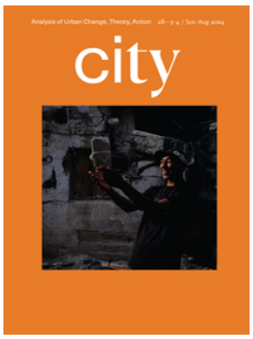

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It is 'more than just about building houses': collaborating towards a housing commons in Leeds

Neil McKenna, Paul Chatterton and Andrew Wallace

While current research focuses on the emergence of community-led housing (CLH) in England and individual cases, including co-operatives and Community Land Trusts, understanding of the breadth of CLH and its contribution to a city-wide commons is limited. We explore the evolution of CLH-as-commoning in the city of Leeds through three time periods and a framework of 'differential' and 'transitional' commoning, attentive to relations, spatiality and governance, and multiple contested visions from minimalist to maximalist. There was a maximalist tendency in the 1970s/80s, minimalist into the 1990s, and maximalist-pragmatist in the 2000s/10s. More significantly, we highlight the important role that minimalist and pragmatist tendencies play in the ongoing growth of the commons and commoners. CLH is part of a growing urban commons if we see it built through a patchwork of different approaches and actors, all contributing to cumulative horizon building. The transformative potential of CLH-as-commoning lies in repeated attempts to challenge the current housing system. More needs to be done to support long term collaboration between civil society and the state to widen involvement, expand provision and support democratic benefits of CLH.

Keywords **community-led housing, transformation, housing commons, differential commoning, Leeds**
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Introduction: community-led housing-as-commoning

> Frontline was more than just about building houses. It was: one, about building houses; two, showing that a community group working together could deliver it and three, it was about giving the self-builders employable skills so that they could then go on and create enterprise. (Claude Hendrickson, in Same Skies 2023)

Frontline was a group of 12 unemployed Black men empowered through community-self-build housing in 1980s Leeds (see Figure 1). It contrasted starkly with the extractive model of privatised, volume housebuilding prevailing in the UK from the late 1960s onwards (Colenutt 2020), as part of a sustained 'ideological project to shift housing from a social to a private and financialised commodity' (Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019). The mainstream UK housing system is now largely dominated by this commodified approach making recurring crises a 'feature, not a bug' (Fields and Hodkinson 2018, 1). In response to the dominant housing agenda, pioneering projects such as Frontline remind us that 'community initiatives are central to the possibilities of transformation' (Pickerill 2021, 249) and we can situate Frontline as part of a broader community-led housing (CLH) movement, itself linked to horizons of urban commoning. Given recurring housing crises, understanding this movement is of increasing analytical and practical importance, responding as it does to some of the shortcomings in the current housing system by promoting alternative residential logics that challenge commodification, alienation and the

Figure 1: Frontline self-builders on-site (Photo: Claude Hendrickson).

erosion of democracy (Madden and Marcuse 2016). Using the case of Leeds, this paper clarifies and strengthens how community-led housing-as-commoning might advance these logics and contributes to a broader research agenda of understanding 'the regime practices and rules that would embed and extend a city-wide commons' (Chatterton 2016, 411).

CLH in England has a multifaceted history originating in the building societies of the 18th and 19th century (Field 2020; Lang and Mullins 2020) and has evolved through three key phases. Firstly, hyper-localised co-operative projects emerged from the late 1960s shifting towards housing associations in the early 1990s; second, there was a period of growth from 2006 through new models and sub-sector networks; and, third, from 2014 onwards a relatively integrated and formalised sector emerged, represented nationally by the partnership 'Community Led Homes' and backed by central government funding (Field 2020; Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019). Interest in CLH today is the greatest it has been in 40 years, yet it remains largely unknown to the public, with inconsistent state, market, and third sector supporters (Lang and Mullins 2015, 2020; Mullins and Moore 2018). Consequently, CLH represents only 1% of homes in England (Lang and Mullins 2020).

CLH encompasses various models including co-operatives, community land trusts (CLT), cohousing, self and custom-build, self-help, Tenant Management Organisations and community-based development trusts (Community Led Homes n.d.; Heywood 2016; Field 2020). Formal definitions capture the essence of CLH:

> homes that are developed and/or managed by local people or residents, in not for private profit organisational structures. Organisational structure varies but governance should be overseen by people who either live or work in the locality of benefit or are direct beneficiaries. Community housing generally refers to a small geographic identified area of belonging or association. (Gooding and Johnston 2015, 15)

Further, CLH offers the potential to develop new political spaces beyond elected local government and state professionals (Cochrane 2003). However, CLH departs from 'tendencies towards consensus and accommodation with hegemonic powers' (Zielke et al. 2021, 2). In particular, we contend that CLH can act against the individualising tendency in neoliberal market economy (Moulaert et al. 2007) and broader post-political tendencies driving a decline in political contention, apathy with representative governance and, in its place, a consensual governance that sustains existing power relations (Swyngedouw 2018). In this context, socially attractive housing alternatives are understood to have become 'largely dominated by the politicised and ideologically-motivated urban middle classes' (Zielke et al. 2021, 6).

In this paper we adopt a commons perspective on housing, specifically as it allows us to explore the complexities and dilemmas of community-led housing. For example, Ferreri and Vidal highlight CLH as a 'potentially problematic reference point for the study of housing commons' because it includes commodified tenures and lacks attention to material and power relations in collaboration (2022, 7). In this sense, rather than exploring and advocating for an 'ideal-type' housing commons (Joubert and Hodkinson 2018), such as

co-operatives and CLTs (see Ferreri and Vidal 2022; Thompson 2020a), in this article we commit to a deeper and broader understanding of CLH as 'actually existing' commons through a framework of 'differential' and 'transitional commoning' (Aernouts and Ryckewaert 2019; Ferreri 2023; Noterman 2015), examined through overlapping themes of *relations*, *spatiality* and *governance* (Chatterton 2016). We agree that there are multiple co-existing and contested visions of the commons, which Arbell, Middlemiss, and Chatterton (2020) have summarised as: 'minimalist' focussed on housing alone; 'maximalist' that emphasises communality in many aspects of member's lives; and middle-way 'pragmatist' that is more flexible, less communal and political, with clearer distinction between private and the organisation (Arbell, Middlemiss, and Chatterton 2020).

