCNC2 divided the cooperative into two groups; the management team and the members. Membership of LCNC costs a single payment of £1, which buys members a share in the cooperative. LCNC2 explains however the process of joining the management team.

There is the management [team] and that’s hard. Well you just have to say you’d like to and then we give you roles. I think it’s a 6-month probation and you can’t vote at meetings for 6 months. But we wouldn’t stick to that unless it was a very important thing and then after that you’re in. So, you have to just join. We [management team] are the only members at the moment. We haven’t done a membership drive because we haven’t had a site. But now we have a site, we have a place, we’re just starting to think about that.

LCNC’s management team works using a deliberative process of consensus decision making. One benefit of their currently small membership is that they are able to establish a working ‘ideal consensus’ (Richardson & Connelly, 2005), meaning no decision is made without unanimity in agreement. LCNC2 also included LCNC’s external partners as part of the
cooperative, citing other community-led housing groups in the area such as CLT Walterton and Elgin Community Homes (WECH) with whom LCNC have explored the option of working collaboratively across their CLD network in order to bid for land and funding.

Next LCNC cites the public actors at various levels such as the Greater London Authority (GLA), Westminster council and its planning department, and Queens Park Community Council. Each of these stakeholders is mentioned in relation to their authority over land and its use, making them essential stakeholders to ‘have onside’. Finally, private actors are cited as granting access to resources and services. These private actors include financiers such as the Ecological building Society and the Unity Trust, and solicitors to negotiate how the land will be held by the cooperative.

5.2.4 The project
Establishing the formal structures of LCNC was undertaken as an iterative process. In the early stages of their project the founding members were aided in the building of their organisational infrastructure and constitution by their access to expertise across a community-led housing and cooperative network. By working with Radical Routes – a so-called cooperative of cooperatives – the founding members of LCNC were facilitated and granted access to finance in order to establish first the London Community Housing Cooperative (LCHC). The original aims of the cooperative were to use funds generated to finance the provision of a community space elsewhere; however, upon discovering that funding external activity is outside the legal framework of a housing cooperative, the group engaged further expertise.

We realised that first of all it [the housing cooperative] wasn’t what we really wanted, and second of all it wasn’t going to get us to where we wanted. So, then we were able to get some help from the co-op development hub and spent about 18 months meeting every 2 or 3 months... So, the coop bank used to have 2% of its money went to this organisation which you could apply to and we said well you know we’re a housing coop we want to do more, and we’re in London and you’ve got to raise a lot of money in London. How can we make this work? So, we got on to this... we had 10 days of expert consultation. So, through him [co-op development advisor] and this work we formed LCNC. He was the one to tell us that the housing can’t fund the community space.

This continual engagement with experts facilitated LCNC in developing a formal constitution for their work ahead of engaging potential members. This engagement with expertise extends as far as the branding of the work that they hoped to undertake and led to LCNC’s development of their theory of a so-called “Six Mix”, conglomerating all the services and space the group hoped to provide into a model for sustainable and socially-just living. These six activities illustrate LCNC’s holistic understanding of the socio-spatial issues they wish to tackle through their work as a cooperative and include:

1. Intergenerational living through the design and development of a fair-rent apartment building.
2. Financial support through the provision of a mutual-aid fund.
3. Formal and informal learning and training through the provision and design of workspace.
4. Healthy eating and cooking through the provision and design of a community kitchen and café.
5. Urban agriculture through the provision and design of community gardens, farms, and micro-dairy.
6. Communality through the provision and design of a community space.

This final iteration having moved from housing cooperative, to community and neighbourhood cooperative to a Six Mix builds a vision for what LCNC hope will be a transferable model of sustainable and socially just living.

[W]e're saying that this is something unique, and I mean it’s not that unique, but it is unique in the way we are configuring it we think. [It is] a Six Mix project and LCNC is one instantiation of it, but there could be Bradford six mix or Paris six mix eventually.

Once the Six Mix framework had been designed, a process of building consensus around the project with the external actors identified began. In practise this entailed the creation of information space around the project, including events, films, and the production of a design proposal to be submitted to Westminster council.

We got two big grants, one to do an event and make a film that we did with the Glass House, and that event and film was great and jumped our profile. Then we got another grant to work with an architect to do a pre-development document. This was to put everything we have together and go to Westminster with some kind of well written, written in the style of Westminster that they would expect, so that we would look reputable. It was a multi-expert event, so we wanted people there from finance and planning and councils which we did manage to get. So, it was just sort of across the board talking about community-led housing and how difficult it is, what does it look like, and what does it do for you and how could it benefit you. To just sort of open people's eyes to it. He [the architect] helped us find a couple of the sites, we’d found a couple and we talked about them and looked at those and married up the policies at all the levels, both Queens Park Council, Westminster Council, GLA, National building policies, with what we want to do so that we look right in the centre of things and they don’t have to think "Do we want to do this?" and also to explain the project because it is quite complicated, I think. It was to look at each site and work out just roughly how many flats you could have on it, what that would cost, what it would deliver. What's in it for Westminster as well. That we would fulfil various policies and we would be building housing.

These information spaces, both the event and the proposal are the first instance of LCNC working externally with the key stakeholders they identified and demonstrates a clear desire for each key stakeholder to consent to the realisation of the Six Mix project.
5.2.5 Transitional Qualities

LCNC’s decisions/actions are framed by a theory based in ecology, equity, and communality. Within this framing the most prominent design feature the group proposes is the provision of small living spaces. This is a design feature that foregrounds first ecology based in LCNC’s belief that space be viewed as a finite resource to be conserved, equity in the provision of 18m² per person within the building, and communality through the belief that small living spaces and large communal spaces will drive residents towards communal living.

[It’s] community by design in some way. But also, being involved in other peoples’ lives is very important. It’s not just that you are living in a housing block that happens to have a community room downstairs that you go to once a year on Christmas, it’s a different way of living.

The desire to design spaces in which communal associations are encouraged has its basis in LCNC’s association of communality with well-being and resilience against socio-spatial issues such as social isolation through the construction of a neighbourhood-based fabric. A second design quality aimed at the construction of this neighbourhood-based fabric is not a spatial quality of the design, but it’s use. LCNC’s aim for the apartment building to be an intergenerational housing complex is based too in this belief in the potential of communality to build resilience.

It’s for me what a village is, what a neighbourhood is, in countless ways, in very subtle ways, and in lots of layered ways, it’s not just me babysitting for your kids so that you can have a night out but it’s your kids growing up with an older person or somebody that’s got a skill. It’s a thickening of the sociality, a more complicated and...difficult to explain or understand way of relating together. That has to be re-encouraged because we are losing it. A lot of people don’t know how to talk to kids or old people or some other kind of people. We can’t just get into ghettos that look more and more like us so that we feel comfortable.

These transitional design qualities are what LCNC believes will help them make the transition from the socio-spatial issues that affect their community such as homelessness, social isolation, and lack of affordability towards a model of sustainable living in the future.

5.2.6 LCNC Summary

To summarise, LCNC have a broad understanding of socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification such as a lack of affordable housing, social isolation, and homelessness. They view these socio-spatial issues as within a broader framework of sustainability and social justice. Working within this framework their designs prioritise ecological builds, treating space as a finite resource, consequently minimising living space, and promoting well-being through communality and the provision of large communal spaces. Through the promotion of communal associations and the provision of formal/informal tools and services their designs aim to build a neighbourhood-based fabric as a system of support that can build resilience amongst their members and the locality against the socio-spatial issues identified above. The group’s internal work utilises ideal consensus decision making, meaning that all design decisions are made with unanimity in agreement amongst their members. In their external relations with key stakeholders LCNC also work to build consensus around their concept of a six-mix project, although naturally this work is towards a pragmatic consensus
requiring only formal agreement from actors with jurisdiction over authority/resources. LCNC’s work as a CLD initiative aims to limit the impact of the socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification on their members and the locality through the provision of formal/informal tools and services and the construction of a neighbourhood-based fabric.

5.3 We Can Make Homes

For the purposes of this chapter, project lead coded WCMH was interviewed.

5.3.1 Where you were

Knowle West is a low density, mainly residential neighbourhood in the south of the city of Bristol. For KWMC members, housing represented a significant problem/need in the area, with approximately 500 locals on the council house waiting list (in a ward of 13,300). This failure of housing provision to meet need was coupled with feelings of frustration amongst Knowle residents that the current pathways to housing were failing.

I think there was a general frustration with the usual way that anyone gets to access housing. So, it’s either you have to beg, borrow, steal, from all your relations to try and get on the property ladder where it’s quite impossible, or you have to try and prove how incapable you are, so that you can get that last resort council housing. It is our sense that both of those strategies are damaging in their own right, because they divert capital from other productive uses and bury it in property or they make people lose all sense of agency and have to prove that they have no agency in order to get a house, which is very damaging in itself...If you try to do the market route [to housing] then that is damaging because you are spending 90% of your salary on that and not on anything else, so at a societal level as well if all money is diverted into housing then it isn't doing other things like helping people set up businesses, or investing in other things, or saving for a pension. All the other things you could do with money if it wasn't stuck in bricks and mortar. It has a social impact; it has an economic impact. It’s quite hard to be enterprising with nothing.

Housing in the area is a mix of tenure and ownership, with approximately 40% of the housing stock being owner occupied, another 40% being council housing, and with the remainder being a mixture of housing association and private rent. The central problem for Knowle West as KWMC sees it, is a lack of accessible and affordable housing, resulting in frustration at current pathways to housing in residents which tie local capital up in housing creating a broader negative economic impact on the area.
5.3.2 Where you hope to be

The ambition of KWMC and the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project is for people to be able to deliver their own housing at the point of need. This entails a localisation of the means of producing housing through the utilisation of local expertise and resources. As a low-density neighbourhood, they are concerned that current developmental models would mean demolition and rebuilding at a higher density, instead their work seeks to use space ‘smarter’. WCMH explains further.

*Citizens themselves should be delivering it because they’ve got the know-how, the resources, and the expertise to do that. But the systems at the moment are preventing them from doing that. So, it’s a low-density neighbourhood, 25 dwellings per hectare which is about half/a third of what you would build at nowadays. What that does mean is there is a lot of space scattered around, in small plots and back gardens. The land is in the hand of people here themselves, because it’s scattered in back gardens and in small plots. So, it’s not a speculative commercial approach to development where you pay a high price for a piece of land and then you speculatively think well, we could get a nice executive home on here or put something else on there. It’s more saying what are your needs, you’ve got this land here, you could solve your own housing issues yourselves.*

The hope of the project is that through a process of asset mapping of local expertise and resources that the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project will be able to develop a model enabling residents to produce their own housing through making better use of the available land.
5.3.3 The players
KWMC is a community-based organisation and has been a cultural asset in Knowle West for 20 years. The organisation’s trustees are a mixture of local residents and individuals from the city of Bristol more broadly, as well as some of the employees of KWMC who are also local residents. There is a ‘We Can Make Homes’ team, who specifically oversee the housing project as well as a reference group that includes the representatives of the City Council and key residents, to whom the ‘We Can Make Homes’ team reports to, at key milestones. KWMC has an entirely open structure, so in order for someone to be considered a member they simply have to attend KWMC AGMs. In this sense the community in Knowle West has a decent degree of pre-existing community organisation and infrastructure. The work of the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project specifically, is aimed at providing housing for what WCMH describes as ‘the community of Knowle West’ meaning individual residents and their families. In this sense, much of the project’s work was undertaken in collaboration with individuals unaffiliated to any formal organisation and in whose hands the land to be used as micro-plots lies. However, in undertaking the project KWMC also co-opted a number of formal community organisations, working closely with the Filwood community centre and utilising the networks of ‘Knowle West Together’ (an umbrella organisation of all the other community and voluntary organisations in Knowle West).

For the purpose of undertaking the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project KWMC have worked collaboratively with public sector actors such as the city’s universities (Bristol University and UWE) to work on research and development, and with the City council in order to gain authorisation for their project to go ahead. In addition, KWMC have worked with private actors Bristol and Bath Regional Capital in exploring financial models that can support the project, as well as architectural and design expertise in the form of Bristol practise White Design.
In the above mapping of the socio-spatial landscape the pre-existing community assets of KWMC have both strong connections within the community of Knowle West and expertise in art and technology. In this sense they work both from within the community and as facilitators on the project. This facilitation engages individuals from within the community and co-opt a number of other civil actors in the area. Additional expertise is gained from both public and private actors, in design, research, and access to authority and resources.

