Please cite the Published Version

Urban regeneration and social entrepreneurship: A microhistorical study of a Community Land Trust

Thomas Davis, James Scott Vandeventer, Gary Warnaby & Michael Bull

Published online: 16 Apr 2025.

Submit your article to this journal ⬚

View related articles ⬚

View Crossmark data ⬚

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

 OPEN ACCESS

Check for updates

Urban regeneration and social entrepreneurship: A microhistorical study of a Community Land Trust

Thomas Davis, James Scott Vandeventer, Gary Warnaby and Michael Bull

Faculty of Business and Law, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

ABSTRACT

In this article, we use microhistory to investigate the emergence of social entrepreneurship within historic patterns of urban regeneration. Specifically, we explore the complex temporal processes leading to the formation of Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust (CLT), located in the Granby neighbourhood of Liverpool, UK. Drawing on archival sources, we explore the changing composition of Granby by constructing a microhistorical narrative that analyses the context and consequences of multiple macro- and micro-level attempts at neighbourhood regeneration. This allows us to elaborate on how the Granby CLT emerged in relation to the historic agency of generations of Granby residents and community groups as they interacted with the complex legacies of institutional attempts towards urban change and renewal. In tracing these multiple overlapping historical agencies, we add new theoretical insights relating to the dynamic, intersecting relations through which social entrepreneurship emerges.

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship relates entrepreneurial thinking to societal problems through the creation of organisational forms that can pursue both economic and social change (Dacin et al., 2011). Seen as an important alternative to for-profit enterprises causing socio-economic inequality and environmental degradation, this mode of organising has attracted increased scholarly attention (Hota, 2023; Lechterman & Mair, 2024). The literature on social entrepreneurship often emphasises the heroic abilities of individuals who can address market failures others cannot (for critique, see Holm & Beyes, 2022). More contextualised approaches explore collective and relational characteristics (de Bruin et al., 2017), situating the creation of social ventures within wider social, institutional and material interrelationships (Stirzaker et al., 2021). Historical research can provide new insights into these complex and interactive contexts of social entrepreneurship (Steyaert & Dey, 2010) by analysing how dynamic patterns of relations between different actors, groups and materials change over time (Blundel & Lyon, 2015). In this paper, we use microhistory to study such changing patterns as the historical foundations of social entrepreneurship. Specifically, we trace the history of

---

regeneration as it relates to an urban community in Liverpool to reveal how the formation of a Community Land Trust (CLT) emerges from the temporal layering of multiple different forms of historical agency (e.g. Lantela, 2024).

Conventional theories of social entrepreneurship emphasise individuals who start new social ventures as unilateral change agents, able to address seemingly insurmountable societal problems by employing their visionary or resilient characteristics and traits (Zahra et al., 2009). This reifies the agency of founders whilst diminishing the contributions of others (Nicholls, 2013) – a problem reflected in the popularised notion that social entrepreneurs thrive in and around situations of socio-economic breakdown sometimes characterised as 'institutional voids' (Mair & Marti, 2009). Here, social and institutional actors are a benign influence in that they create conditions for social entrepreneurship through their absence or ineffectualness (Grimes et al., 2013). Consequently, a scholarly focus on 'lone agentic actors runs the risk of overlooking the vital role played by outside actors … [where] … much of social entrepreneurship appears, in fact, to be collaborative and collective, drawing on a broad array of support, cooperation and alliances' (Montgomery et al., 2012, p. 376).

Alternative explanations for social entrepreneurship can be found by analysing its contexts. This approach understands social ventures as fundamentally relying on relationships (Montgomery et al., 2012), moving past ideas of visionary and skilled individuals working *against* their surroundings (see Holm & Beyes, 2022, pp. 229–230), towards an emphasis on more distributed and multi-level collective forms of agency (de Bruin et al., 2017). This work has investigated the role of different social, economic, and political actors in social entrepreneurship (Lumpkin et al., 2018), which has involved investigations into the intricacies of institutional settings (Koehne et al., 2022) to unpack how public-private relations support social ventures such as cooperatives (Stervinou et al., 2021) and other hybrid organisational forms (Gillett et al., 2019). These relations have also been shown to be mediated by material infrastructures: shared experiences of the built environment form meaningful place attachments and identities that galvanise or reinforce collectively distributed forms of agency (Brenton & Slawinski, 2023).