The housing commons, in this formulation, are emergent through everyday struggles and a 'politics of possibility in the here and now' (Gibson-Graham 2006; Hodkinson 2012a). Whilst commodification remains a dominant tendency, we are interested in exploring a politics of possibility that rejects a capitalocentric framing of the housing system and instead draws out plurality and heterogeneity (Gibson-Graham 2006). As Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2016) highlight, commons are produced and maintained both from enclosed and unmanaged resources, encompassing: individual and collective private; state; and, open access forms of ownership. The focus instead turns to commoning as a relational process, where the commoners include 'social movements and grass-roots organisations but also governments, institutions and firms (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2016, 207). Our task in this paper, then, is to integrate and synthesise different experiences of CLH-as-commoning to understand broader trends and potential solidarities but also contradictions and limitations.

Through a threefold periodisation of CLH-as-commoning in Leeds, in the following sections, we document a broad trend from a maximalist vision of the commons in the 1970s/80s, towards minimalism into the 1990s, turning again to maximalism but with a pragmatist influence in the 2000s/10s. Looking across the phases of commoning over time reveals that CLH represents small acts that open opportunities, forming generative patchworks of housing commoning, which foster solidarities and potential housing alternatives. CLH is currently a hopeful and inspirational mobilisation both 'in' and 'against' the shortcomings of the current housing system (Chatterton 2016). To move 'beyond' these shortcomings (Chatterton 2016), it is important to build on this strategic framing of CLH-as-commons to support a broader shift towards public-commons partnerships addressing exclusion, expanding and connecting practical examples in new democratic structures for managing the housing commons. Further work is required to develop this agenda within CLH but also to understand wider linkages in a housing commons movement involving public housing tenants, home owners, private renters, squatters, homeless as well as to other commoning movements beyond housing (Dyer-Witherford 2007; Hodkinson 2012b). Before we present our findings, the next section outlines our conceptual approach to locating CLH through a commons perspective which we subsequently use to interrogate the periodisation in our case study.

Locating contemporary community-led housing through a commons perspective

Weaving CLH into discussions of housing commons foregrounds broader considerations of power, relations and potential. Formatively, Ostrom (1990) described the commons as self-organised and self-governed common pool resources such as fields, forests and rivers. This can be expanded to include non-bounded physical attributes such as air, water, soil, animals, plants as well as social goods such as language, knowledge and codes, and even as an imaginative tool with transformative potential for forming new relations, spatial forms and alliances beyond capitalism (Chatterton 2016; 2010; Davidovici 2022). To structure our CLH-commons dialogue, and critically explore our threefold periodisation of CLH-as-commoning in Leeds, we mobilise an analytical framework based on three overlapping and interconnected themes of a commons research agenda (Table 1; drawn from Chatterton 2016), each of which offers commons-based solutions in response to challenges identified for CLH. First, we consider the intent to challenge capital accumulation through *relations* between commons, the state and the market to address exclusion in CLH. Second, we consider *spatiality* and questions over scaling CLH. Finally, we consider *governance* and addressing fragmentation in CLH. We address each theme in turn.

Relations between commons, state and market

CLH is no different to most housing contexts, being subject to structural power dynamics and interpersonal tensions causing exclusion. Some forms of CLH – cohousing most notably – is associated with the White middle-classes (Arbell 2022) and leadership of CLH from ethnic minorities, younger people and lower-income groups is limited (see Hendrickson et al. 2024; The Young Foundation 2022). Yet, cooperative housing and Tenant Management Organisations emerged from the working class (Bradley 2014; Lang and Mullins 2015; Lang, Carriou, and Czischke 2020). Likewise, CLTs have aimed to provide affordable housing for lower-income groups (Moore 2018). Squatting

Table 1: Analytical framework for CLH-as-commoning.

Commons theme	Challenges for CLH	Commons-based solutions	Commons visions
Relations	Exclusion, reductionism, internal versus external help	Challenge state/ market relations in differential commoning, create commons based movement	Minimalist
Spatiality	Scaling, up or out, from bottom-up or top-down	Collective over individual, middle-out expansion in nested hierarchy	Pragmatist
Governance	Fragmentation and competing purpose between sub sectors and models, institutionalisation	Public-commons partnerships to connect productive patchwork with state as partner	Maximalist

and forming co-operatives have empowered marginalised groups such as women, LGBTQ + and Black people to better meet their housing needs (Ferreri 2023). Moore and Mullins emphasise resource disparities as the main cause of exclusion, highlighting the need for 'resources and support of 'help from without" from the state and intermediary organisations at neighbourhood to national scales (2013, 4). Further, Arbell suggests that highly participative models of CLH such as cohousing can exclude due to demands on time, energy, skills and is cultural associations with the 'White middle class progressive left' (2022, 447). Both perspectives underscore a need for flexibility in community involvement.

Community involvement in CLH operates on a continuum, from housing *by* residents (higher) to housing *for* residents (lower) (Czischke 2018; Jarvis 2015b). Both practices of housing *by* and *for* residents have a role to play given the differential abilities and desires for participation. Emphasis should be placed on how differing degrees of involvement in CLH play out as a 'relational process – or more often a struggle – of negotiating access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility' (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2016, 195).

A commons perspective on state and market *relations* reveals the challenge for CLH of 'walking a tightrope between organisational agency and structural partnerships ('help from within and help from without')' (Lang and Mullins 2015). According to Harvey (2013, 73), 'the relation between the social group and that aspect of the environment being treated as a common shall be both collective and non-commodified - off limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuation'. This provides an 'ideal-type' commons (Joubert and Hodkinson 2018), where commons exist beyond the state and commodity market. This is unhelpful, however, because 'Any project aimed at creating alternative housing in the here and now is thus discouraged because it cannot transform the entire system – it's either revolution or nothing' (Hodkinson 2012b, 435). Alternatively, the commons cuts across binaries such as state and non-state, providing an imaginary for new forms of governance beyond, but also within and against capitalist state and commodified market relations (Chatterton 2016). Hodkinson (2012b) advocates solidarity between bottom-up anarchists and top-down socialists on the housing question. Rejecting false binaries, Joubert and Hodkinson emphasise 'all housing, irrespective of tenure, constitutes an actually existing housing commons when we recognise its collective use-value as social infrastructure that benefits us all when everyone can access it' (2018, 192). This perspective highlights commoning is a relational process, possible within enclosed and unmanaged resources as well as producing and maintaining more ideal-type commons (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2016). To widen the movement of commoners, we need to allow a (deeply reformed) state to play a role in enabling the commons, addressing inequalities in resource distribution, and being open to levels of resident control to suit different cultural desires.