5.3.4 The project
Housing was identified as a central concern for KWMC in a meeting of over 150 members at their AGM in 2016. As stated above, KWMC’s open structure means that these 150 individuals included residents of Knowle West and interested parties from the city more broadly engaged in a collaborative process of problematisation from which housing emerged as the top issue. Having been provided with this mandate by their membership, KWMC undertook a six-month process of academic research with UWE exploring the problem of housing and potential options, as well as research and engagement with families and individuals in Knowle West through art-based scoping activities. WCMH describes some of the activity as follows.

So, Charlie [anonymised] made a mobile wallpaper making machine and then went door to door collecting people’s favourite objects and creating a wallpaper collection. So, it was a really nice way of not just doing a survey and asking people what their problems are, you’re actually actively creating something beautiful with them. You kind of put the object down, close the lid, roll it on so you’ve got the object there and then it took about 10 minutes to develop, so you had ten minutes to have your conversation. It was softer than a survey, it was talking about what the issues are and their lives and all these connections. And then that builds into something that you can understand about what is going on and what’s important...
The other artist did longer narrative interviews and did a sound and visual installation with it. So, we created a test space, we’ve got a studio/gallery space up at the media centre. So that became a kind of live space.

These acts of design activism serve to create a theoretical and conceptual interstitial space in which the ways and norms of thinking about housing can be interrogated and engaged with critically, beginning a conversation between Knowle West residents and KWMC about how housing might be done differently. This is also the first collective act of making, in which an entire street has collaborated in the creation of a set of wallpapers. The ideas for these design interventions came from artists engaged by KWMC, however the process of making is a co-design process, with actors from a local community organisation collaborating with non-member residents. These engagements were followed by a series of multi-stakeholder workshops in which topics such as finance, regulation, and design were debated between residents, professionals, and academics in an ideation process around how to respond to the problem of housing. WCMH offers reflections on the engagements between stakeholders.

They were all really key, the point is the mix that you’re not just in one sector or silo. The point is making sure that that mix is there, and you are
respecting everyone’s expertise in the room. It’s not like you are just importing professionals and they hold all the expertise; it’s about creating space where residents and others can be in the same space and have valid things [to say]. So that’s the important thing. We as the media centre would take that facilitator role and then the professionals or the residents or the artists are there to help or just contribute and create something together. Share ideas, test ideas.

These workshops were aimed first at Knowle West residents, but the series also included workshops targeted more broadly, to housing activists from the city for instance. At each stage of KWMC’s problematisation and then ideation process, from research with the universities, engagement with residents, and workshops with experts, the desire to create a tangible creative output comes forth. Taking ideas that came forward from the workshops and combined with insights into different ways of doing housing, KWMC - in collaboration with White Design – designed and produced the TAM. White Design managed the construction process of the TAM - employing local people in the process – and worked in partnership with Filwood community centre as the TAM was constructed on their land. The idea behind the TAM’s design and construction was to demonstrate KWMC’s concept of how micro-plots can be used, exhibiting the production of a house using a place-based design process and with the residents of that place through the inclusion of the interior design artefacts. WCMH outlines the theory underlying the TAM’s design brief.

So, the design was informed by using local materials as much as possible, and sustainability, and affordability. Thinking about the issues that have been raised by people locally. So how can you localise the means of production was one of the big themes. I think because White Design are part of the project team, they are sort of embedded, so we’re not outsourcing. They’re here throughout the process. There is a link between White Design and UWE, the director of White Design teaches at UWE. Then this [prototype home] was opened and launched. Lots of people came to the opening and locals get to stay in it for free. It’s on Airbnb so it creates an income for the community centre. So, it’s a live demonstration of the value you can create.

Having designed and launched the TAM, KWMC then created a report outlining a test concept of the key components they see as a different model of producing housing. This report was used to secure funding from private financiers nationwide for the next stage of their project in which Knowle West will be used as a pilot neighbourhood to test their approach before enquiring as to if/how this approach could be replicated in other neighbourhoods. Undertaking this process entails the creation of a set of packages, these include:

- **The land assembly mechanism**: This package looks as ways of assembling the micro-plots on which the TAM can be built. In the interests of keeping the housing affordable, the project is keen to avoid any buying or selling of land. Instead KWMC are looking at an opt-in model (for either council tenants or owner occupiers), either through a dispersed land trust (shared ownership for council or owner occupiers) or
through housing as a service with no exchange of land at all (i.e. owner occupiers with the requisite capital can commission the production of a TAM on their land).

- **The financial model**: How this project could be funded as a business model and how funding is secured.

- **The suppliers’ framework**: In this package the community sets its requirements for any architectural models that will be produced - e.g. affordability, local materials, aesthetics. Designs are then submitted which meet these criteria, the current White Design TAM being the only current design but with an ambition to commission multiple design options.

- **The digital platform**: This will allow potential participants to explore design options and analyse their micro-plot, again helping the project become a transferable model of producing housing.

The ultimate aim of the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project is the development of a new and transferable model of producing housing, with the hope of attracting investment to allow this model to be rolled out first in Knowle West as a pilot neighbourhood, before being introduced to other similar low-density neighbourhoods in the city of Bristol.

In summary, housing was identified as a key issue by over 150 KWMC members at their AGM. This led to a series of scoping activities with the wider community of Knowle West including acts of design activism in which interior design artefacts were created as part of a reconsideration of ideas around housing, as well as the creation and facilitation of information and debate spaces in which the problematisation and ideation stages of the design process could be undertaken between residents, academics, and expertise. From these activities a design framework was produced from which White Design produced the prototype TAM, a small build designed to accommodate Knowle residents on one of over 2000 micro-plots identified in the area. The creative outputs of the project also included the production of four packs, designed with the intention of making this localised model of housing transferable to other low-density neighbourhoods.

### 5.3.5 The transitional qualities

KWMC believes that the housing industry cannot solve the housing crisis. From this belief their hope is that the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project will create a space in which experimental ways of tackling the housing problem can be engaged with. Their work has created that experimental space in which a prototype of an alternative model of housing production has formed. The main aim underlying the work is to localise the means of producing housing in order to allow residents to provide their own housing at the point of need. WCMH offers further explanation of the project’s transitional qualities.

> The starting point is the people and the place, rather than theories of how housing should work. So, based on the assets and resources of real people and real places. How can we remix that so that people are getting more of what they need rather than what they're told they're not allowed to have?... I think it’s that rapid making and doing. It’s not a theoretical exercise, all the way through there have been tangible things that have been made, from wallpaper to a house.
The engagements with community members around interior design artefacts pronounces an aesthetic dimension to their work, with WCMH emphasising terms like ‘quality’ and ‘care’ around their affordable designs as in opposition to a reduction in quality that she associates with the speculative model’s provision of affordable homes. Finally, WCMH highlights the ambition for the TAM/micro-plot model to be transferable as a central transitional quality of the ‘We Can Make’ project.

It’s essential that it is a transferable model. So, there are at least six estates that are similar to Knowle West in Bristol and then these types of low-density estates across the UK really. It’s about how you get to scale. Most community-led housing projects are 8 people down the pub for 8 years and maybe a house comes out of it but probably not and those that do see it through to the bitter end there is no way that they want to repeat it. So, all that knowledge and know how is then lost. So, this is more about building some of the collective tools and making it much easier to replicate and much easier to do it in the first place. Without asking that you have a grand designs budget or professional skill levels of everything.

Through the creation of a transferable resource KWMC hopes to reconfigure the social relations around the production of housing by situating the means of production in local residents’ hands.

5.3.6 WCMH Summary
To conclude, housing was identified as the central issue affecting Knowle West at an AGM of over 150 KWMC members. The ‘We Can Make Homes’ project utilised design activism, making interior design artefacts with residents to create a conceptual/interstitial space in which modes and norms around housing could be engaged with critically. This was followed by the creation of information/debate spaces in which problematisation and ideation was undertaken collaboratively between residents, academics, and experts facilitated by KWMC. KWMC believes that the ‘We Can Make Homes’ project is an experimental space in which the orthodoxies of the production of housing can be challenged. Their aim in this regard is to subvert the socio-spatial relations underlying housing as it is currently produced, localising the means of production in the belief that this will produce greater quality. The creative outputs of the project were the prototype TAM and 4 packs assembled with the aim of making the model of housing provision transferable to other low-density neighbourhoods.

5.4 Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust
Assemble architect and GCLT steering group member were interviewed for this chapter coded GCLT1 and GCLT2.

5.4.1 Where you were
The area of Granby is in the south of the city, but still close to Liverpool’s centre. Originally merchant housing connected to the city’s docks, Granby has since the 1920’s/30’s housed early generations of immigrants building over the post-war decades a vibrant and diverse community, until the 1970’s when following the trend of deindustrialisation in Northern Cities generally, Liverpool’s South Dock closed producing economic downturn and loss of
jobs in the area (Sykes et al., 2013). GCLT2 described the impact of the economic downturn as follows.

The immigrant population and the black youth were affected the most, and they were kind of based here... in 1981 there was a series of uprisings that happened, which I guess was kind of born from the frustration of the people that lived there. But also, it wasn’t just economic problems, there was lots of social problems, people say lots of institutionalised racism from the police force. So that kind of exploded in 1981, with these kind of 3-4 days of riots. I think it was the only time in England that the army have been called out, so it was completely out of control. So, there was a degree of damage that took place and the area was left in a kind of strange situation. There was physical damage, but also it changed the way people thought of the area. They thought of it as a dangerous place that you wouldn’t go.

Following the civil unrest of 1981, the area experienced disinvestment which Granby residents claim was a deliberate reaction to the rioting. Part of this disinvestment was the removal of council and social tenants from the area as the council declared the housing unfit for habitation. The extent of the disinvestment was detailed by GCLT2.

‘[Some] say it was to spread out what was a concentrated group of people across the city to try and stop things happening again...So, you found that houses started to be boarded up, the council stopped collecting peoples’ bins because they thought that nobody lived there. Police wouldn’t go there because it was seen as dangerous’

At the turn of the new millennium, Granby was selected as one of the areas targeted for New Labour’s Housing Market Renewal or ‘Pathfinder’ initiative (Leather & Nevin, 2013; W. Wilson, 2013), a program of demolition in densely urbanised areas for redevelopment at lower densities. The program ran between the years of 2002 and 2010, before a change in government resulted in its termination. During this time however, Granby’s twenty streets had been reduced to four, with the program being brought to an end before the rebuilding had been finished. GCLT2 describes the impact of demolitions coupled with high vacancy rates.

'It was left in a situation where the majority of the streets were left derelict. By that I mean in a street of 100 houses maybe only ten people were living there. But the people that were living there had a kind of pride in the area. A lot of them had lived there for a long time, 25, 30 years and had a memory of when it was a thriving area. They were generally people who had bought their houses, private tenants that had remained. They are in a situation where they can’t really sell. You know if you live on a street where not many people are living it’s very hard to sell that house. But also, they didn’t really want to move.'

De-industrialisation and the consequent disinvestment in Granby resulted in civil unrest, social exclusion, and the creation of a rent gap. Reinvestment arrived in Granby in the form of state-sponsored redevelopment programs such as the Pathfinder initiative aimed at
renewing exchange value of housing in the area through the reduction of the housing stock, resulting in the displacement of council and social tenants and the subsequent demolition of streets targeted for redevelopment. However, the termination of the Pathfinder program before redevelopment could be completed created dereliction in the remaining four streets.

![Figure 27. Data relating to context as collected by GCLT1/2 and researcher](image)

**WHERE YOU WERE**

- High unemployment
- Deindustrialisation
- Negative mythology
- Disinvestment
- Demolition (Pathfinder)
- Institutionalised racism
- Displacement of social tenants

5.4.2 Where you hope to be

GCLT’s theory of development favours terminology around “rebuilding” as opposed to “regeneration”, with much of their work focussed on an end to demolitions and the restoration of the derelict housing in the area. Their theory around rebuilding extends to the community as well as the built environment, with a requirement for any future CLT residents to demonstrate an historic connection to Granby. The CLT’s plans for development include a mix of tenure, with the restored housing being for both sale and rent. In terms of the non-tangible dimensions to their work GCLT have an ambition to turn the negative mythology associated with the area around. They see their work as part of a broader plan for “incremental development” in the area, that will go on to include not only housing but the restoration of business on the high street with an ambition for the city council and local housing associations to have a greater level of involvement. GCLT2 and GCLT1 delineate GCLT’s theory of development as follows.

*GCLT2: There is so much redevelopment or regeneration and all these words that come with a heavy weight of things like gentrification and ideas about cleansing. Whereas really, they [GCLT] are talking about rebuilding the houses and also rebuilding the local community. Obviously, there is an aspiration for the council to be more involved.*
GCLT1: What we hoped would happen was that the houses wouldn't be demolished, the shops wouldn't be emptied out, [and] that some money would be put in, probably by social landlords and probably by the council... We didn't think that we'd be doing it. We thought we'd be the pressure group.