Historical research can further contribute an important *dynamic* appreciation of these contextual relationships, revealing the temporal complexity in changing patterns of agency that shape and influence social entrepreneurship (Newth & Woods, 2014). Existing studies have focused on the urban context, such as Barinaga's (2017) exploration of the micro-level dynamics for launching and maintaining social ventures as a process of continuous 'tinkering': social organisations grow and develop by interfacing with different urban actors and organisations at different times, accommodating competing and shifting interests and priorities (see also Johannisson, 2018). Other longitudinal studies trace macro-level changes in institutional policymaking as they relate to specific inner-city communities (Gillett et al., 2019), revealing how changing political initiatives continuously enable and constrain 'embedded' social ventures (Nowak & Raffaelli, 2022), or homing in on the temporal processes whereby social entrepreneurship moves institutions themselves to action (Bobadilla et al., 2019) by reanimating derelict postindustrial sites to spearhead the wider renewal of neighbourhoods and cities (Alonso et al., 2020; Kang, 2017).

We build on this work through our microhistorical study of Granby Four Streets CLT,[1] founded in 2011 as a community-owned social housing cooperative refurbishing derelict homes for sale and social rent in the Granby area (part of the Toxteth neighbourhood of Liverpool). We investigate the formation of the CLT within complex and intersecting patterns

of urban regeneration unfolding over a time period of 140 years. Our findings trace the changing composition of relations in the community, which we distinguish within a narrative that configures a dynamic interplay between macro- and micro-level actors playing out across a series of chronological temporal episodes (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023). This enables our identification of time periods when different individuals and groups became involved in driving change in Granby, allowing us to develop new explanations of their overlapping historical agency in the formation of the CLT.

Our approach sets out to disentangle the complex web of agents and materials that can come together in the formation of social entrepreneurship, which we exemplify in our micro-historical study of the urban processes that foreground the emergence of Granby Four Streets CLT. Following the principles of microhistory (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023), our fine-grained contextualised study allows us to develop new theoretical insights into the complex and dynamically related historical foundations of social entrepreneurship. We focus on revealing the social and material legacies associated with institutional action that may facilitate or inhibit the creation of social ventures, generating new explanations of the wider temporal processes at play in the development of such emergent strategies, which we elaborate through our analysis of overlapping and intersecting agency of multiple intergenerational actors. Key empirical material we draw on includes successive institutional plans for the regeneration of Granby held in the *Liverpool Records Office* and *University of Liverpool Special Collection and Archives*, and personal archives that preserve the lived experiences of generations of Granby residents, exhibited at the *Liverpool Maritime Museum* in 2024.

Studying the origins of a Community Land Trust through microhistory

CLTs are an important, but under-researched, example of social entrepreneurship involving collective forms of property ownership that decommodify land to remove it from the speculative market (Haugh, 2022). CLTs emerged in 1960s USA out of experiments in common ownership in the rural south that sought to address the discrimination experienced by Black Americans preventing fair access to housing (Peredo et al., 2018). More recently, CLTs have proliferated – especially in inner-city locations in the USA and UK – to alleviate pervasive socio-economic inequalities created by market failures in providing affordable housing (Peredo & McLean, 2020). CLTs are organised so property ownership does not rest with individuals but is vested in the Trust itself, indivisibly and in perpetuity, with individuals or groups permitted to obtain long-term land leases and own buildings and renovations; the land itself remains owned by the CLT overseen by a board composed of three groups: property owners on leased land, members who do not own property but live in the community, as well as members who support the housing initiative (Peredo et al., 2018). The latter can include social housing providers, architectural practices, community outreach/advocacy programs, social financiers, and institutional departments (e.g. planning and regeneration, public health, social services) (see Gillett et al., 2019).

CLTs are highly pluralistic social organisations requiring active collaboration between multiple actors (often with diverging interests) to collectively address a pervasive form of market failure. The crisis of urban housing affordability is worsening (Potts, 2020) – making the task of understanding how CLTs come into being increasingly urgent. Our research builds on existing studies of the historical roots of rural CLTs (e.g. Haugh, 2022) by considering the

urban context: tracing historic patterns of interaction between diverse actors to reveal new theoretical insights relating to who and what becomes involved at different times.