Spatiality of the commons

The *spatiality* of the commons and scaling CLH raise significant concerns. The first is whether scaling up CLH projects reinforces tendencies towards alienation and lessens democratic potential (Jarvis 2015b; Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019; Mullins and Moore 2018). For example, co-operatives in Zurich

face a 'double binding principle' becoming larger scale and institutionalised to ensure economic viability rather than meeting member's wellbeing (Davidovici 2022). Rather than mimicking market-oriented practices, ideas of 'scaling out' (Heywood 2016) or 'going viral' (Moore and Mullins 2013; Thompson 2020b) are proposed, focussing on network development, solidarity and mutual support. A second consideration is the scale at which change comes from. Not all CLH initiatives aim to scale or transform the system (Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019). CLH has grown bottom-up from fragmented grassroots movements, organically responding to needs (Field 2020; Heywood 2016; World Habitat 2015). Simultaneously, national programmes and funding support have bolstered these initiatives (Lang and Mullins 2020). However, these top-down legal and organisational forms that give structure and support to CLH also 'risk calcifying the brittle bones and the dynamic energy that first inspired them as campaigns' (Thompson 2020b, 15).

In this context, perspectives on the *spatiality* of commons supports scaling out by establishing middle-tier support. Commoning challenges private benefit, individual freedoms and exchange rights (Davidovici 2022; Thompson 2020b), emphasising the collective, with 'shared and wide' access to commons 'managed by a community', and benefits 'widely distributed to a community and beyond' (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2016, 197). However, collective ownership can represent collective privatisation (Thompson 2020b). Davidovici (2022) notes that shifts towards communality, such as through co-operatives, are often made by those sharing backgrounds, norms and values, thereby causing exclusion. Thompson (2015) adds that actually existing commons create their own internal and external boundaries as necessary defences. Caffentzis and Federici reject all exclusionary and hierarchical principles, however the commons inherently require a degree of enclosure and exclusion because, as they also explain, a 'specific community is created in the production of the relations by which a specific common is brought into existence and sustained' (2014, i102). This raises concerns only if the privileged can engage in commoning. In this context, how to expand the commons and widen access become important considerations.

This brings us to our central point. Cayuela (2021) argues for bridging a divide between prioritising material resources and social relations. The author integrates De Angelis' concept of 'boundary commoning', premised on autonomous spaces of shared material resources (see Angelis 2017), with Stavrides' concept of 'expanding commoning' that focusses on politicising altering subjectivities of as many people as possible through open thresholds (see Stavrides 2016). This approach encourages movement both from the bottom-up and top-down, and thinking inwardly and outwardly through an alternative 'middle-out' 'nested hierarchical structure', linking commons into city-wide or regional networks democratically and justly (Joubert and Hodkinson 2018, 196). The spatial politics of the commons is therefore 'complex and multi-layered … It will more likely reflect archipelagos of common experiments that layer together different spatial entities – networks, places and broader sectors' (Chatterton and Pusey 2020, 42). This perspective helps us navigate across individual, community and public scales, emphasising the role of city-scale entities in brokering relations between regime and grassroots actors and build collective power for system-wide change.

Governance of the commons

Since 2006, England's CLH sector has gradually cohered into a small 'grassroots-based housing niche' (Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019). However, there are a confusing range of umbrella organisations, models and competing goals (Lang and Mullins 2020; Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019). Sector-wide governance is limited, with strength found in overlapping horizontal networks at the sub-sector level rather than vertical integration (Lang and Mullins 2020). Drawing on international examples, Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins (2019) advocate for the creation of sector-wide institutions for CLH, whilst preserving the democratic potential and benefits of sub-sectors. Enabling hubs at a city and regional level have been an important component of CLH governance, creating 'ecosystems of support' and widen participation, particularly among minoritised groups (Arbell et al. 2022). Yet, limited funding and capacity pose challenges for these hubs to address inequalities and expand beyond niche innovation (Arbell et al. 2022; Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019).

Perspectives on *governance* of the commons help to explore links between different scales of CLH, roles of various actors and institutions and partnerships with the state. Key aspects include co-productive social relations between commoners and resources, and the rules and practices of ownership and governance at different scales (Aernouts and Ryckewaert 2018). Commoners include future residents, the wider community, and collaborative partners (Davidovici 2022; UCRC 2022). Understanding the roles of civil society, state and market actors in producing and defending a CLH commons is crucial. Chatterton (2016) suggests potential alliances among meso-level institutions to individual action, influencing grassroots groups horizontally and stakeholder and institutions vertically. Thompson (2020b) identifies three 'languages' of commoning: 'inward' (within group, deep, complex); 'upward' (formal, bureaucratic, abstract); and, 'outward' (lay, broad understanding).

Various mechanisms and forms, such as 'public-common partnerships' (Milburn and Russell 2020), have been proposed to govern the commons. These provide a set of principles and practices to reconfigure partnership between civil society and the state, focusing in redistributing surplus value and knowledge. Applied to CLH, Thompson (2016b) suggests neighbourhood-based structures for housing projects, district-level 'Community Development Corporations' to coordinate across neighbourhoods and link projects to resources, all overseen by city-level 'Urban Development Corporations' for strategic coordination of land and funding. These structures would be formalised to ensure public benefit control, in a reformed partnership between civil society and the state. Ferreri and Vidal caution that:

> public-co-operative arrangements emerge from political alignments that are often fraught by antagonistic and contradictory forces, subject to always-looming marketisation pressures and involve a state that ultimately governs through and for capitalist rationales rather than for the commons. (2022, 5)

Additionally, Zielke et al. argue commons research often assumes the 'existence of a dense web of different actors capable of and committed to cooperating for a common(ing) purpose' when in reality 'low-income communities increasingly

lack the social infrastructure, material and affective resources required to engender commoning endogenously' (2021, 2). What we see therefore, is the urgent need for meso-level institutions to support and amplify the potential of grassroots niches and, importantly, connect them upwards to state actors.