GCLT2: The important thing for our [Assemble’s] involvement anyway was just trying to give some legitimacy to what was already happening. That's what making a document with a graphic designer and drawing architectural plans and stuff does, because then it makes it somehow more believable for the council.

The above passage demonstrates that whilst there are feelings of animosity between the community and the city council, GCLT’s desire is to build consensus amongst local stakeholders and around the concept of incremental development. Incremental development here refers to the CLT’s ambition to develop the area gradually, beginning first by bringing the houses back into use before then moving on to rebuilding business on the high street. GCLT operate a post-modern theory of development, prioritising accommodation and revaluation of the historic characteristics of their development site through restoration of derelict buildings, their theory of incremental development is similar in concept to the postmodern planning’s discussions around ‘gradual’ and ‘cataclysmic’ investment (Jacobs, 1961) believing that if money pours into an area too quickly then it creates developmental issues such as gentrification as it does not allow time for new mutually beneficial socio-spatial relations to emerge. This sits in opposition to the council’s theory of development who favour demolition and redevelopment with new builds. The group are conscious of language and theories surrounding redevelopment/regeneration and their attachment to gentrification and social cleansing and as such endeavour for CLT residents to be able to demonstrate some form of historic connection to the site. This is seen as an effort to rebuild not only the houses in the area, but the community as well helping former residents to return to the derelict streets. As part of their work they are attempting to work collaboratively with council and housing associations as a model of incremental development beginning with housing before moving on to rebuild local businesses on the high street. GCLT feel abandoned by the city council and aim to bring this social exclusion to an end by encouraging council-led development on their terms.
5.4.3 The players
Underlying GCLT’s theory of development is an understanding of the problem of scale. Their recognition of the relative limits on their ability to develop housing on a large scale is central to their theory of incremental development and their desire to have greater involvement from outside actors in the future. When asked to identify the key stakeholders that are connected to their work GCLT first identified the local housing associations, citing that they have ‘only’ restored 13 buildings so far and demonstrating their ambition for total redevelopment of the area. The second stakeholder identified is Liverpool City Council on the basis that they own a large section of the properties in the area. The final external stakeholders identified are grant agencies, in this case specifically Power to Change and the Architectural Heritage fund. As with many community-led projects of this nature the organisation is made up of a number of independently constituted groups that have sprung out of the CLT, these include gardening group ‘The Blooming Green Triangle’ and social enterprise the ‘Granby Workshop’ which is run by Assemble. GCLT1 also included both of these groups when asked to identify stakeholders.

Interestingly the Granby four streets project works across state and civil society actors but does not include any private, market stakeholders aside from architects Assemble. This is perhaps due to GCLT’s conscious avoidance of redevelopment that might lead to gentrification. GCLT1 offers the following rationale.

*The housing associations are very key, because they have brought back most of the stock into use. Housing association doesn’t lend itself to gentrification because it keeps the prices low. We’ve put a covenant on the houses that we sell. We’re very anti-gentrification because gentrification also tends to mean “white-ification”. You’ve only got to have a look at what’s happened in Brixton and Notting Hill…*
The covenant that GCLT1 mentions refers to a so-called ‘anti-gentrification clause’ placed on any of the houses the CLT sells. This clause stipulates that any future sale of the houses must be made at below market value, with market value being determined based on the median income in Liverpool. This conscious and deliberate effort to avoid practices that might result in gentrification perhaps goes some of the way to explaining the absence of private market-based stakeholders in the project.

5.4.4 The project
GCLT first formed as a residents’ association in 1993 as part of a campaign against demolitions in the area. As a result of the displacement of mainly council and social tenants, resident numbers were reduced to such an extent that a functioning residents association became untenable, eventually disbanding in 2010. The few remaining resident activists on Cairns St first made aesthetic interventions into their environment in the form of street sweeping, guerrilla gardening, and painting of the boarded-up houses. These actions included the pulling up of paving stones for planting, and painting curtains and window boxes onto boarded up houses to give them the appearance of being occupied. The theory behind the decision to undertake these unauthorised interventions is explained by GCLT1.

Basically, we just thought we'd do whatever we want because the council didn't give a shit, so we'd just do it. They weren't doing anything...We put a thing in the Echo [local newspaper] asking if anyone had old tins of paint, because we didn’t have any money. So, we were asking for old half tins of paint, so we had rainbow colours. So that's what we did. You use what you've got.

Here GCLT1 illustrates that through what GCLT perceived as their social exclusion by Liverpool city council, they were able to make unauthorised design interventions into their environment without contestation. These aesthetic acts of communication were made as a challenge to the disinvestment and displacement in the area, juxtaposing the obvious dereliction with signifiers of life and habitation. At this stage the residents, with relatively few assets, crowdsource the materials to undertake these activities.
This same logic was applied in the undertaking of the Granby market. Demonstrating that the residents had an ambition for the high street to be back in use from very early on, the market was first undertaken again without the authorisation to do so. GCLT1 explains how the expansion of activity undertaken by the residents was a natural process.

Nothing is done in isolation, it's organic. So, we started sweeping and planting, then we started the table sale and that grew into the market. The market is growing, it’s got 70 odd stalls, it started off with three tables and that now runs once a month every month whereas it used to run just for 8 markets a year. And we’re legal now and agreed with the council because it just started out as an anarchist market on this street.

It is common for CLD initiatives to utilise open ended processes of infrastructuring when in their early stages. In the case of GCLT it is clear that the original ambition was not to undertake the redevelopment of housing in the area, but that rather a series of activities were undertaken to improve the sense of well-being in the area. As with the gardening and painting of the streets above, we see again the role that citizen action undertaken without the authority to do so has to play. These actions are undertaken as a form of self-help, with citizen actors undertaking roles and providing services that the state and market have not provided. Here the purpose of the street market is two-fold, first it draws people back into the area and goes some of the way to reducing the sense of social isolation felt by residents, and secondly demonstrates the appetite for at least small-scale enterprise in the area, in
line with GCLT’s future ambition to bring the high street back into use. This new campaign
group constituted themselves as a CLT in 2011, with GCLT1 offering the following
explanation.

Then Robert [anonymised] who had worked for pathfinders decided his
white, middle-class guilt was too much, so he came in and helped set up
the CLT. We’d looked at that as a residents’ association and didn’t know
how to do it. Robert was very energetic and pushed and said, just do it
ethically but do it. Morally you own this, no one else wants it so let’s just
set it up and then see what happens.

The residents’ actions remained at small scale community activism and organisation. This
served to draw attention to the socio-spatial issues affecting the area and helped the
residents in their efforts to lobby for council intervention by raising their profile. It was not
until 2013 when a social investor who was looking for a philanthropic project selected
Granby as an area where he thought he could help. GCLT2 and GCLT1 explain the process as follows.

GCLT2: The CLT always had ambition of rebuilding the neighbourhood, but
it was really when the social investor got involved in 2013 and said he
wanted to work in the area. He loaned the CLT like half a million pounds
and said that he would invest another 5 million rebuilding this street -
which actually never happened - but it suddenly appeared that there was
funding, and once you’ve got a bit of funding the CLT were able to raise
capital. They got a grant form nationwide because it could be matched
against the half a million. So, once you start to get a bit of funding you get
more and once you’ve got that then it becomes a real project. Then they
could employ us to do designs and so on and so forth.

GCLT1: We didn’t think that we’d be doing it. We thought we’d be the
pressure group...So what we wanted was to apply pressure to stop
demolition and get the houses back into use...What we hoped would
happen was that the houses wouldn’t be demolished, the shops wouldn’t
be emptied out that some money would be put in, probably by social
landlords and probably by the council.

This is the first stage in the Granby 4 streets project that GCLT have engaged external
partners. It is at this stage that we begin to see the group’s relationship with and the role of
expertise. In this instance, Assemble are engaged as developers translating GCLT’s abstract
ideas into detailed architectural plans. Here GCLT2 and GCLT1 offer us an insight into how
the relationship between GCLT and Assemble developed, and the design process as it
unfolded.

GCLT2: So, our relationship with the CLT happened over quite a long time.
We were basically working alongside them on another project doing
designs for actually not their project, but they were in the room. For like a
year or so before we worked with them. So, I think that helped create quite
a trusting bond between the two of us... Emma [anonymised] and GCLT1
lived on the street and we had quite long conversations sitting in their
houses. So, Eleanor had knocked through her front and back room to allow more light to go in, because the back facade of the houses are north facing which means the bay windows in the front room get south light, so the backroom doesn’t get very much light at all. So, she explained that she knocked through to make the backroom lighter. So, we did that on all the houses because sitting in the room you could tell. In Hazel’s house she has an amazing use of colour and ornaments, so she has all this painted timberwork and loads of shelves for all the different things that she has collected over the years. So that was an idea of using painted timber and it being bold and almost quite aggressive in its use. So, it’s not all necessarily all neutral colours but it can be quite bold. Then just trying to provide as much shelving and places for interesting stuff...

GCLT1: You have working groups you see, because you can’t involve everybody. So, we have a working group for the garden, we have a working group for the market, we have a working group for the houses. We have three working groups for the winter garden because there’s the build, then there is the art side, and then there is the day to day running. Then we’ll have a fourth group which is going to look at how we rent it out. So, you could belong to 6 or 7 groups if you want, or you could belong to one group, or you can belong to no groups, but all of the meetings are open they’re not closed so we make sure everybody knows, it’s on the internet, we keep it to our own streets so it’s 500 leaflets and it takes half an hour to do your own street. The working groups have decision making powers up to 5 grand, then after that it goes to board and all of the working groups the monthly report goes to board.

The above passage grants us an insight into both the design process and how the CLT is infrastructured to design. Through free association with working groups, CLT members can have as much or as little influence on the design of buildings and space in the area as they wish, with a decent degree of autonomy in terms of decision making with only large financial decisions having to go through the democratically elected board. The design process itself can perhaps be viewed as a more distinct form of user-centred design (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). GCLT2 details how design decisions were based in the historical and experiential design decisions of the remaining residents who - having lived in the uniformly designed terraced houses for as much as 30 years - have already made design interventions in their own homes to improve their lived experience within them. These designs formed part of a proposal developed by Assemble and put forward to Liverpool City Council as a plan for developing the area. GCLT2 offers more detail below.

In that booklet there is a thing about incremental development, which came from the CLT and us. So, the idea is that there is 4 streets and the social investor will take one which has the biggest houses and is in the worst condition and do all of that up, and then housing associations there was a number of houses that they were interested in doing up, there was two different housing associations, and then there was a cooperative of young people from Liverpool but not from the area, mostly architects or structural engineers who wanted to do up houses in an eco-sense, and
then there was the CLT who were a group of residents living in the streets who wanted to also do up a section. So, it’s this kind of jigsaw puzzle development of different people, different investors hopefully providing different types of housing for different types of tenants.

Here again we see that GCLT working with Assemble aim to build consensus around their concept of incremental development, working to build partnerships with who they see as key stakeholders in the area and gain the consent of the council in facilitating and authorising the development. Again, it is interesting to note that GCLT2 identifies a set of civil actors, with no private actors involved. In the end the CLT houses were bought through Liverpool City council’s “pound house” initiative, a development scheme granting housing assets to actors who have the requisite capital to restore housing as long as they can demonstrate that it is for their personal use as a residence.

Once the houses were in the CLT’s possession the process of restoring began. Through the sessions with residents detailed above Assemble produced a set of design options based on the experiential design interventions made by residents in their own homes. In addition to this, many of the designs were made with the intention of accommodating the pragmatic spatial properties of the houses, including designs for double height rooms where the floor had fallen through and vaulted ceilings where a ceiling was missing. GCLT2 offers more detail below.

There were different options and all of them were priced up and there was a mix. At first, we were going to do loft conversions and there was one design where there was going to be a winter garden where the front half of the roof was going to be glazed and there would be a double height garden space on the southside, and then people would live a kind of two bed version on the back. So quite ambitious. That was something that came through in the final designs in terms of the front bedroom. So, a lot of them the roofs had caved in, so that there was basically no ceiling. So, we just repaired the roof and insulated it at roof level and then left the front rooms vaulted. So, they’re not double height, but they’re like height and a half. Some of the houses had rear extensions already and some of them hadn’t. So, each one was looked at differently, so like placement of windows, if it had a rear extension then they were treated slightly differently so maybe there was a bathroom put in there. So, window positions were kept, so we rearranged kitchens around them. So, there are little changes between each one.