Our analysis is guided by microhistory. Microhistory is an approach for developing pluralistic accounts of change that attempt to counter established narratives that can emphasise the inherent rationality of institutional systems (Levi, 2001) or the acts of 'heroic' individuals as the singular makers of history (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023). It involves the detailed investigation of a particular context to reveal the wider significance of its social dynamics (Lantela, 2024). Analytically, this involves combining a narrow spatial scope with broad temporal frame to (re)examine historic processes, unveiling the roles and identities of past (and present) actors that drive change with their agency (Van Lent et al., 2023).

Microhistory prescribes close attention to the historically situated lives of individuals and groups whilst simultaneously acknowledging that 'it is not possible to comprehend the everyday, even at the most granular level, without attention to … [the] macro-level' (Popp, 2020, p. 624). This approach therefore understands micro and macro-level processes as always intersecting – and the animation of this interactive process is crucial for unearthing new microhistorical explanations about complex processes of change (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023). This situates microhistory as the study of myriad interactions unfolding through time in the texture of the everyday, which involves excavating often-overlooked or concealed ways that micro-level actors – who are 'active individuals, conscious actors' (Magnússon & Szijártó, 2013, p. 5) – exert their agency by negotiating, extending, diverging, or even outright resisting the rationality of macro-level forces, producing new historical trajectories (Levi, 2001).

The aim of microhistory is to configure a historical narrative that explains how different actors assume agency at different times, to provide new explanations that reveal the multiple factors that influence or intersect in the emergence of a given phenomenon (Lantela, 2024). As Cohen (2019, p. 6) describes, microhistory traces how 'movements, developments, swings in values, shifts in institutions, changes in cultural and intellectual climate, and exchanges across the entire world might intersect and interact in one small pot'. Based on these theoretical considerations, we now elaborate on the analytical approach that informs our microhistorical study of Granby Four Streets CLT.

Empirical materials and analytical approach

Existing microhistorical scholarship has emphasised institutions as the key *conduit* of macro-level forces (Decker, 2015) - as they can translate national and international political and economic shifts onto specific locales (see also Cohen, 2019). To understand macro-level urban changes and their influence on the regeneration of Granby, we gathered records of historical institutional initiatives relating to construction of the neighbourhood in the 1860s, up until 2011, which was the year of the CLT's formation. These documents – held at the *Liverpool Records Office* (LRO) and the *University of Liverpool Special Collection and Archives* (ULSCA) – included published strategies, policy reports and white papers, internal memos, minutes of regeneration committee meetings, written correspondences between local authority departments (i.e. planning, housing, social work, and public health) as well as their exchanges with local organisations located in Granby. This combination of published literature and internal documentation helped us understand changing macro-level plans and how they were successively formulated, coordinated, managed, and altered 'over time' (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023), as well as furnishing an understanding of how such initiatives

were developed in the context of national policymaking amidst Liverpool's changing position in the national and global economy.

We obtained evidence of micro-level processes in empirical materials that preserved evidence of Granby residents' everyday life. Grassroots community publications published between the 1950s and 2010s (held at the LRO) contained field reporting from community events and protests as well as local interviews and letters pages, which were important sources revealing the historically situated lives of Granby residents 'in time' (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023) - and we were able to build a picture of how these experiences intersected with institutional plans, as such initiatives were often explicitly referred to in community publications. Additionally, we located commemorative oral histories from approximately 100 past and present Granby residents (with some recollections stretching back to the 1920s), which filled temporal gaps in our material. Finally, we examined the personal archive of Dorothy Kuya – a pioneering social justice and race relations activist and founding member of Granby Residents Association (GRA) and the Granby Four Streets CLT – exhibited at the *National Museums Liverpool* throughout 2024. This archive contained meeting minutes, letters and (printed) email correspondence, as well as published reports and internal white papers authored by the GRA and CLT, that evidenced their strategic responses to institutional plans and how these were formulated between members and local authorities, but also other community groups, supporters and Granby residents. These materials showed how, from the 1990s, residents had started to organise formally in response to increased macro-level regeneration initiatives, providing a paper trail of how this grassroots movement grew into Granby Four Streets CLT in 2011.