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The above provides an analytical framework for CLH-as-commons to explore its transformative potential. It helps us understand the tendencies and contradictions in CLH-as-commoning and its role in shaping new residential logics that are de-commodifying, democratising and dis-alienating (Madden and Marcuse 2016). In a spirit of 'hopefulness', CLH initiatives should be 'valued for what they achieve, not what is lacking, and avoids assuming that they are fully formed blueprints or even that they need to be' (Pickerill 2021, 250). The following section now explores our case study of CLH in Leeds. We present it through a threefold periodisation, analysed and assessed through our three commoning themes of relations, spatiality and governance

Community-led housing as commoning in Leeds

Leeds showcases various CLH projects, supported by a regional enabling hub and relatively cooperative city authority (Co-operative Councils Innovation Network 2018; Goulding 2018). To understand the temporal dimension of 'transitional commoning' (Ferreri 2023), these projects are grouped chronologically in Table 2, adapting Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins (2019) framework for the evolution of CLH. We take a 'long view' that develops 'historical sensibility' (Flanagan and Jacobs 2019), and that contextualises experiments, social relations and policy in a particular place (Thompson 2020b). This provides a source of inspiration and grounds transformation in past practices, rather than something radical and novel (Flanagan and Jacobs 2019; Pickerill 2021). Delivery models for CLH include group-led, community-based and developer-led approaches (World Habitat 2017). Drawing on the methodology of 'N of one plus some' (Mukhija 2010), emphasis is given to four instrumental cases – Tangram, Cornerstone, Frontline and Armley Community Homes (highlighted ***[bold]** in Table 2) – with other cases brought in to provide critical reflection.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 24 key actors between May 2022 and April 2023 (a schedule is provided in the notes) to include: national, regional and local state actors; market actors such as housing associations and a private developer; and, civil society actors such as residents, activists, and researchers. Interviews were transcribed and coded using the three commoning themes. Additionally, a number of secondary sources were provided by interview participants, obtained from project websites, as well as written reports, book chapters and peer-reviewed articles.

Period 1: 1970s/80s maximalist commons

Growth of CLH – exclusively co-operatives – in the 1970s and 1980s in Leeds was enabled by state funding and support through the Government's Co-operative

Table 2: Built, in-construction or permitted CLH projects in Leeds.

Project, date initiated	Model	Legal form	Extent
Period 1: 1970s to 1980s maximalist commons			
New Albion, 1970	Group-led co-operatives	Co-operative Society	2 shared homes (re-use)
***Tangram, 1977**			39 individual homes (all social rent), common room, meeting room, kitchen, garden (re-use)
Hunslet, 1977			18 individual homes (new-build)
Firelight, 1981			1 shared home (re-use)
301, 1982			2 shared homes (re-use)
Badger, 1986			1 shared home (re-use)
Isis, 1988			3 shared homes (social rent) (re-use)
***Cornerstone, 1989**			2 shared homes, workshop, resource centre & common garden (re-use)
Period 2: 1980s to 1990s minimalist commons			
***Frontline Community Self-Build, 1988**	Group-led community self-build/ community-based housing association	Community Benefit Society	12 individual homes (all shared ownership) (new-build)
Leeds Action to Create Homes (LATCH), 1989	Community-based self-help		100 individual homes (all rented) (re-use & new-build)
Belle Isle Estate Management Board (now BITMO), 1991	Community-based Tenant Management Organisation		1850 individual homes (rented and leasehold), community café (re-use)
The Canopy Housing Project, 1996	Community-based self-help/community land trust		81 individual homes (all rented) (re-use)
Period 3: 2000s to 2010s maximalist-pragmatist commons			
Xanadu, 2004	Group-led co-operative	Co-operative Society	1 shared home (building re-use)
Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC), 2006	Group-led cohousing/ co-operative		20 individual homes (equity share), common house, common garden, allotment, public garden (new-build)
Headingley Homes, 2010	Community-based community land trust	Community Benefit Society	3 individual homes (all rented) (re-use)
Chapeltown Cohousing (ChaCo), 2010, previously Imba Yedu, 2002	Group-led cohousing/ co-operative/ self-build	Co-operative Society	28 individual homes (rent and shared ownership), 1 shared home (rented), 4 self-build homes, common house, workshop, common garden (new-build)

(*Continued*)

Table 2: (Continued)

Project, date initiated	Model	Legal form	Extent
Climate Innovation District, 2017	Developer-led community land trust (Leeds Community Homes)	Community Benefit Society	16 individual homes (rent and shared ownership) (new-build in construction)
***Armley Community Homes (ACH), 2017**			34 individual homes (rent and shared ownership), community space (new-build approved)
New Wortley Housing Association, 2017	Community-based housing association	Private limited company	22 individual homes (all rented), public garden, (new-build approved)
Greenwood, 2018	Group-led co-operative	Co-operative Society	1 shared home (re-use)

Note: ***[bold]** highlights the four cases given emphasis in this research.

Housing Agency between 1974 and 1980, with the 'hidden history' of cooperative activism being enabled by the appointment of Reg Freeson as Housing Minister (Birchall 1991; Ferreri 2024; Thompson 2020b). These co-operatives were established at a time of deteriorating public housing, coupled with available and relatively affordable empty properties (Interview 7 & 8). Here we focus on two early co-operatives, including Tangram and Cornerstone.

Whilst enabled by the state, the co-operatives in this period tend towards *relations* that are more autonomous from the state and market. Tangram, a multi-home member co-operative, provides affordable, secure and member-controlled housing as an alternative to social housing, private rent and private ownership. It brought council and housing association properties into co-operative ownership, resisting demolition and privatisation. Affordability is a key factor of inclusivity in the co-operative model, with members paying as little as £62 a month for a 1-bed flat with a garden (Interview 24). This de-commodifying tendency is crucial as market prices rise, and is protected by the co-operative ownership. A Cornerstone member also noted that many co-operatives emerged during an 'era of road protests and massive social squats, anti-GM action' (interview in Sanders 2022). These group-led co-operatives tend towards a more ideal-type and maximalist vision of a de-commodified, self-managed commons connected to wider political change (Arbell, Middlemiss, and Chatterton 2020; Joubert and Hodkinson 2018). Tangram demonstrates a desire for autonomy while relying on institutional support to produce and defend housing commons (Chatterton 2010, 2016; Ferreri and Vidal 2022; Hodkinson 2012b). It started with loans, grants, advice and training from the Co-operative Housing Agency (Scanlon et al. 2021). Although Tangram desires to 'break away from the shackles and become more an independent co-op', it remains a 'registered provider' with the social housing regulator to avoid repaying government loans (Interview 24).