Here GCLT2 demonstrates that the processes of design ideation/iteration are undertaken with a kind of spatial pragmatism, admitting that this was in part to restore the houses at a minimal possible cost. Eight of the restored Granby houses have now been housed in partnership with local housing associations, with an additional three houses going into the development.

The incremental aspect to GCLT’s theory of development is that once the houses had been rebuilt, that the high street would be next. Following the completion of the initial eight houses the GCLT and Assemble were offered an opportunity to kick start the high streets rebuilding when nominated for the Turner prize.
In a way it was the other part of this document, which speaks about rebuilding community and that starts with the housing, but then there was also an idea at the time that the market happened on Cairn St - it was the street that was the most planted and had like chairs in the street - and so as part of this first proposition it was to move it from Cairn St onto Granby St which is what would have been the high street. Which didn't have any shops on it, but since then has got a nail bar and a hairdresser and a kind of takeaway. And we always thought that once you've done the houses the next thing is to concentrate on the high street.

GCLT and Assemble used the Turner Prize as an opportunity to set up the social enterprise ‘Granby Workshop’, producing interior design artefacts for both sale and inclusion in the restoration of the CLT housing. The workshop is managed by an Assemble member who moved to Liverpool after having worked with GCLT. In addition, the workshop presents the CLT with an opportunity to train local people as part of their work, a stated ambition in their proposal for development. GCLT2 explains further.

The idea for the business came from when we were making the houses basically, we were in the situation where the budget had been cut so much on the houses that we felt like what we were delivering was so far away from the original ambition of like having a winter garden and house or having like these amazing double height spaces. We thought it was becoming too in a way generic. So, there was an ambition to give something of care and value back into the houses, rather than just make it a basic refurb... So, we made mantel pieces from the demolition waste to put in each of the 10 houses. It was the first thing we made, and it was made from the demolition waste from the houses and... felt quite symbolic and you know there is a whole story that went with it... So, we used funding from the exhibition to put this sort of thing back in. We called them enrichments to deliver something ourselves that felt a bit more cared for and special. So, we made tiles and we made door handles. We made kitchen countertops and mantelpieces. Originally, we were thinking that part of the house’s delivery could involve training of local young people ... So, there was basically these ideas about having mentorship, like apprenticeship schemes. Which weren’t delivered during the houses. So, when the Turner Prize came up, we thought it would be amazing opportunity to firstly deliver apprenticeships and also deliver a business that could exist on the high street.

In summary, the design work of GCLT began as acts of design activism. These unauthorised aesthetic interventions were made possible - to GCLT1’s mind – as a result of the social exclusion the area of Granby was undergoing. The disinvestment and displacement of residents meant that there were few stakeholders left who could contest GCLT’s actions. Their interventions were made precisely to challenge this disinvestment and displacement as well as to improve the sense of well-being for the remaining residents. This design activism served to raise the profile of the socio-spatial issues affecting the area to the extent that the initial funding for the project arrived in the form of a social investor. This initial funding allowed GCLT to produce a proposal in conjunction with Assemble that aimed to
build consensus around their concept of incremental development in the area across a set of identified civil and public actors. The city council consented to the proposal and facilitated the exchange of property to the CLT through the introduction of a £1 house scheme. When it came to the designs for the restoration of the terraced housing GCLT worked through free association with working groups, using their experiential knowledge of having lived in the houses, combined with Assemble’s use of postmodern accommodation and spatial pragmatism in both design ideation and iteration. Once completed the houses were let or sold to CLT members who could demonstrate a connection to the area, with those sold including an ‘anti-gentrification’ clause, stipulating that houses could not be sold in future above what is affordable determined local median incomes. Following the completion of the houses and in line with their incremental development strategy, GCLT next designed social enterprise Granby Workshop as a shared resource and workspace. This interior design enterprise trains local people and contributes business to the Granby High street.

5.4.5 Transitional qualities
GCLT’s ambition at the beginning of their project was to rebuild the area, without gentrifying the area, and to turn the negative mythology associated with it around. When asked to identify the transitional qualities of their work they identified first how their renegotiation of the social relations that had created the socio-spatial issues in Granby allowed them to subvert the hegemony of exchange value and speculation over property in the area. GCLT2 offers the following rationale.

Really their [GCLT] main reason for wanting to develop the houses and rebuild the area was because they wanted the area to be better for the people that were living there and that is different to the way that cities are normally developed, because normally they are developed by a developer who doesn’t live in the area and it’s a financial interest. The idea that you buy a site, build stuff on it, and sell it, with the outcome being profit. Whereas the CLT isn’t interested in profit. It can’t lose money, but it can take on the houses and spend money without looking for a return on that. So, it means they can be more generous with how the houses are made, or it can sell them more cheaply or rent them cheaper. They’re interests, because it’s not profit, are not directed somewhere else. So, it’s not sold to someone who’s not going to live there, it’s someone who’s got a connection to the area.

What has been renegotiated here are top down models of development where economic growth is seen as the common sense underlying placemaking. Instead the CLT by removing property and land from the speculative marketplace have subverted its exchange value, allowing themselves to design entirely in the best interests of the community as they see it. In terms of changing the negative mythology of the area, GCLT1 pointed to the design activism as the most significant.

It’s not that you have to change, it’s not for us to change anything. You don’t change people. What you do is provide enough for them to be able to knock it out together. That’s all, just give people a chance, give them an opportunity… We put seats in the streets because we used to have gangs
of lads, they weren’t gangs of lads, they were young lads that lived in the area nowhere to go so they’d stand on the street corner doing the usual, rolling their… whatever they’re doing, smoking their smoke, drinking their cider, chatting up the girls. But they’re black and they stand on the street corner. “Can’t go down there ’cause there is black gangs”. What we did was provided seating. Suddenly there is a group of lads chatting. Same people, same corner. They’re sitting down now. The threat has gone.

Here GCLT1 points to the introduction of a new object into the plain of everyday life and the re-ordering of assumptions and value judgements made possible by it and renegotiating how users interact with the space. She also reiterates that the ambition is not to change people but to create new spaces and opportunities in which they might thrive.

5.4.6 GCLT summary
To conclude, Granby 4 Streets CLT is an open structure organisation in which anyone who lives or works in the Liverpool 8 area can become a member. They aim to build consensus around the 4 streets project and are politically motivated by the democratisation of their built environment, innovative design, and building a sustainable community. They are self-bounded in their work, in which they contribute by generating design solutions and evaluating and critiquing design ideas. The area of Granby had been experiencing sustained disinvestment and displacement following economic downturn and civil unrest resulting in the creation of a rent gap. State-sponsored redevelopment programs such as New Labour’s Pathfinders initiative arrived as reinvestment in the area, favouring demolition and redevelopment at lower densities. GCLT on the other hand emphasises language around rebuilding as opposed to redevelopment or regeneration with the expressed justification that these terms are too associated with gentrification and social cleansing. Their ambition was to rebuild the homes and the community in Granby, however being aware of the issue of scale they work to build a consensus across an identified set of public and civil stakeholders around their concept of incremental development. This proposal favours the restoration of the remaining terraced housing before making efforts to return enterprise to the Granby High Street. GCLT residents engaged in design activism in an effort to raise the profile of the socio-spatial issues in the area and to act as a pressure group to the council. The city council eventually consented to the proposal and facilitated the CLT’s acquisition of properties through a £1 house scheme.

GCLT design in autonomous working groups and in partnership with developers Assemble. Centralising the experiential knowledge of the residents and spatial pragmatism the partnership operated a post-modern theory of development, accommodating the historic idiosyncrasies in each restoration. This theory of development extended to the production of interior design artefacts in the social enterprise Granby Workshop, in which reclaimed materials are used to produce design artefacts for inclusion in each house whilst providing training to local people and bringing business to the Granby high street. By the very nature of being a CLT, GCLT’s work acts as a renegotiation of the socio-spatial relations governing the production of housing in their area. By removing land from the marketplace GCLT have subverted the opportunity for financial speculation against the exchange value of the properties and allowed themselves to centralise the use values of the site in their designs.
5.5 Wards Corner Community Coalition

For this interview, WCC steering group member and advocate to the Latin American market traders was interviewed (coded WCC3).

5.5.1 Where you were

In gathering data relating to the context of the WCC project, WCC3 highlighted first the imminent threat of displacement faced by the market traders. Before the creation of WCC, the originally organised community was composed solely of the affected traders, called to action by the threat of eviction. WCC3 frames the problem as he perceives it as one of social exclusion, that the Latin traders had no presence on the socio-spatial landscape and as a result were not included in the plans for development.

_The main problem in one word was invisibility. Surprisingly enough, nobody from the developers, the council (which was the promoter of this project), or in the London assembly was aware of these people. When we started the campaign obviously, they became aware of us and they said, "where did these people come from?" because as far as they were concerned it was just an empty building. They continued doing studies and plans and things and still not a word on the existence of that community. Therefore, they were not in the plans._

The exclusion from the proposed development, led to in its extreme instances the eviction and displacement of market traders. WCC3 attributes this social exclusion in part to a language barrier which made access to the processes and procedures of state actors problematic. WCC3 also attributes a lack of communication between other activist groups in the area (identifying a kind of latent social capital) to this language barrier coupling social exclusion from the official procedure of the state with social exclusion from civil society as well compounding the ‘invisibility’ of the market traders.

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**Lack of communication between activist groups**

- Threat of displacement  
- Lack of consultation

**WHERE YOU WERE**

- Struggle to access planning process
- Language barrier  
- Invisibility

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5.5.2 Where you hope to be

In WCC’s future vision we are looking for a theoretical picture of how the social exclusion they identify as the key socio-spatial issue in their case has been resolved. Their plan favours renovation of the historic building as opposed to redevelopment, with the Latin market remaining at the site. As part of their plan they envisage the management of both the building and the market being undertaken by a committee constituted of residents and traders, a legally constituted organisation that could act as a mechanism through which local assets could be utilised for the benefit of the community. WCC3 describes the central theme as follows.

*Self-determination is the right word. No risk of being in that situation again. They [the community] have a lot of skills and knowledge, it has been demonstrated through all these years. We have managed to do everything with the human capital, within the coalition and on a voluntary basis, with no budget. So, there is a lot of capacity in that sense. What it was lacking was a proper vehicle to tap into those assets and channel them into the right directions.*

As well as the material aspects of their proposed renovation, WCC’s theory of development relates also to structure and governance. In the discussion of self-determination above, WCC3 is highlighting a kind of devolved, autonomous community infrastructure and positioning this aspect of their community plan as one which will prevent a return to the current socio-spatial issues they face. This can be thought of within the view of CLD as self-help i.e. a support system through which communities can build resilience and resource themselves. This envisaged future begins to build a theory of development that not only includes production of the built environment, but also the infrastructure and reconfiguration of the socio-spatial relations governing the production of that environment. It is necessary then to understand WCC’s assumptions about how these relations are configured across a socio-spatial landscape, how they operate, and how an organised community will engage with them.
5.5.3 The players

In the identification of the key stakeholders connected to the site, WCC3 delineates a triangulation of interested parties. These are what we can term first the organised civil actors (in this case the market traders/WCC), an authority (Haringey council), and a developer (a private developer in this instance). The configuration and structure of these social relations is a crucial dimension for CLD initiatives in envisaging future models of development. For instance, the idea to produce a community plan came perhaps unsurprisingly from the market traders as they exist already as an organised socio-spatial grouping, sharing a community of place, of ethnicity, and sharing physical work and social space in the market. The authority in this case is Haringey council, operating a policy of municipal entrepreneurialism and overseeing the sale of public assets (Beswick & Penny, 2018), with the developer acting as DeCarlo’s operative appendage to the financialisation of the local environment. WCC3 offers his perspective on Haringey’s theory of development in the following passage.

*Basically, they thought that this is an opportunity, from the economic point of view. Businesses and other organisations from the east displaced by all the development going on from the Olympics, would give them the opportunity to do some development here, then these people will come here - it’s not too far from where they were - at the cost of the local population.*

Here WCC3 indicates that across this triangulation of stakeholders there exist conflicting interpretations of value competing for hegemony over the development site. To the community who WCC3 identifies on the one hand, the value they extract from the site is a use value as it grants them access to skills, knowledge, and resources for community self-help. On the other hand, WCC3 identifies the local authority, to whom the site is viewed as
an exchange value against which they can speculate in an attempt to generate revenue. The tension between these competing interpretations of value and how it is mediated and engaged with plays a crucial role in the style of CLD processes and how they unfold.