Our analytical approach followed microhistorical principles: tracing multiple historical agencies as they played out across time to unearth new explanations of their often-complex temporal combinations (Lantela, 2024). We overlaid macro- and micro-level processes to discern different times in history when residents were impacted by, subjected to, and sometimes even able to change institutional initiatives, tracing the historical contexts and consequences of these events (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023) We especially looked for 'the pockets or alleys … in which norms are not taken for granted or they are bent' (Lantela, 2024, p. 7), scrutinising our empirical materials for 'clues' (Ginzburg, 1989) to identify when and how diverse historical actors – intentionally or otherwise – might have made important additions or alterations to material infrastructures in Granby, set new political precedents, or sparked novel forms of community organising.

These analytical procedures allowed us to develop a picture of when and how different groups and individuals assumed agency at different times. We subsequently configured a narrative of seven episodes with timescales marked by distinct transformations occurring between macro- and micro-level relations (Popp, 2020). These included an era of institutional dominance tied to industrial wealth; a profound demographic shift and influx of new residents to Granby, who reshaped the neighbourhood's social and cultural makeup; two concerted institutional attempts at regenerating the neighbourhood, first proposed clearances and then a charity-supported participatory project; the collapse of social and institutional relations encapsulated in a civil disturbance, the Toxteth Uprising; the grassroots formation of a residents association; and, finally, the establishment of the CLT. Within each, we move from description to explanation, examining the context of actions involving different people at different times and tracing the consequences of their agency (Hargadon & Wadhwani,

2023) to provide new insights relating to this historical complexity in the emergence of the Granby Four Street CLT.

Findings

The streets that make up the Granby Four Streets were designed and built in the late nineteenth century: Beaconsfield, Cairns, Jermyn and Ducie Street, with Granby Street itself running through the centre (Figure 1). Together, they form the southern extremity of the 'Granby Triangle' (hereafter referred to as 'Granby') – a wedge-shaped formation of 14 rows of terraced housing situated within Toxteth (LRO/643 HOU).

Institutional genesis: harnessing Maritime wealth for urban conservatism (1860s–1920s)

Granby was conceived by the Liverpool Corporation (as Liverpool City Council was then named) as a neighbourhood of fashionable dwellings to accommodate the rapidly growing middle class of artisans, shipping clerks and merchant bourgeoise settling in Toxteth – the most desirable and affluent residential area in Liverpool, situated a mile from the southern docks (LRO/942.753/WHA). The Corporation laid out street plans and employed Robert Owens – a prolific Welsh builder of decorative chapels and terraced homes in Liverpool – to develop unique architectural designs for each street where, importantly, 'no pubs, workshops or factories were allowed' (LRO/942.753 FRO, p. XXIX).

Such ornateness and architectural differentiation constituted a new approach to designing terraced housing (Sharples, 2004). This was especially true for homes in south Granby: ambitiously adorned with arched entrances and wide bay windows (Beaconsfield and Cairns
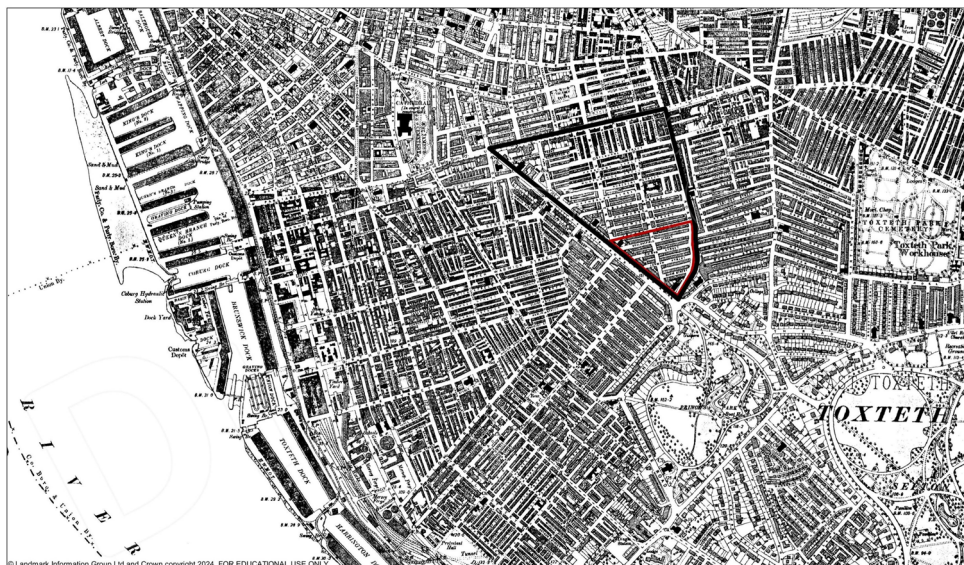