These two co-operatives illustrate a *spatiality* of the commons for re-using existing buildings (Hunslet is an exception), which is a valuable tactic because it is quicker and establishes an asset base by converting privately owned homes into collective ownership (Interview 1, 18). They opportunistically acquired

empty and cheaper property, reflecting the political and market context of this period, and illustrate a tactic of community-building where like-minded people organised to achieve their aims, rather than emerging from a geographically defined community. The Leeds co-operatives typically consist of 1-3 shared homes, and are relatively small scale given membership is typically around 50 people in the national context (Lang and Mullins 2015). Their smaller scale supports a more maximalist vision of communal living and direct tenant control. Cornerstone demonstrates the trade-off as they are 'not that socially integrated in our local community' because of the particularities of running the house, collective decision making and eating together (Sanders 2022). Tangram, being larger, includes individual homes with common spaces. Whilst longer term residents regretted a decline in communality, collective management persists (Scanlon et al. 2021). Interviewee 24 noted Tangram's shift from enforced participation to accommodating varying levels of involvement to suit needs and desires, allowing for multiple minimalist to maximalist visions to coexist (Arbell, Middlemiss, and Chatterton 2020).

Expanding and replicating the co-operative movement to counter exclusivity has proven difficult. Interviewee 24 noted that Tangram recruits new members through word-of-mouth, limiting the commons to like-minded people rather than 'outward' translation (Arbell 2022; Davidovici 2022; Thompson 2020b). A Cornerstone member remarked 'there haven't been as many co-ops set up as I had imagined' (interview in Sanders 2022). A member of Tangram explained that:

> just keeping a housing co-op going with low rents and trying to improve those properties and security for the future, I guess I kind of see as a political statement and a political challenge and fighting and struggling against all the new legislation coming in. (Interview 24)

This quote illustrates the limitations to expecting co-operatives, which require significant time commitment, to seed new ones. While secondary co-operatives were not active in Leeds, Liverpool saw 34 co-operatives established between 1974 and 1992 by two secondary co-operatives (Thompson 2016a). Despite their potential, Interviewee 8 noted that nationally 'there's invariably never been enough money generated from working with primaries to keep the secondaries going'. External funding from civil society, the commercial sector or state is needed.

In terms of *governance*, co-operatives were praised 'because they really are community-run, and it's the people involved in them who, who are making the decisions' (Interview 9). The relative autonomy of the co-operatives and smaller spatial scale, supports greater direct participation in their governance. Interviewee 24 explained of Tangram that:

> all our decisions are made at general meetings, and through votes of all our members … there's been a lot of pressure on us by regulatory bodies to make the whole process easier by having it management committee-led and decisions made via that but … that's a red line really. (Interview 24)

While state support has aided their establishment, formal recognition of co-operatives has been limited, hindering 'upward' translation and broader

adoption (Thompson 2020b). Initially pioneering citizen and community group responsibility in housing, co-operatives became seen as too radical and support was cut (Interview 8). Interviewee 24 explained that Tangram has been involved in Leeds-based co-operative network meetings, but are not linked into local sector-wide CLH networks, suggesting stronger 'inward' bonds have formed. Several co-operatives in Leeds and Manchester are reviving discussions of secondary co-operatives through the 'co-operative' cluster model (see Radical Routes 2018). However, suggesting a degree of 'outward' relationships, Tangram's longstanding influence makes it a model for new CLH groups and CLH activists often have links to older co-operatives, either personally or through networks (Interview 14 & 23).

Period 2: 1980s/90s minimalist commons

Perceived as resource intensive, Government funding for co-operatives was cut in 1980 (Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019; Thompson 2020b), with a shift in housing responsibility from local authorities to state agencies, housing associations, the private sector, and voluntary sector (Clapham and Kintrea 2000). A cyclical pattern emerges where 'each decade has its kind of thing that starts off. So it was coops in the 70s and 80s and housing associations in the … 90s' (Interview 12). We explore this period through the case of Frontline.

During this period, cases focussed on housing issues for specific target groups and neighbourhoods. For example, Frontline, inspired by Zenzele in Bristol, is one several Black-led initiatives nationally. Following riots in 1981 over housing conditions, unemployment and opportunities, Frontline challenged:

> a stereotypical view of Black men and Block boys and there was this thing about high crime and that Black men didn't want to work and that Black men didn't want to get into construction … So when we decided to build these houses it was because of high unemployment in our community, a negative stereotypical view of Black people. That was fundamental. (Interview 11)

In this period, state *relations* shifted to a more direct partnership. A Government Taskforce directed funding to Chapeltown, supporting a project coordinator and training for 12 self-builders. Leeds City Council provided land, the Housing Corporation provided development finance, and additional funding came from Leeds Federated Housing Association. Similarly, BITMO, although tenant-run, initially required council staff in housing and community development for five years, alongside government funding. This effort built organisational capacity and formed three initial tenant associations that later amalgamated into BITMO (Interview 21).

The project coordinator of Frontline regrets the lack of collective ownership, which could have prevented ongoing enclosure of what initially was public land. The self-builders earned 25% 'sweat equity' for their labour. Six of the 12 homes have stair-cased to full ownership and sold on the market. The housing association continues to collect rent, likely exceeding the original costs, with equity shares bought at current market values. Despite not challenging private property relations, Frontline demonstrates that marginalised groups seek empowered within mainstream structures and a stake in society, contrasting

with the autonomy desired by co-operatives. To widen involvement, there has been a shift to a 'minimalist' vision of the commons focussed on basic material needs (Arbell, Middlemiss, and Chatterton 2020). Framed as 'differential commoning', Frontline is valued for its transformative effects, providing not just housing but employment and broader empowerment. This includes the coordinator becoming a national CLH advisor and other self-builders finding employment in construction, with one person at LATCH. Frontline highlights the socially useful role of all housing regardless of tenure and ownership (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2016; Joubert and Hodkinson 2018). It also aligns with discussions on 'key moments' in commoning noted by Ferreri and Vidal (2022), exhibiting maximalist qualities in production, and which resonate today, but minimalist thereafter.

Spatially, the cases illustrate community building within geographically defined communities, and highlight a 'community development perspective of empowerment of people in disadvantaged communities' (Interview 21). They illustrate the need for 'the right support' from the state (Interview 11) to facilitate bottom-up initiatives. Interviewee 11 stressed the importance of 'examples that people can touch and feel. Not theoretical stuff – physical', suggesting 'boundary commoning' as a prefigurative step before pursuing broader, networked 'expanding commoning'. Frontline, initially a pilot project to replicate and particularly to poorer White neighbourhoods, faced challenges with institutional support, lack of funding and a belief the group could not do it beyond their own (Black) networks in Chapeltown (Interview 11). Frontline exposes a shift from networked social change in Period 1 to spatial targeting of neighbourhood deprivation and empowerment of specific groups, bounding problems and limiting expansion of solutions (Ward 2003).