5.5.4 The project
When CLD projects are undertaken within the context of gentrification, it is common for them to be a reaction to a contextual change in the socio-spatial environment (Zamenopoulos et al., 2016). In this case the impetus to produce a community plan came in reaction to the eviction of a Latin American trader. Having already led the design and self-build of the indoor market in a Latin American style the traders already had a clear vision which WCC3 describes as “Pueblito Paisa” or the village in the city. Through WCC3’s work as a facilitator the traders produced a design brief, with a view to commissioning an architect and submitting their plan for approval ahead of the private developer’s proposal. WCC3 details the process of selecting an architect as follows.

_We tried to identify a Latin American architect, that was the original plan. Working with a Latin American architect makes it easier to communicate, it gives the Latin American community confidence, a reassurance that they are going to be understood. There was consultation within the Latin American community as to which architect to hire. The money was raised within the community, in a record time. The architect came to the other meetings and we set a deadline and he took onboard all the information that had been gathered in the initial process, and the brief was to convert all that into a plan._

In his facilitation of the ideation process for the trader plan it was understood by WCC3 that in any engagement with expertise it would be necessary for all participants to speak the same language as in this instance the role of the expert is as a developer, translating the abstract vision of the market traders into a detailed plan. Here we also see the way in which a community self-help can function, crowd sourcing the funds to commission an architect from within the community and delivering the trader plan they needed to gain planning permission ahead of the private developer. At the same time as developing their own plan, the community were also engaged in the consultation process for the private development, managing to submit 2,000 objections to the private plan in one week. Here the function of community self-help is two-fold, as an economic asset financing the development of the trader plan and as a social asset, acting as a hub of resistance against the private development. This is an important asset in this context, as the trader plan is design in the adversarial sense (DiSalvo, 2012; DiSalvo, 2010), a contestational process through which political issues and power relations are brought to the fore to be challenged. By this logic it is not that the community are themselves interested or concerned with architecture, planning, or design, but that these processes and procedures are the socio-spatial manifestation of the opposing interpretation of value with which they are in contest. This adversarial binary - the creation of an ‘us’ by the definition of a ‘them’ - at this stage in the project’s journey the ‘them’ has been defined as what we can term “power brokers” (i.e. those with jurisdiction over money, materials, and the authority to access land - the local authority and the private developer). Having defined an adversarial ‘them’, the community next must define themselves.
Having produced their plan, the market traders began a process of engagement with the wider community. The language barrier between the traders and the wider community of N15 meant that up until this stage the organised traders had struggled to access or create information space in which to promote their vision. To this end the trader plan was presented publicly to the community of N15 - an event attended by approximately 400 people – and from this meeting it was decided by the traders to invite other organisations who shared their vision of renovation as opposed to redevelopment. 30 organisations were invited into a closed partnership with the traders and WCC was founded. The adversarial ‘us’ had now been defined as a broad coalition of local organisations with a shared vision for the marketplace. At this juncture the function of the coalition was more as advocates in favour of the trader plan, than as active partners in the planning process as WCC3 explains.

In January we submitted the original plan that was more the vision of the market traders. Of course, it was necessary to have a plan that encompassed the wider communities, other minorities and so on. So that’s why we have a second [plan] which was approved in 2014. In between we had some legal battles, and we won one important issue which was about equality and how it was not assessed properly. But at the same time as we are complaining about equality assessments, we are not doing it. So, we need to do our own equality assessment to produce the community plan. Well the second plan because it was made with more knowledge, and more participation from more volunteers, because we were better known after winning that legal battle it raised our profile a lot.

This second iteration of the community plan - the WCC plan – is an iteration motivated not by the perfection of form or function of the building but by the construction of legitimacy around the concept of a community plan. The second plan was created in WCC meetings with the aid of a new architect working on a voluntary basis, meaning that the planning process within WCC was not adversarial. WCC meetings are deliberative forums in which decisions are reached by consensus. This creates an interesting dynamic in which the relations across socio-spatial actors – i.e. the organised community’s relation to power brokers – are adversarial in nature, whilst the relations within WCC are deliberative, consensus building processes. At no stage in this project’s journey have the organised community and the power brokers engaged in a design process collaboratively. Instead what has been created are two rival plans around which both groups attempt to build a consensus. It is required then that we understand the attributes of the WCC plan that they believe will aid them in making the transition to their envisaged future, free from social exclusion.

5.5.5 The transitional qualities
In some sense the undertaking of the CLD process has already helped WCC make the transition to their envisaged future. WCC3 noted that the adversarial nature of the project has led to the struggle of the Latin traders gaining international recognition, going a long way to tackling the problematic invisibility and social exclusion they were initially faced with. In addition, the process of infrastructuring that the community has undertaken has begun to construct resources and knowledge for community self-help. In WCC’s theory of development, they attribute both material and abstract qualities to the renovation of the marketplace which will aid them in the transition to their envisaged future. When asked to
detail the qualitative aspects of their proposed development and how they believe it will help them to make this transition, WCC3 highlighted a kind of cultural significance that the building holds within the community.

*The building has a certain importance for the locality, because it was an achievement of a family that had a little workshop and then it developed into a big store, which used to be of considerable importance not only in the area. Of course, things change, and a lot of things get lost, but the industrial history has a lot of importance. It hasn't been publicised much that it has been lost and that is what is happening in England. Maybe that's why people are reacting now, it is a revival of that heritage and if you look closely at these people [the traders], there are similarities, a lot... Of course, if you have a business you want it to grow. But we are losing that, that's why we don't have new businesses coming out... Markets are like ruined spaces where new things can come alive and preserve the spirit of the community.*

Conservation of community and the built environment are the central concepts here. This passage allows us to categorise WCC’s theory of development as a postmodern revaluation of buildings and space as sign systems (Jacobs, 1961). From WCC’s perspective the historic building is symbolic of aspiration and of community wealth building, in this sense the renovation of the building is an act of design activism as understood by Markussen (2013), an aesthetic disruption placed into the socio-spatial landscape of everyday life in order to create a space in which accepted ideas can be re-evaluated and challenged. Specifically, the challenge is to the post-Fordist transition from production economies to consumption economies or - in WCC3’s terms - a call for an industrial revival.

However, the transitional qualities of the WCC plan are not solely symbolic. Included as part of their proposals is for the building and marketplace to be managed by a committee of residents and traders. The self-management of the final development would place a limitation on the impulses of the local property market. The rent gap theory of gentrification dictates that if a greater rent can be actualised under a different land use or following improvements, then it is reasonable for the marketplace to make these changes even if doing so includes displacement of the current residents/users. Whilst self-management of the site does not subvert this socio-spatial relationship entirely, it grants the community greater authority over the site of contention, detaching in some small sense one of the key components in the production of the socio-spatial environment from the power brokers. In WCC’s theory, an organised and legally constituted structure would in turn aid the community in actualising latent community capital into an NBF, allowing them to resource themselves more effectively and build resilience against the socio-spatial issues that affect their community.
Figure 33. Interview resource as completed by WCC3 and researcher
5.5.6 WCC summary

To summarise, the Wards Corner marketplace has experienced the disinvestment/reinvestment cycle as delineated in the rent gap theory of gentrification. The rapid reinvestment in the area threatens to displace the Latin traders and community who live/work and are connected by the site. In response, WCC utilises a postmodern theory of development coupled with a desire for self-management of the site, valuing it as a symbol of social mobility and community wealth building. The self-management of the site proposed in their plans grants the community greater powers of resistance and resilience against the socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification. In the undertaking of their project they identify a triumvirate of key stakeholders connected to the site across a socio-spatial landscape: an organised community, an authority, and a developer. Their assumption is that these socio-spatial relations are configured adversarially, with the organised community set against a set of power brokers. With their theory constituted in these basic assumptions, they set about creating a community plan deliberatively within WCC, that was to be used as an opposition in their external relations with power brokers. At no stage in the planning process did the organised community or the power brokers engage in a collaborative design process together.

5.6 Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative

For the purpose of this research FCI steering group representative and founding member was interviewed (coded FCI2).

5.6.1 Where you were

When gathering data relating to the context in which FCI was initiated, FCI1 identified austerity cuts as contributing to a general decline in the area, with these cuts to local services resulting in a lack of community-based activity. At the time of the interview the area was still undergoing very recent high-end development. The former brewery offices along the canal-side had been demolished and redeveloped in the previous six months, including hotels and cafes.

*I think to be honest it was quite depressed around Tollcross because it had a lot of cuts to the community centre. It’s not a very rich area actually and I think it looks a bit grim to be honest round there and the canal certainly was a bit grim. Services hadn’t disappeared but they were being cut and now of course more, so it’s almost disappeared. There was a lot of anger in Edinburgh about the planning committee letting things through that people didn’t want. Big shopping centres and stuff that people thought was pretty poor actually. So, there was a lot of feeling of, I suppose, alienation about politicians and councillors, and not a big community action project around here.*

Fountainbridge is an area experiencing the disinvestment/reinvestment cycle of the rent gap theory. As a publicly owned site, disinvestment in the form of austerity incentivises the council to exercise a policy of municipal entrepreneurialism (Beswick & Penny, 2018), speculating on the exchange value of the site in the hope of ensuring a financial return. In practise this means a change in land use, replacing the industrial buildings with office space and hotels. This economic transition from production economy to consumption economy
had in turn created a fragmentation of the surrounding communities formerly connected by the industry in the area. The already socially mixed communities – along lines of class and ethnicity – now had the additional factor of being faced with a gentrification frontier (Smith, 1996) as what FCI2 describes as the ‘new business sector’ expanded into the former industrial area.

![Diagram]

**Figure 34. Data relating to context, as captured by FCI2 and researcher.**

### 5.6.2 Where you hope to be

FCI envisage a future where instead of office buildings, working class communities can live in the centre of Edinburgh. To this end their primary interest is in the inclusion of social housing in the final development of the site, with an additional desire for homes on the development to be sustainable utilising alternative energy systems like district heating. After the technical priorities of the site, FCI value non-tangibles in their theory of development citing terms like ‘mixed’ and ‘lively’. In the following passage, FCI2 outlines how the CLD initiative’s theory of development diverges with the local authority’s planning orthodoxy.

_We used to laugh when all these master planners and architects talk about vibrancy and we know what they mean is Costa coffee shops and tourist hotels. That's what they see as economically attractive... I don't think they understand what makes it an interesting area for everybody. People like quirky things. They like little workshops. They don't want everything to be all the same, sitting in coffee shops looking at other tourists... So, there are a lot of ideas about what we call vibrancy as well. I think that areas that are attractive to most people... are slightly old kind of quaint things or perhaps people working on something... You know you could wander into kind of locally run businesses or see activity on the canal boats. Just draw more people and ages in... The whole mix of the population being there._
You know some of the visuals you get for these master plans, it always amuses me. They show very smart young couples usually or people or individuals... Not usually old people, or kids, or black people. It's very mono-cultural stuff they tend to promote... It doesn't have to be art shows or exhibitions. Just people being busy. When you go to visit places something about people engaging in some kind of purposeful activity, or artistic activity, or something, it's always very enjoyable... because we've become passive consumers in some way I think.

Here FCI2 expresses an understanding of vibrancy similar to that of the post-modern planners and discussions around ‘exuberant diversity’ (Jacobs, 1961). This approach to planning considers an exuberant diversity to be a mix of land/property use, tenure, age, ownership and takes this diversity to be the ultimate aim of a sustainable and gradually implemented urban plan. FCI appears to share this postmodern theory of development, placing an emphasis in particular on a diversity of enterprise, and craft. This final point is interesting to note in relation to FCI2’s framing of their theory of development as against the move to becoming ‘passive consumers’. This situates FCI’s theory of development as against the post-Fordist transition to a consumption economy, a kind of industrial revival.

**Figure 35. Data relating to theory as captured by FCI2 and researcher.**

5.6.3 The players
In the identification of the key stakeholders connected to the site, FCI2 delineates a triumvirate of interested parties. These are what we can term first the organised community (in this case FCI and its co-opted organisations), an authority (City of Edinburgh council), and a developer (arm’s-length developer EDI). Here FCI2 begins to outline FCI’s theory of how a CLD project should be structured. The first stakeholder she identifies is the community,
however she specifically identifies the politicians as the key players, providing the following rationale.

It’s owned by the council. If it wasn’t, I don’t know what I’d be saying. But I do think people underestimate the democratic pull. People often moan, but they don’t actually engage the councillors. They just think they are rubbish. But come on they are our elected representatives. So, the councillors, the politicians, not just the officials. On this particular site the elected representatives were the key people on our side and we kind of created that relationship with them deliberately.