Figure 1. Map of Granby Four Streets area (thin-line) within the wider Granby Triangle (thick-line) shortly after construction in 1900.
© Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2025). All rights reserved (1900).

Streets); fashionable stylistic elements borrowed from continental Europe such as multi-sided mansard roofing and hip-roof dormer windows (Jermyn Street); and large double-fronted homes of up to eight bedrooms (Ducie Street). Considered reminiscent of Hausmann's Parisian boulevards (LRO/331.833 SHE), homes were built wide along tree-lined avenues interspersed with decorative places of worship and public buildings. Granby Street itself was the focal point of commerce, lined with shopfronts constituting 'one of the most prestigious local shopping areas in Liverpool' (ibid, p. 53).

This institutional genesis of Granby coincided with a remarkable period of growth in Liverpool's mercantile trade: between 1860 and 1915 tonnage passing through the docks quadrupled, reaching a peak of nearly 20,000,000 tonnes thereby establishing Liverpool as the second largest port in the world after London (Wilks-Heeg, 2003). This growth, in addition to Liverpool receiving City Charter status in 1880, afforded the Corporation considerable civic powers at a time when they were increasingly being regarded – and crucially, also seeing themselves as – in the vanguard of modern democratic industrial statecraft: 'Liverpool was *the* industrial city, and more than any other city was pioneering local government initiatives' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 23, emphasis in original). The Corporation had previously developed important social innovations in waste management, sanitation and public health (ULSCA/D396/56). As the city settled into a period of plateauing but nonetheless exceptionally high levels of mercantile trade in the 1920s, attention turned to housing: the Corporation completed 18,876 homes from 1920 to 1929 (compared to just 2,658 in the previous four decades between 1880 and 1920) which reflected their growing opinion that housing was 'a means of social control and of improving the moral and behavioural characteristics of the population' (Pooley & Irish, 1994, pp. 206–207).

The Corporation thus exercised significant agency in Granby's formation, an era when its designs for urban life were 'co-extensive with their user communities' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 21). This is reflected in its impressive material form, a legacy that, as we shall see, was essential in Granby's endurance. But what had been left out from designs was also important: strict rules banning pubs and workplaces meant that the neighbourhood was experienced by its inhabitants as 'a sedate area, old-fashioned and quiet' (LRO/942.753 FRO, p. XXIX). From this perspective, we can understand Granby's genesis – its designs, but also how it was administered – as synchronised with the growing institutional desire for control over inner-city living, to encourage conservative ideals and work ethic.

Waning institutional influence, an emergent cultural vibrancy (1930s–1950s)

The 1930s 'heralded the greatest change taking place since the [Granby] community itself had been formed so close to the city's southern docks in the second half of the nineteenth century' (LRO/942.753 FRO, p. XXVII-XXVIII). A substantial shift occurred in the relations between urban administration and everyday life, starting with demography. Liverpool's urban core had already passed the height of industrial activity (in 1915), but its population continued to grow, peaking at 855,688 in 1931 (Hansard, 1943). Overcrowding in tenement housing surrounding the industrial docks spilled over into immediately adjacent inner-city neighbourhoods such as Granby, lessening its appeal as a sedate refuge from the chaotic city centre and prompting the established population to leave the area in droves (LRO/942.753 FRO).