During this period, the Community Benefit Society (CBS) model of *governance* expanded membership beyond residents to the wider public, supporting larger operations like LATCH, which has grown to 100 homes. In order to survive, LATCH has become more institutionalised and centrally controlled, departing from the original 'self-help' model where residents refurbished their homes and gained training, due to loan repayment pressures and need for quick turn-around (Interview 18). Reliance on external support pressured organisations to deliver numbers quickly, pushing organisations towards a more minimalist vision commons. Interviewee 18 reflected: 'I used to know every tenant because we'd see more of them, they'd be more integrated into LATCH, you'd built relationships … So this lost a little bit of cohesion as a community.' Concerns about democratic control arose, with Interviewee 8 and 12 highlighting risks of co-option by political figures and professionals. Despite scaling up, LATCH and Canopy are committed to staying relatively small scale, emphasising training and community ties (Interviews 18 &19). This contrasts with many larger housing associations with similar voluntary sector roots (Mullins 2014).

There has limited 'outward' integration with the wider national co-operative sub-sector but there has been 'upward' influence with Frontline informing the establishment of the National Community Self-Build Association, and LATCH and *Canopy* informing the Self-help Network and Leeds Community Homes. There has been greater on-going partnership with the state, with LATCH and Canopy both members of the Affordable Housing Group and cited in national

level housing strategies (Leeds City Council 2022a; Leeds City Council 2022b). Public support has been gained by overlapping with policy aims around affordable housing, homelessness, empty homes and skills. However, this might be expedient for the state rather than a sincere commitment to expanding CLH. Nevertheless, the cases demonstrate a positive response to Zielke et al.'s (2021) challenge, suggesting ways that involvement can be broadened within marginalised neighbourhoods and communities.

Period 3: 2000s to 2010s maximalist-pragmatist commons

More recently, CLH has expanded significantly in terms of models, complexity and involvement of various actors, supporting the formation of intermediaries locally and nationally, and leading to the Community Housing Fund in 2016. Building on a strong CLH movement in Leeds (World Habitat 2016), Leeds Community Homes (LCH) was set up in 2015 as an enabling hub for Leeds and Yorkshire and was a national front-runner (Archer, Moore, and Mullins 2020; Lavis and Duncan 2018). This period is explored through Armley Community Homes, being delivered by LCH.

Through such projects, LCH want to establish:

> a pipeline of community-led housing from lots of individual disparate schemes that, if left on their own … have a relatively low chance of success and a very long trajectory, and to try and find a better process-driven route that isn't entirely reliant on the individuals and the groups to do all of the heavy lifting, and to get the benefit of the group involvement and community involvement at really key stages. (Interview 10)

The aim is to develop a self-replicating alternative CLH ecosystem and widen involvement from disadvantaged groups. Armley Community Homes builds on projects like LILAC and ChaCo, which were highly involved and group-led schemes with a stronger maximalist tendency. LILAC is a pioneering 'ecological, affordable and fully mutual' project (Chatterton 2013) however, without additional funding, it provides an affordable option only for middle-incomes (Chatterton 2013; Hodkinson 2012b). ChaCo was inspired by LILAC but sought to address its relative exclusivity (Interview 22). Two-thirds of the homes are reserved for people from Chapeltown, with 'quotas relating to ethnic background, (dis)ability, income, age, gender and sexual identity' (Bliss 2020; Chapeltown Cohousing 2021). LCH now aims to develop a flexible model for CLH that accommodates diverse commoning visions, fostering an outwardly expanding patchwork of differential commons.

Armley Community Homes introduces shared ownership tenure, influenced by political and funding pressures and closer *relations* to the state and market. LCH were approached by the council to develop the site (Interview 10). The planning application was supported by funding from the Public Works Loan Board, Affordable Housing Grant from Homes England, and the Community Housing Fund (Bliss 2020). However, the Affordable Housing Grant required that properties can staircase to 100% ownership, threatening collective control. ChaCo addressed this by creatively structuring leases to restrict onward sale by tying access to common spaces, bins and parking to co-operative membership (Interview 12, 22). Continuing a trend

from Period 2, projects like Armley Community Homes rely on state funding, compromising and limiting de-commodification and self-governance. This reflects a national trend where CLH's role is reduced to a technical mechanism of affordable housing delivery, supressing its broader political and democratic potential (Field 2020).

Evident through LILAC, ChaCo, Armley Community Homes and New Wortley, spatial arrangements have emerged for new-build schemes at a scale of around 20–30 homes. This has been informed by the political context and the cohousing model's intentional ethos of sharing and provision of common facilities beyond housing (Jarvis 2015a). Earlier group-led initiatives in Period 3 sought higher degrees of communality, whereas newer projects show more pragmatic compromises. The cohousing model in Period 3 addresses both the exclusivity of communal co-operatives in Period 1 and the lack of communality in institutional approaches of Period 2. Across Period 3, a distinct divide between private and communal indicates a shift towards pragmatism (Arbell, Middlemiss, and Chatterton 2020).

Highlighting a key barrier to expanding the commons through a middle-out nested hierarchy, LCH have struggled to establish a group to take on collective control of Armley Community Homes (Interview 9, 10, 17). However group involvement can be fundamental to bridging material 'boundary' and subjective 'expanding' commoning (Cayuela 2021). For instance, the long group-led process of ChaCo allowed for deliberation on people's involvement, to reconcile differing expectations, learn to live together, make decisions, and resolve conflict before moving-in (Interview 22). This partially facilitated an acknowledgement and countering of White dominance, and to address barriers to involvement such as people not feeling that CLH is for them; explaining the complexity of co-operative ownership; and building confidence of members (Interview 15, 22). LCH's lack of 'community development' resource to support group formation was further hindered by the challenge of building an asset base and longer term revenue stream. This highlights the need for a nested hierarchy bringing together the grassroots, middle-tier and the state, demonstrating CLH cannot emerge from the middle alone.