Here FCI2 has identified the local councillors as the ‘key’ individuals in the project and stated that a conscious effort was made to engage with them. Finally, the third stakeholder is identified as the developers, which in this project includes one arm’s length developer engaged by the council and one private developer working on a separate section of the site. Whilst the private developer was identified as a stakeholder the efforts of FCI have been focussed on the council owned section of the site. This presents FCI’s theory of CLD infrastructure; an organised community engaging collaboratively with two sets of power brokers (i.e. stakeholders with jurisdiction over money, materials, land, and authority). In the next stage of the interview the aim was to understand how the community became organised, how this engagement with power brokers was infrastructureed, and the planning process as it unfolded up and until the present day.

5.6.4 The project

When CLD projects are undertaken within the context of gentrification, it is common for them to be a reaction to a contextual change in the socio-spatial environment. Initially FCI was the work of three retired community workers who were engaged with one another through an existing social network. The point at which this initial group was galvanised to take action was when the brewery site was brought into public ownership.

The council bought it to build a school, which they have built now, what they were going to do was sell off the rest of it. Just at that time we were very lucky it was local elections and we made it a whole campaign to push the council to keep hold of it. That was really important to us that they keep hold of it because we felt we’d have a better purchase on them.

This passage is consistent with FCI’s theory of development, in which they acknowledge the need to renegotiate the socio-spatial relations of the rent gap theory. For FCI this means that land must be held outside of the private marketplace if it is to be developed with the needs of the community as its foundation. This renegotiation is a struggle between competing interpretations of value across a socio-spatial landscape, with the council on the one hand seeing the site in terms of its exchange value and the community members fighting to keep the land in public ownership to better realise its use value in their interests. The tension between these competing interpretations of value and how it is mediated and engaged with plays a crucial role in the style of CLD process and how it unfolds.

The campaign to keep the site in public ownership was the first instance of the community taking action in an organised sense and would lead to the formation of FCI. Once the land was brought into public ownership the initial group began outreach in the community, organising the first formal FCI meeting.
I think our original aims that we bashed out then were a bit the same, it was about the belief that the community should be involved in every stage of the design process. We had people volunteer to be part of [the steering group] which had about 12 members in the beginning. We also co-opted a lot of local organisations… So, we had like local housing associations, the nursery and all the other people that were kind of like co-opted reps. So that group met for the first time, elected a chair and a secretary. Set up a constitution and a bank account to get organised and then we just started having meetings about what can we do next/what needs to happen.

This passage demonstrates that the organisational structure of FCI is the first thing that is created in the project’s journey. The creation of this organisation was aided by the community’s access to expertise in the form of the retired community workers who lived in the area and who took on the role of enabling community members to infrastructure themselves. The first stage in the planning process for FCI was the creation of a community design brief. By holding an event which they termed a ‘visioning day’ the aim was to create a space in which community voices could engage in discussion and debate, building a strong mandate within the community for FCI going forward. The event was split into 5 themes:

- Social;
- Culture and recreation;
- Economic;
- Environment;
- Napier site and park.

Each of these themes detailed the desired qualities of the development for community members. These included aesthetic qualities such as a rejection of faceless concrete and glass, suggestions for specific forms such as colony style housing, and desirable functions for the development such as a mix of tenure and use. The report from the visioning day was then presented to other community groups and organisations as part of an open-ended process of outreach within the area. It is clear that FCI are interested in empowering a multiplicity of voices around the site of contestation and have utilised existing social networks to engage with as broad an audience as possible. This again illustrates FCI’s theory in relation to how to infrastructure an organised community, co-opting existing organisations and collaborating with them under the umbrella of FCI. Hereafter it is the interactions between this organised community and the power brokers – both councillors and developers – that becomes the relation of interest.

Whilst FCI places a clear emphasis on collaboration with the City Council, the engagement is not built on deliberative consensus building. The two stakeholders participate with one another agonistically, with the engagement being designed to bring power relations out into the open to be examined and contested (Inch, 2015; Mouffe, 1999, 2000). For instance, FCI’s initial engagement with the council was primarily as single-issue lobbyists, using direct activism aimed at communicating the political interests of the council to the wider community. FCI2 explains some of the kinds of activity FCI were engaged in.

Before the election we did actually have posters around saying, these are the people standing, ask them what they are going to do about Fountainbridge. Do they want it to be all these things we said it should be?
And we actually sent questions to all the candidates. It was a survey saying what do you think about this. And we published that.

However, an adversarial relationship does not alone make for agonistic planning. It was not until FCI sought to engage design expertise from the Glass-House, that an agonistic planning process was undertaken. FCI managed to secure a free ‘planning-for-real’ workshop from the Glass-House in which participants would model potential developments with plasticine. The participants at the workshop were divided along the lines of 50% Councillors, council officers, and developers, and 50% community representatives. Dividing participants in this way begins the construction of an agonistic pairing, as opposed to the two groups occupying adversarial positions. By grouping council and developers together we begin to see the creation of an ‘us’ – an organised community - by the definition of a ‘them’ – power brokers (Mouffe, 1999) with this us/them pairing engaged in a collaborative process. Creating this agonistic dynamic is touched on by FCI2 in her reflections on the workshop.

At that point there was people in the council who thought we were trouble and didn’t want anything to do with us. So, when we actually wrote to them and the leader of the council had agreed to this day, we asked him to chair it because we knew it would bring the people [council officials and developers] along, and he was supportive. But his officials, some of them were awful. One of them when I wrote to him saying we were going to have this planning day, he actually wrote back to me, saying ‘you have no right to organise this planning day. The council is going to decide what to do and there will be consultation in the future’. So, I sent a copy of that to one of the councillors and said, ‘Is this the council’s reaction?’ There was another department that were a bit reluctant. So, I was sending out emails saying that ‘I think the leader of the council will be quite disappointed if you don’t come, because so and so is coming’. You have to try and persuade them all that it’s an important event and of course they don’t think that community events are. Or they think they are going to be got at. So, there was a lot of reluctance and we had to do a lot of work to get them all out. Of course, the beauty was that they all did come and because it was playing with plasticine, modelling stuff, it wasn’t like a confrontational public meeting. But I think the thing that was really important [was] that the officials and the politicians realised they could have a meeting with the community that wasn’t antagonistic. It wasn’t getting at them, it was constructive, and I think that then enabled the sounding board to be developed.

The Sounding Board that FCI2 refers to is the main agonistic mechanism utilised in the planning process. A forum constituted in the same manner as the planning-for-real workshop - 50% community representatives and 50% council and developers - it was suggested as a mechanism by FCI and the council agreed to take part. The sounding board members – both community and power brokers - have equal power to submit papers for discussion in the forum, and it is chaired by the head of the council in an effort to lend the forum authority and legitimacy. Unlike the neighbourhood forums that exist under the Localism Act, the sounding board has no formal decision-making ability. However, FCI2 rationalises this fact in saying that the real purpose of the sounding board is as a mechanism
to ‘hold the ring’, meaning that the board is a forum in which the conflict between competing interpretations of the value of urban space can play out even if the economics and the politics of the socio-spatial landscape changes. This makes the purpose of the sounding board two-fold, not only does it enable FCI to be active participants in the planning process but also to hold power-brokers accountable for any deviation from the decisions made in the forum. This open acknowledgement of power relations in the design process is similar in nature to the Scandinavian participatory designers, particularly in its utilisation of assemblies around objects of contention (Bjerknes, Ehn, Kyng, & Nygaard, 1987; Bjögvinson et al., 2012; Ehn, Nilsson, & Topgaard, 2014). As well as the agonistic model, FCI shares with the Scandinavian designers an open-ended process of infrastructuring in which community participants are capable of setting up their own separate forums, actions, and lines of enquiry. FCI2 details an example of this open-ended infrastructuring process in relation to the struggle to include a district heating system as part of the development.

We raised it [district heating] at some meeting at the sounding board, but we could feel they weren’t going to go for it. So, we organised a meeting about district heating and we invited all the experts. So, in Aberdeen for example, the council has actually done a district heating scheme on some of its council housing and it was really successful. The other side of it was the legal side, because nowadays when you can choose your own energy supplier it’s a bit tricky if everyone has to have the same one. So, I got in touch with... a big law company here and got this chap who knows a lot about this contract stuff who came free because he supported us. We got the technical expertise from the university and then we decided that instead of us chair it we would get the Green councillor to chair it because again we knew they [powerbrokers] were more likely to come if he chaired it. [The developer] wanted to influence it, so they came along to the meeting with their architects. They were a bit suspicious with the idea in the beginning asking, ‘will it work?’ and ‘will people want it?’ and ‘investors won’t invest’ and as they put forward their worries, all the expertise we had round the table answered their queries and about half way through the meeting [the developer] said, ‘Well this could be an eco-site’ and suddenly it’s their idea and it’s all wonderful.

This passage demonstrates that when the agreed mechanism of the sounding board proved unable to further the material aspirations of FCI, the group were able to infrastructure a separate mechanism dealing specifically with the issue of including a district heating system on the site. This open-ended process of infrastructuring would be used repeatedly in FCI’s undertaking of future action.

In the visioning day report ‘Brewing New Life’ a desire was expressed to hold so-called ‘Meanwhile’ activity on the site as it would be left empty for an extended period of time. This included landscaping activity and using the site as an event space. It was agreed in the sounding board, seemingly without controversy, that the meanwhile activities would be allowed on site. Each of the activities brought on to the site in some way related to elements identified in the community’s visioning report (aside from, for obvious reasons, the provision of housing). This included:
• Temporary community gardens in line with the report’s call for greening of the site.
• Metal, wood, and glass workshops in compliance with the report’s call for artisanal workspace.
• A “Pianodrome”, a 100-seat amphitheatre constructed entirely from reclaimed pianos and in line with the report’s call event space on site.
• A community wiki-house in line with the report’s call for a community hall on the site.

In each instance these activities were facilitated by FCI, sourcing materials and funding either through community donations, sounding board partners, or grant agencies. Again, we see the open-ended infrastructuring process at work. For each meanwhile activity, FCI enabled the participants to create separately constituted organisations, FCI2 offers the following example of the process in relation to the meanwhile garden.

\begin{quote}
About 40 people came to the first meeting about a community garden. Where they asked do you want a community garden or an allotment and then they developed it. They’ve got their own constitution, they got their own bit of funding I think initially, they’ve got their own Facebook page, they’re their own organisation. They’re separate but we supported them, and they’re linked with us. We do things together.
\end{quote}

This open-ended process of infrastructuring within the community fulfils the agonistic call to empower a multiplicity of voices in the struggle for hegemony over the site. The previously empty site, surrounded by fragmented and unintegrated communities had been transformed into a hub of activity, providing access to resources, training, and social networks. Suddenly it was not only FCI with a vested interest in the site, but a network of community groups. This aspect of the FCI project features as a central concept in FCI2’s discussion of the transitional qualities of their work.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{‘The Grove’ meanwhile community garden \hspace{1cm} (Image redacted)}
\end{figure}
5.6.5 Transitional qualities
Of the work they have undertaken so far, FCI attributes the main transitional qualities to the meanwhile project. We can think of these meanwhile projects as acts of design activism in the sense understood by Markussen (2013), aesthetic disruptions placed into the socio-spatial landscape in an effort to create a conceptual space in which accepted ideas can be re-evaluated and challenged. FCI2 describes the transitional qualities of the meanwhile projects as follows.

*It was actually a living demonstration of what we are talking about. In terms of the social vibrancy and the greening of the site and the pleasure people have in it. It’s a living demonstration of what we are talking about when we say social capital or a vibrant neighbourhood. We had a mini community there if you like that came together and was very welcoming to everybody. To old ladies and to younger kids a very nice inclusive community actually. From the towpath it looked kind of like a hippy camp and I think people weren’t really sure what was going on there. Which is why we had all these events like the spring fling and so on, to invite people in and they were very well attended.*

Here the aesthetic disruption is the introduction of rustic, handmade, installations often built with reclaimed materials such as shipping containers and wooden pallets (see Figure 36/37). These activities exhibited the style of community that *could* exist in Fountainbridge and the local appetite for a diversity of activity at the site. Specifically, it challenges the post-Fordist transition from production economies and the disinvestment that created the rent gap, to consumption economies and the reinvestment that creates gentrification. This is in keeping with FCI’s theory of development and FCI2’s earlier call for an industrial revival.

However, the transitional qualities of the FCI’s model are not solely symbolic. FCI2 highlighted the capacity of the community-led vision to facilitate wealth building within the
locality, through the provision of workspace for local enterprise. This again draws our attention to the competing interpretations of value that exist across socio-spatial actors. FCI outlines how the local authority’s understanding of wealth building differs from that of FCI.

"A lot of Local Authority economic development guys are really a bit old fashioned about how they think the local economy works. They still seem to be wedded to the idea of big hotels, tourists, and that that creates jobs. I don’t always think it does. I actually think that a small local enterprise probably brings more to the local economy. The council are now actually moving towards an innovation centre, where the ground floor will be workshops for little businesses etc.

FCI’s focus on small local enterprise is an attempt to build reciprocity into the local economy. This is a challenge to the local planning convention which to this point has focussed on high-end development of services and a consumption-based economy. It is these competing interpretations of value that engage with one another in an agonistic planning process in the sounding board. It is through this mechanism that FCI have built the capacity to materially further their aspirations and work collaboratively from within the positions of power that hold jurisdiction over money, materials, land, and authority."
Figure 38. Interview resource as completed by FCI2 and researcher.
5.7 Findings from the interviews: CLD as a reconfiguration of socio-spatial relations

In exploring the inter-relation of gentrification and CLD, participants highlighted in their interviews the need for a renegotiation of the current socio-spatial relations underlying the design of urban buildings and spaces in order to end the hegemony of exchange value-driven development and its resultant social exclusion. We have seen that these renegotiations can take place through the reconfiguration of the socio-spatial relations of CLD actors to one another and to the site for which they design. This can be through the creation of new models and design outputs which endeavour to create new ways and modes of living through which reconfigured relations and systems of production can exist. Alternatively, this renegotiation can directly reconfigure the social relations underlying the production of urban space, through the creation of new forums and governance structures in which the relations of production become restructured.

It is helpful in understanding the concept of reconfiguration to consider three spheres of socio-spatial actors connected by a site: civil actors, public actors and private actors (see Figure x). In discussions of CLD our primary interest is in the role of civil actors (i.e. CLD initiatives and their co-opt). However, if our focus in this research is also towards the current configuration of relations underlying the design of urban space, it becomes necessary for us to consider also the interactions of public actors (the state, local authorities, their officials, and elected representatives – i.e. actors with jurisdiction over authority), and private actors (the marketplace, this tends to include developers, financiers, and actors with jurisdiction over resources). The configuration of the relations between these sets of actors is central to understanding how the work of CLD initiatives can help tackle socio-spatial issues such as gentrification.

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**Figure 39. A triumvirate of social actors connected by a site.**
The cases can therefore be categorised as reconfigurations within/across spheres of socio-spatial actors. Here we take reconfiguration to entail some resettlement - between socio-spatial actors - of authority over the site of design, capacities to design, and/or resources with which to design. When these reconfigurations occur “within” the civil sphere alone it is the socio-spatial relations of civil actors engaged by the CLD initiative to one another and to the site of design that are reconfigured. This can include the creation of new formal/informal infrastructures through which authorities, capacities, and resources are mediated, and/or through the creation of buildings and spaces which alter how actors occupy the site of design or how actors relate to one another. It is possible for reconfigurations within civil space to occur without the socio-spatial relations of public and/or private actors being altered in any way. In some senses this can be thought of as the typical form that CLD takes, when land is purchased from private actors by a CLD initiative, often with funding from some form of public actor. In this scenario, none of the relations across social spheres have changed, either their relations to one another, or the relation of public or private actors to the site. However, when reconfiguration occurs “across” social spheres, it is a direct attempt to alter in some sense how the relations underlying the production of space are configured, necessarily altering how public, private, and civil actors relate to one another and/or the relations of these actors to the site of design. These reconfigurations across social spheres entail the redistribution of authorities/capacities/resources between socio-spatial actors through the creation of new forums, infrastructures and/or design processes. It is necessary then to understand how participants believe these reconfigurations can be used to tackle gentrification. In the cases examined in this research these reconfigurations were undertaken either in collaboration with actors within/across the socio-spatial landscape (partnerships, agonistic processes, co-production), in opposition to one or more of these actors (protest groups, adversarial designs, social movements), or the work was undertaken in isolation as a CLD initiative (self-bounded work through free association of participants). Taking these categorisations, it is possible to classify the aspects of CLD practice within the context of gentrification against two dimensions: the type of collaboration and the locus of reconfiguration (see Figure.) In the next section these aspects of CLD practice will be used to describe and compare the 5 participating cases and how they have worked.
Figure 40. Aspects of CLD practise (participating cases plotted by researcher)

5.7.1 LCNC

LCNC’s conception of gentrification exists in the abstract, as a set of socio-spatial issues they associate with London generally rather than gentrification of a specific site. The theory underlying their design is that new modes of occupying urban space must be engendered to tackle these socio-spatial issues. To this end, the reconfiguration of the social relations of the neoliberal political economy takes place indirectly through the design of an ecological and communal apartment complex. The actual design process takes place within social relations as currently configured, in that (whilst LCNC initiate and steer the project) the only relations that have been altered exist in civil space (i.e. the relations of civil actors to one another and to the site of design). Neither the local authority’s relationship to the site (which is privately owned in any case) or to other actors has changed. The same to for private actors who are straightforwardly engaged by LCNC as a client. LCNC therefore reconfigure relations within civil space and in isolation, not designing in opposition to or in collaboration with any other actors connected by the site of design.

So, what do these isolated reconfigurations within civil space look like? As we have seen the governance structures of LCNC weigh decision making power in favour of residents, who extract the greatest use-value from the site as a living space (subverting the rentier/tenant relation based on simple transaction). Each of their underlying frameworks - ecology, equity, and communality - form part of LCNC’s vision of living sustainably in the future by attempting to reconfigure how its members relate to one another and to the site of design. As an organisation, their governance and formal/informal infrastructures aim to design and
facilitate new reconfigured relations between their members and affiliated participants, encouraging for instance mutual-aid and communality. Their work is also designed to alter how their members relate to the site, encouraging them to live and act ecologically, and associate communally/intergenerationally.

In sum, any reconfiguration of socio-spatial relations takes place within civil space and amongst actors engaged by LCNC. The cooperative works in isolation, with little desire to engage or collaborate with public or private actors beyond their role as custodians of authority and resources.

5.7.2 WCMH
WCMH’s confrontation with gentrification is manifest in a lack of access to affordable housing. Their aim is to create innovative solutions to provide housing at the point of need by localising the means of producing housing. To this end, WCMH worked with actors across public, private, and civil spaces to design the TAM as part of a transferable model of building housing on “tiny plots” in low-density neighbourhoods. As with LCNC WCMH’s attempts to reconfigure social relations occur indirectly. Their theory is that having designed the TAM, future social relations will be reconfigured, as the means of producing housing will be localised in the hands of residents of Knowle West, who will in turn be less reliant on the current relations restricting their access to affordable housing. However, the social relations underlying the design process have not been reconfigured. WCMH lead the project but public and private actors engage with the project as they would if WCMH were any other client designing housing.

What is interesting to note about WCMH, is that whilst the project is a collaboration across the socio-spatial landscape it is difficult to claim that a reconfiguration of relations has taken place at this level. Instead, the collaboration is undertaken in an effort to reconfigure the socio-spatial relations within the network of civil actors in Knowle West, altering their relationship to space through the localisation of the means of producing housing. The only sense in which a reconfiguration across socio-spatial relations is suggested is if land assembly is made available for council tenants as a dispersed CLT. In this iteration of the transferable model, WCMH attempt to alter the council’s relation to any land it grants to the CLT, removing it from council ownership to be held by CLT members in trust and thus subverting the neoliberal political economic relations governing the production of housing on it.

The aim of WCMH is to subvert the socio-spatial relations underlying the design of housing as it is currently produced, localising the means of production. The creative outputs of the project were the prototype TAM and 4 packs assembled with the aim of making this model of housing provision transferable to other low-density neighbourhoods. Interestingly, whilst WCMH work in collaboration with public and private actors, their work serves to reconfigure relations within civil space believing that the solution to the problem of affordable housing lies in the devolving the means of producing housing to civil actors within a locality.

5.7.3 GCLT
In the case of GCLT, gentrification arrived in the form of the state-led ‘Pathfinder’ initiative, where the theory of redevelopment was the demolition of high-density neighbourhoods for redevelopment at a lower density, thus raising the exchange value of housing in the area by decreasing housing stock. Having first campaigned to halt the demolitions, GCLT’s theory
underlying their designs then became about rebuilding the neighbourhood, with an ambition to build consensus across civil and public actors around their concept of incremental development. GCLT’s designs are an attempt at a direct reconfiguration of the social relations surrounding the site, having constituted themselves as a CLT rebuilt a neighbourhood which the community will now hold the land in trust subverting exchange value-led redevelopment. The group are consciously concerned about gentrification and as part of their designs have built in “anti-gentrification” clauses which dictate that first CLT residents have to demonstrate an historic connection to the area and second that owner occupied houses must be sold on at “affordable” rates, with affordability set against local median incomes.

What has been reconfigured here are top down models of development where economic growth through the exploitation of a rent gap is seen as the common sense underlying placemaking. Instead GCLT, by removing property and land from the marketplace, have allowed themselves to design adversarially and entirely in the best interests of the community as they see it, foregrounding the use value of the buildings they redesign to the residents of their neighbourhood (historic or otherwise). Interestingly, whilst GCLT reconfigure relations across public and civil space (working to bring the local council onboard with their model of incremental development) they design in opposition to the housing market renewal model of demolition and rebuilding at a lower density favoured by the council.

5.7.4 WCC

For WCC gentrification proposes an imminent threat of eviction as the marketplace which acts as work/social space is set for redevelopment. WCC’s envisaged future is for renovation of the site with the (Latin American community remaining on it) and for the site to be managed by a committee of residents and workers reconfiguring relations within civil space by granting the community extended authority over the site. WCC’s designs reconfigure directly, designing the renovation of the marketplace as a community coalition who will then devolve management of the site to a committee. WCC design adversarially but engage public and private actors through formal channels and without altering social relations as currently configured across actors.

WCC3 identifies a local authority who (WCC3 maintains) views the site of design in terms of its exchange value, attempting to generate revenue through its redevelopment. WCC on the other hand foreground the use value of the market as a social/workspace. The tension between these competing interpretations of value and the uneven dynamics of social power between WCC, the local authority, and the developer are what WCC attempt to reconfigure in their favour by winning authority over the site of design. This attempt at reconfiguration would occur within civil space, with the community coalitions relationship to the site of design being altered through extended authority, but with the site remaining under public control. Private actors’ relationship to the site would not alter either as they would have simply “lost a bid” to develop the site. Whilst reconfiguring relations within civil space, WCC design in opposition to the development proposed by private actors.

In WCC’s theory, an organised and legally constituted structure would in turn aid the community in actualising latent community capital, allowing them to resource themselves more effectively and build resilience against gentrification community self-help.
5.7.5 FCI

FCI’s site of design exists on a rent gap created by de-industrialisation and austerity cuts, with the area of Fountainbridge experiencing rapid and high-end redevelopment at the time of the project’s initiation. FCI envisage a future in which working-class communities are able to live in the area and are considered in the designs for redevelopment, including social and sustainable housing as well as a diverse and mixed local economy. To realise this future, FCI work to reconfigure the social relations underlying the redevelopment of the site (i.e. selling of public land into private hands and the maximisation of its exchange value). FCI work towards this reconfiguration directly, leveraging the council through formal and informal methods to meet FCI’s demand to initiate a new forum in which the design of the site could undertaken with the community immediately granted extended authority over the site of design and access to resources.

In the case of FCI, the council were identified as key stakeholders as owners of the site of design. Interestingly, rather than attempting to reconfigure relations by leveraging the council to give FCI control over the site, FCI instead made the case for the site to continue to be publicly owned. Whilst this meant that all the design work on the project was undertaken in collaboration with the council and developers, FCI wanted the site to remain publicly owned because of the greater democratic leverage they would have over the council when compared with private developers. The reconfiguration then takes place across socio-spatial actors. Rather than the council selling the site to a private developer, FCI’s reconfiguration gains the community extended authority over the site, winning a seat at the table with developers and councillors and forcing the council to act as intermediary between opposing sets of actors. In contrast with GCLT, whilst this reconfiguration occurs across social actors the design work is undertaken in collaboration with both public and private actors agonistically.

5.8 Conclusions

This chapter has presented a spectrum of CLD practises which aim in some sense to tackle the socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification. It has used the framing provided by participants at the workshop stage to identify aspects of CLD which can work to reconfigure social relations and exploitative power dynamics underlying the design of housing.

In the first instance, these reconfigurations can be characterised as direct or indirect. Direct attempts at reconfiguration relate to cases where an attempt is made to alter the social relations and power dynamics between actors as they design. In the cases above this is demonstrated only by FCI, whose work is more concerned with design processes which address power imbalances head on through the creation of new forums, constituted outside of the formal channels, and in which the social relations of the neoliberal political economy are subverted. Indirect attempts by contrast tend to be output focussed. Whilst designed without altering social relations or power dynamics in the first instance, indirect reconfigurations are designed with qualities which endeavour to embed new social relations or alter power dynamics in an envisaged future. These indirect reconfigurations accurately describe much of the practise above. The best example of this is perhaps LCNC, as their attempt to engender communal and ecological living through the design of small living spaces is most striking. But WCC, GCLT, and WCMH also have created design outputs which work in some sense towards a future reconfiguration of social relations indirectly.