Despite these limitations, an important aspect of CLH *governance* emerged in Period 3. LCH is a CLT and registered as a CBS for Leeds and Yorkshire. LCH exemplifies a 'Community Development Corporation' capable of coordinating land and funding (Thompson 2016b). Formed as a 'unique city-wide collaboration' (World Habitat 2016), LCH brought together experience and connected key people from Frontline, LATCH, Canopy, LILAC, and ChaCo to enable new projects (Interviews 9, 10, 11, 18, 20, 22). Our periodisation shows how these projects provide prefigurative steps, creating structures, networks and models that can evolve towards an ideal-type commons. LCH operates with collective democratic structures through its CBS model, but questions remain about its relationship with individual projects and whether ownership and control of these will be collective. A key concern is that LCH are taking on the 'heavy lifting' through directly delivery but with insufficient resource and support, rather than focussing on establishing a coordinating and enabling structure. As Thompson (2020b) finds in Liverpool, LCH could be a barrier to bottom-up change

given the movement is reliant on them, rather than them being reliant on the movement. Contrasting examples such as the Mietshäuser Syndikat in Germany highlight the strength of joint ownership and control between the Syndikat and individual projects, preventing commodification, fostering a network of activists to share knowledge, get involved in media and policy debates, and steadily gaining capital from solidarity contributions recycled into new projects (Hölzl 2022; Hurlin 2018). A further concern is that LCH are not bringing together the different sub-sector models of CLH, limiting 'niche integration' at the local and regional level, but which has been a feature at the national level (Lang, Chatterton, and Mullins 2019).

During this period, the 'public' dimension of emerging public-commons partnership faced limitations across the cases. There was excitement amongst officers regarding CLH (Interviews 1-7) but Interviewee 1 explained, 'we are reliant … at the very 'primordial ooze' kind of layer, that's got to generate itself'. This statement reflects that the state is largely reactive and CLH not an institutional priority. CLH is largely absent from local policy save for statutory duties around self and custom-build and when aligned with public policy goals. Emphasis instead is on large-scale allocations and capital receipts, not the smaller scale of CLH (Interview 3). Interviewee 20 saw CLH in competition with the council's public housing programme and too resource-intensive. This reflects the post-political tension between hopes for 'more democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive forms of doing politics' whilst challenges to the existing system are neutralised (Swyngedouw 2018, 2). Given the state's pivotal role in expanding CLH, city-wide intermediaries like LCH need to demonstrate the potential of CLH's broad public appeal and role in a renewed municipal housing project. At the moment, however, LCH have had limited capacity to take on this lobbying role (Interviews 9 & 10).

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Overall then, through three historical periods in Leeds, we have explored the diverse forms of housing commons over time, using the city as a useful vantage point from which to understanding the complexities of commoning as an actually existing practice. The lens of 'differential' and 'transitional' commoning helped us understand the dynamics of change over time, with a critical perspective on how *relations, spatiality* and *governance* are manifested in different ways in different contexts, as summarised in Table 3. Each of our commoning themes charts a similar trajectory from an early maximalist appearance based on politicised autonomous relations, a tightly bounded spatiality and commitment to co-operative governance, evolving through a more minimalist approach based on managerialism, partnership and individualisation, and mutating into a more blended and complex reality in the present period. Our CLH-as-commoning framework highlights that cooperatives (Period 1) had limitations to access and distribution of benefits, while minimalist (Period 2) and pragmatist (Period 3) approaches inform broader access and distribution of benefits. Ultimately, there is a trade-off between maximising the extent and size of housing commons, with the quality and nature of relations and spatial forms that are developed.

Table 3: Thematic summary of CLH-as-commoning in Leeds.

Commons theme	Period 1: 1970s/80s	Period 2: 1980s/90s	Period 3: 2000s/10s
Relations	Group-led, autonomous with state funding, strong de-commodification, wider political change	Community-based, partnership with state, localised material needs	Group-led, community-based and developer-led, partnership with state, some de-commodification, solidify CLH as alternative
Spatiality	Mostly re-use, small scale, communal, networked	Mostly re-use, small to large scale, individual homes, place-based	Mostly new-build, medium scale, private/communal divide, networked and place-based, explicit aim to expand movement
Governance	Fully mutual cooperatives with direct member control	Committee-based management with member involvement, sub-sector networks forming nationally	Mix of fully mutual co-operatives with direct member control, and committee-based management with member involvement, with sector and sub-sector networks forming nationally and city/region scale
	Maximalist	**Minimalist**	**Maximalist-pragmatist**

Conclusions: progress towards CLH-as-commons

In this concluding section, we draw on the empirical research of CLH-as-commoning to provide some strategic reflections on the contribution of CLH to a housing and urban commons, and point to a number of conceptual developments as an agenda for future research. Before doing so, we consider, in turn, each of the three components of Chatterton's (2016) framework and suggest how this can be developed based on the case study of CLH in Leeds.

Building on Chatterton's (2016) theme of *relations*, we stress the importance of bringing in marginalised voices, placing attention on social relations within commoning communities, beyond state-market-commons relations. We cannot simply rely on civil society to expand the commons from the bottom-up, as this will reflect existing patterns of inequality and be dominated by those with resources (Arbell 2022; Moore and McKee 2014). The cyclical peaks in growth of CLH illustrate how the state plays a fundamental role in commoning, and increasingly so with the shift from self-organisation towards more collaborative partnerships (see Czischke 2018; Mullins and Moore 2018). As highlighted by Zielke et al. (2021), studying the commons from the city-level confronts us with the reality of social relations and inequalities. Cases from the 1990s show that commoning in disadvantaged communities requires sustained, targeted investment rather than open-call funding, which tends to benefit more mobilised groups. Meeting basic material needs can expand involvement, fostering cooperative actions where social capital has waned (Zielke et al. 2021). This agenda should address issues of cultural diversity and underrepresentation in leadership within CLH (see Arbell 2022; Hendrickson et al. 2024), aiming to reinforce current action 'in' and 'against', and support more action 'beyond'

capitalism (Chatterton 2016) through 'bottom-linking' and building productive grassroots and state relationships (Dyer-Witherford 2007; Moulaert et al. 2019). The agenda for working in, against and beyond capitalism can also be strengthened by taking forward the concept of 'differential commoning' and capturing the range of experiments – minimalist to maximalist – involved in the actually existing commons, particularly those targeting marginalised groups.

Spatially, we highlight the commons are a non-contiguous patchwork of bounded moments. By examining CLH-as-commoning from the city rather than project level, we build on Chatterton (2016) to reveal connections between experiments, key figures, and the evolution of networks that make Leeds a leading city for CLH in England. Our framework can apply in other contexts, resisting the isolation of 'heroic enclaves of otherness' (Stavrides 2016, 262), thereby alienating other perspectives, and encouraging imaginative collaboration across initiatives. This agenda can be strengthened by incorporating the feminist concept of 'care-work' in building communities and commons (see Arrigoitia et al. 2023) and 'relational work' in energy and sustainability transitions literature (see Middlemiss et al. 2024). We should use productive histories, like we have established in Leeds, to strengthen emerging institutions for middle-out commoning, overcoming this patchwork of bounded commons so that they remain 'infectious' (Stavrides 2014), though also learning from the experience of Leeds Community Homes in that change cannot come from the middle alone but needs to be connected down, as well as up.

Chatterton (2016) highlighted the need for alliances among actors with contrasting political aims, and new meso-level organisational forms for *governance*. Leeds, though limited, serves as an empirical case from CLH, offering steps towards public-commons partnerships (PCPs). Leeds shows strong and diverse micro-level action (Table 1) and emerging meso-level coordination via Leeds Community Homes, linked to networks like 'Community Led Homes'. This study addresses a gap in Milburn and Russell (2020), showing how PCPs can actually emerge, developing from practical actions, experience and networks. The task is to engage with these rich histories, unify voices, learn from strengths and limitations, and improve our understanding of potential PCP structures. The case of Leeds Community Homes illustrates the need for connections to broader housing and urban issues, to avoid bottlenecks in resources, bringing people out of the day-to-day efforts of separate actions, and encourage pro-active state involvement. Czischke, Peute, and Brysch (2023) suggest four pathways to build supportive relationships: solidarity networks, such as the regional hubs and umbrella networks in UK; federating, like the Mietshäuser Syndikat in Germany; collective tenant management within social housing; and, co-productive partnerships between groups, local authority, housing associations, private developers. Applying the CLH-as-commoning framework across contexts will help identify suitable pathways and their strengths and weaknesses.

As well as these three themes of relations, spatiality and governance, a more comprehensive framework for analysing the commons would include materiality and subjectivity (Cayuela 2021; Stavrides 2016; De Angelis 2017). The research on CLH-as-commoning has highlighted how new subjectivities and spatialities are formed around small material wins, which establish new relations and embed new forms of governance, all of which can open further opportunities for commoning.

Adding these themes brings Chatterton's framework into dialogue with reality of actually-existing commons, and contends with the post-political condition of disenfranchisement, disempowerment, and precarity (Zielke et al. 2021).

This paper argues that CLH is more than housing design, provision, management; it is a hopeful, transformative, community-driven effort that works within and against mainstream housing systems. CLH empowers communities to create meaningful change through co-productive governance, that can re-orient our systems and cities to respond to societal crises. This shift is essential given the UK's impositional governance approach and lack of commitment to addressing structural change, as seen with the previous administration's 'Levelling Up' agenda (Coyle and Muhtar 2023). CLH is also connected into wider agendas, and part of a wider ecosystem trying to common the city, as seen in Leeds Community Homes' involvement as 'transition partner' for Housing in Climate Action Leeds', a five-year programme uniting people to make Leeds 'zero carbon, nature friendly and socially just' by the 2030s (Climate Action Leeds n.d.). The initiative involves eight community hubs around the city, working together with transition partners on energy, food, nature, work & economy, youth & education, and transport, linking various community-led networks to inform a city-plan. Future research should explore CLH-as-commoning from a 'provisioning systems' perspective, linking biophysical resources with social outcomes, (see Bayliss and Fine 2020; Fanning, O'Neill, and Büchs 2020; Gough 2019) and integrating CLH into the broader project of transformation across transport, food, energy and work (Schafran, Smith, and Hall 2020). In this sense, rather than that locating CLH as 'transitional commoning' (Ferreri 2023), we suggest it points more towards 'transformational commoning'.

Whilst hopeful, CLH-as-commoning should not be idealised. Leeds lacks a unified common housing movement and, as yet, there is not a city-wide commons. CLH-as-commoning is cyclical and adhoc, with CLH remaining a niche, and unable to provide a complete response to the shortcomings of the housing system. CLH is also complex, risky and a lengthy process. Given this, Chatterton's (2016) concept of a 'city-wide' commons is less useful, while Stavrides (2016) idea of the 'City as Commons' is more fitting given the patchwork spatiality of commoning interventions. The commons also represent 'translocal' networks beyond the city, linking the local with broader regional, national and international networks of solidarity and counter-hegemonic strategies for change (Hölzl 2022; McFarlane 2009). Research should explore connections between CLH and other commoning actors, including tenants, homeowners, renters, squatters and homeless, as well as with other urban systems (Dyer-Witherford 2007; Hodkinson 2012b) and link CLH with housing protests and smaller-scale prefigurative experiments for greater impact. For example, the Pride of Place Leeds project are planning a new LGBTQ + cohousing and community centre, but in the interim are renting a space to bring the communities together (Pride of Place Leeds n.d.). CLH must also integrate into city-wide discussions concerning collective land use, as seen with the Liverpool Land Commission (Thompson 2020c) and Just Space in London (see Lipietz, Lee, and Hayward 2014).

The transformative potential of CLH-as-commoning, then, lies in blending commoning tendencies – by challenging hegemonic norms, empowering communities, forming new relationships, deepening good governance, providing

practical examples of change, making material changes and expanding the overall ecosystem of movement actors. Our case study of Leeds shows how periods of commoning build on each other, creating a tapestry of what commoning is or could be. Through our CLH-as-commoning framework, and bringing a range of examples together in solidarity, we strengthen these often isolated, small scale and fragmented examples of change. Rather than perfect and complete transformation, CLH-as-commoning provides us with a 'Robin Hood' narrative, slowly building a bureaucracy from below (Thompson 2020b). Whilst our findings support Ferreri and Vidal's (2022) concern that CLH is a problematic reference point for the commons, we contend that, rather than ditching the connection, what is needed is a broader conception of the commons. If we had only sought out purer and more maximalist expressions of the commons to study then our empirical material would be limited and insight into the tensions and contradictions and some of the more micro-level innovations of real-world commoning would be lost. We hope this work opens up opportunities for further analytical explorations of CLH-as-commoning and its contribution to a more broadly conceived city-wide commons that, ultimately, can explore a wider range of models and diverse tactics involved in producing and defending housing commons as they actually exist.

Schedule of primary interviews:

1	Homes England
2	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
3	Leeds City Council (LCC) Regeneration
4	LCC Urban Design
5	LCC Planning
6	LCC Housing
7	LCC Housing (retired)
8	Self Help Housing
9	Leeds Community Homes
10	Leeds Community Homes
11	Frontline
12	Wrigleys Solicitors
13	Ecology Building Society
14	Connect Housing
15	Unity Homes & Enterprise
16	Citu
17	Architect
18	Leeds Action to Create Homes
19	Canopy
20	LILAC
21	LCC Community Development Worker (retired)
22	Chapeltown Cohousing
23	Pride of Place Leeds
24	Tangram

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