Reconfigurations, both direct and indirect, then can be categorised as either within or across socio-spatial actors. These actors tend to occupy one of civil, public, or private space
and are connected by the site of design. Relations then are either reconfigured within one of these spaces (civil, public, or private) or across them. With WCC for example, the relations that are reconfigured are the relationship of the community to the site of design, as they aim to extend their authority over the site. This is a reconfiguration solely within civil space in which public and private actors’ relationships to the site of design and to one another are unaltered. GCLT by contrast reconfigures across socio-spatial actors, altering not only the community’s relationship to the site of design by winning extended authority but aiming to alter the local authority’s relationship to the site also by building consensus around their model of incremental development.

Finally, design work toward these reconfigurations is undertaken either in isolation, in opposition, or in collaboration within/across actors. In LCNC’s work for instance, design work is undertaken in isolation, as they are self-bounded in their work as a cooperative, with no external actors making design decisions. GCLT by contrast (whilst the design work is still self-bounded within the CLT) are attempting to reconfigure social relations across socio-spatial actors, but do so by presenting designs which sit in opposition to the designs of the local authority, presenting alternative futures to ones already envisaged for the site of design. Lastly, in FCI’s design work (despite being agonistic) is undertaken in collaboration with both public and private actors connected by the site with each influencing design decisions.

The above describes aspects of CLD practise which carry within them the potential to tackle socio-spatial issues such as gentrification, through their capacity (latent or otherwise) to reconfigure the social relations of the neoliberal political economy underlying the design of housing.
6 Conclusions and discussion

6.1 Research context

Design and design thinking are increasingly applied to ever-expanding fields (from service provision to genetics) in pursuit of solutions to emergent issues. A particularly growing area of application is that of using design to develop innovative solutions to social issues. But critics of the application of design in solving social issues point to the absence of the political in corresponding discourses and practices, drawing attention to unacknowledged power relations and unchanged material conditions in which social issues are engendered (Seitz, 2019; Julier and Kimbell, 2019). This thesis takes these assertions to be half correct. It has challenged the notion that design theory and practice is entirely absent of the political and attempted to answer Fry’s call for confrontation with it (Fry, 2018), asserting that the diversity in practice of co-design is fundamentally concerned with the ethical considerations of design interventions into our everyday lives. What this thesis has pursued, is an investigation into the potential of the political within design to materially alter the exploitative relations of power through which social issues are created.

This thesis may have chosen any one of an abundance of social issues. However, our focus has been on gentrification owing to its clear intersections with the design of buildings and spaces and its relation to social power as a mechanism through which surplus capital is absorbed by their production. Gentrification manifests as a diverse set of socio-spatial issues - associated with the housing crisis - which this thesis asserts stem from exchange value-led design. Taking all the above into consideration, we can build a picture of CLD as (at least theoretically) antithetical to gentrification, in the sense that the theories and practices outlined by participants foreground the use value of buildings and spaces, establishing a competing interpretation of their value. The thesis argues that amongst the different traditions of design which confront an imbalance of power relations, community-led design is the one which endeavours to reconfiguration the settlement of power relations that underlie and produce gentrification and therefore became the focus of the investigation.

6.2 Key findings

Research participants frame gentrification as a deliberate strategy for capital accumulation by a set of opposing actors with authority and jurisdiction over resources. They categorise the socio-spatial issues they associate with gentrification as both ‘value change’ and ‘social exclusion’. ‘Value change’ manifests as an imbalance in power between the politically weak interpretation of buildings and spaces as having a use value to “the community” and the politically hegemonic interpretation of buildings and spaces as having an exchange value which is extracted by their identified opposing actors. Gentrification as ‘social exclusion’ on the other hand is concerned with the displacement of the community. This displacement refers of course to the physical exclusion from gentrified buildings and spaces, but also to exclusion from the processes and procedures through which housing is produced and the processes and procedures of the state which facilitate and authorise its production.

As a set of practices which deal with the design of buildings and spaces, CLD intersects with the aspects of gentrification as detailed above. Participants’ thinking around this intersection can be arranged into two categories: CLD as self-help and CLD as a social movement. In the first instance, the view of CLD as community self-help can be thought of as designing buildings, spaces, and indeed communities which can act as a safety net,
protecting community members from the socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification. The view of CLD as a social movement on the other hand takes an understanding of CLD as a political opposition to the neoliberalisation/financialisation of space, attempting to build alternative models for its production. Participants identify their power to achieve design goals as collective, whether seen as a social movement or as community self-help. This establishes not only competing interpretations of value as above, but also competing forms of power: the collective power of communities that self-organise in order to design and the power granted to their opposing actors via jurisdiction over authority and resources.

Starting from this understanding, research participants then identify some key criteria for the design of buildings and spaces, which underlie an alternative to gentrification. These characteristics can be grouped under two themes: equitable change and ecological change. The first set of characteristics emphasise a need for equity in design process and design outputs, highlighting “open” community engagement in design processes and economic redistribution through investment “in communities”. The second set of characteristics are framed by participants as the need to create a new social contract which takes sustainability as its founding principle with communities being granted jurisdiction over resources via economic control. Both these pictures point necessarily to a resettlement of the socio-spatial relations underlying the production of buildings and spaces, implicitly reaffirming the political at the heart of their practice and the competing interpretations of value which must play out.

The above framing of gentrification as a deliberate strategy emerging from a set of exploitative relations between communities and various sets of opposing actors, makes it necessary to understand the aspects of the political at the intersection between gentrification and CLD. How is the political polarity (Mouffe’s ‘us’/’them’ dynamic) established? How do participants define their communities, how do these communities relate to their opposers, and does the construction of the political in their work alter the power relations which create gentrification?

The thesis explored with different CLD participants, the ways in which they work to achieve their aims, and looked at both their differing approaches to collaboration with those in power, and the mechanisms for reconfiguring social power relations. The data suggest that all cases in some sense aim to materially alter the socio-spatial relations of power in the community’s favour. However, we can categorise their work towards a reconfiguration of the political as “direct” attempts or “indirect” attempts:

- **Indirect reconfigurations**: some cases (such as LCNC, WCMH) do not formally acknowledge power relations in their practice and believe that sufficient innovation in the design of buildings and spaces can solve socio-spatial issues. These cases seek interstitial spaces for locally situated subversion, appropriation, and prefiguration of existing power relations in order to design buildings and spaces in which future social relations do not produce socio-spatial issues such as gentrification. These “indirect” attempts to alter power relations tend to mean CLD’s attempting positive engagement between themselves and actors with jurisdiction over resources and authority (even in cases where they see themselves as ideologically opposed). These cases tend to be focussed on design outputs and their use value, working to build consensus around innovative design or redesign of the buildings and space in which social power relations are imbedded, in the hope that their designs and the
communities interactions with them will “indirectly” lead to a reconfiguration of the exploitative power relations which produce gentrification and the resultant social exclusion and displacement. Indirect resettlements as an aspect of CLD have a strong attachment to the view of CLD as community self-help, often producing outputs designed to solve specific symptoms of socio-spatial issues as opposed to directly confronting the exploitative relations at their source.

- **Direct reconfigurations**: The concept of “direct” reconfigurations of socio-spatial relations begins with the theories of adversarial/agonistic design and views them both as potential aspects of CLD capable of solving socio-spatial issues like gentrification. In both adversarial and agonistic design an ‘us/them’ dynamic is established with the point of divergence between the two concepts being how actors in the design process relate to one another. Whilst the terms are at times used interchangeably, this thesis offers the view that adversarial design describes practises in which actors grouped into an us/them relation work in opposition to one another, developing rival designs around which actors work to build consensus. In agonistic design however, actors -whilst still relating as us/them – design together as part of a collaborative process which foregrounds power relations and aims to empower a multiplicity of voices around contentious design projects. As with indirect reconfigurations of the political, adversarial designs can sometimes be output focussed. However, characteristic of agonistic design is its focus on the design process as opposed to output. Within this focus on process lies the potential for socio-spatial power relations to be “directly” altered, through the creation of forums and mechanisms in which a new political settlement can emerge. Work towards a direct resettlement of the political landscape of design relates closely to the view of CLD as a social movement. Direct reconfigurations tend to be acutely aware of the power relations underlying the production of buildings and space, seeing their work as in conflict with their opposers.

Initially this research had expected the relational aspects of CLD to engender positive engagement and mutually beneficial political settlement between actors. However, whilst some participating cases accept and indeed work towards pragmatic consensus with their opposing actors, it is clear that their assumptions around gentrification are that it is necessarily concerned with power and that power is zero sum. As a result, the research became acutely concerned with the resettlement of power in favour of communities as being fundamental to our understanding of community-leadership in design.

To conclude, the thesis’s findings suggest that CLD, by the nature of being concerned with community leadership in design, constitutes an implicit endeavour to alter power-relations (hence the research focus on CLD as opposed to social housing – i.e. housing led by housing associations or councils, which make no attempt to alter the current settlement of power relations. In CLD the community (however defined) cannot be “invited” to design by those capable of furnishing them with money, materials, land, and/or authority, as in most pragmatic consensus building processes; the community must organise themselves and, in some sense, demand to design.
6.3 Contributions of the research

The thesis makes a contribution to research on participatory design, agonistic design and design activism which are preoccupied with the social dimensions of design and design thinking (Bjögvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2012; Inch, 2015; Fuad-Luke, 2013). This thesis shares the criticisms of Seitz (2019), Julier (2019), and others with regard to the application of design and design thinking to the solving of social issues. Social issues are not the sole result of a lack of innovation or creativity, as the theory and practice of design thinking schools at Potsdam, Ideo and the Stanford d.school would suggest. The eradication of the political can be considered at best as creating a theoretical blind spot in our understanding of social issues and at worst deliberately leading us away from confrontation with the powerful vested interests who benefit from their proliferation. However, where this thesis challenges the above criticisms is in their assertion that design practise is absent of the political. The research revealed that practitioners of CLD are conscious of exploitative social relations, and this is often explicitly expressed in how they constitute themselves and the design decisions they make.

In sum, this thesis challenges the de-facto tendency in the application of design thinking to depoliticise contentious social issues which emerge from exploitative relations. It moves beyond the agonistic acknowledgement of power to expose some key aspects and characteristics of community leadership within design practice and demonstrate their latent capacity to materially alter the relations from which social issues emerge.

6.4 Limitations of the research

Of course, there are obvious limitations to these research findings. Firstly, we are dealing with a small sample of CLD practitioners. This means that the theory developed in this thesis is to be taken as the beginning of a framework through which we can enrich our understanding of CLD theory and practice as opposed to a definitive interpretation of CLD and its intersection with gentrification. Second, the theory describes aspects of CLD theory and practise meaning that direct/indirect resettlements are not necessarily mutually exclusive of one another. Rather they describe CLD theories and practices that can at times appear simultaneously or not at all. Finally, the findings of this research are based on the perspectives of participants. To understand more fully their material application and impact would require further and more long-term research.

6.5 Future research

This thesis has presented a set of findings and theoretical insights from which a number of potential avenues for further research emerge. In the first instance it begins a conversation in which CLD can be viewed as a form of community organising. From this starting point the discourse must now turn to action research to test the extent to which previously disengaged demographics can be organised to demand change through design practise around emerging contentious issues. Taking as a starting point the stringent criteria presented in this research for design practice to be considered genuinely community-led, further research, based in the understanding that organised communities must demand the right to design, will lead to a more clearly defined set of practices in the area of CLD as distinct from other traditions of co-design. Finally – and in the most fundamentally design sense – the theory of direct/indirect attempts at political resettlement via design process
and outputs requires further research in order to investigate the impact of each case. More specifically, to explore how the communities associated with them interact with design outputs and how communities’ sense of their own power has changed having been actively engaged in a CLD process.

One of the suggestions that emerged during the debriefing session following the CA workshop was to hold a CLD summer school in which theory and practice could be shared. A follow up project of this nature could offer an opportunity to test how generalisable and transferable the above theory is by developing a prescriptivist CLD school of thought in which participants could be trained. This could bring in partners from existing and historic CLD cases to develop a comprehensive school of thought. Alternatively, rather than developing a summer school with multiple participants from disparate cases, an action research could be undertaken in which a single CLD case is initiated to test and develop theory about CLD.
7 Bibliography


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