Related to these changing social dynamics were rapidly deteriorating material conditions. By 1930, many homes in Granby had been standing for over 50 years, badly needing renovation. Yet, rather than undertake repairs, the Corporation increasingly focused on building new homes in suburban sites (Pooley & Irish, 1994), ideologically drawn to the appeal of this clean-slate approach to housebuilding in its ongoing 'attempt to institutionalise the whole principle of intervention in urban affairs' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 37). This devalued Granby homes significantly, incentivising and further hastening the departure of the wealthy to new suburbs 'of unnecessarily spacious layout and low density' (ULSCA/D396/56, p. 30). Granby homes were converted into flats or rooms for multiple occupancies swiftly inhabited by new tenants who had travelled south 'up the hill' from overcrowded dwellings that lined the waterfront (LRO/942.753 FRO, p. XXVII).

By the 1950s, Granby's demographic make-up was one of remarkable ethnic diversity: the arrival of seafarers and dockworkers from the Caribbean, West Africa, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Malaysia, China and India made it 'the most racially mixed part of any English city' (ULSCA/D396/56, p. 14) and, especially, an important centre of Black settlement in the UK. Its employment profile drastically shifted away from stable managerial towards more transient and much lower-paid workers (LRO/942.753 FRO). This new multicultural working class was characterised by insecure employment and multiple families renting apartments in what had previously been large homes (ULSCA/D396/56). Such profound changes presented challenges, yet also introduced an entirely different rhythm to the area:

> There was a feel-good factor here … [with] … over twenty three clubs and 'shebeens' [unlicensed venues] in the area during the 1950s. The clubs were also for eating out and to celebrate social and family occasions – the Ibo, the Yoruba, the Nigerian, the Federation, the Somali, the Sierra Leone and Silver Sands plus a variety of other smaller venues and cafes, such as Stanley House, York House and the Robert Jones youth club gave the area its identity. (LRO/942.753/ WHA, p. V)

Through the social activities of its new multicultural residents, Granby became known as a lively musical centre for out-of-hours drinking that offered something different from other parts of the city (LRO.285.1 EMM). In a considerable transformation, the neighbourhood now had the largest concentration of night clubs in Liverpool, frequented not just by the Black community but also residents across the city (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-A). This popularity grew because of Granby's association with rare Rhythm and Blues and Soul records not available in the UK, brought in by Black American servicemen stationed nearby (LRO/942.753 FRO).

This cultural vibrancy left an important legacy that lives on in the collective memory (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-B). It was a change that occurred in tandem with (or arguably, because of) the withdrawal of Granby's previously established, and institutionally enforced, urban conservatism. Granby's new residents – ethnically diverse mercantile workers, but also their families – had actively reshaped the area, taking advantage of lapses in oversight regarding licencing in venues and monitoring of after-hours activities. Everyday life was transformed: 'vibrant and exciting; desperately poor, yes, but it danced' (LRO/942.753 FRO, p. XXXII). Contemporaneous oral histories testify to this period's importance as Granby's 'heyday' (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-A). Yet this newfound freedom of expression came at a cost: waning institutional oversight – now increasingly focused on the construction of new suburbs rather than the renovation of the inner city – had created the disconnect that made vibrant nightlife possible, but it also resulted in little investment in the already-degraded housing, bringing further overcrowding and impoverishment (LRO/285.1 EMM).

Proposed clearances: Granby as epicentre of post-industrial inner-city crisis (1960s)

During the 1960s, Granby re-emerged as a central concern for Liverpool Corporation as multiple consequences of post-industrialisation intersected in the neighbourhood. Mercantile trade, which so many Granby residents had relied on for employment, collapsed with the closure of the entire southern docks occurring by 1972 (LRO/942.753 FRO). Additionally, the material fabric of Granby terraces now far exceeded the intended lifespans. Physical degradation was worsened by individual property owners – mostly private landlords – who had overcrowded properties and then failed to maintain them (LRO/643 HOU). This led to Granby being identified as not only 'one of Liverpool's worst slum areas' (Liverpool Daily Post, cited in LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 112), but also the worst in England:

> In 1966, when the country's unskilled workers totaled 8%, Granby's exceeded 19%. When 3.3% of the nation's households shared dwellings, 34% shared in Granby. When 12.5% did not have a hot water tap, 54.5% of the households in Granby had no hot water and 66.6% no bath. When Britain had 1.6% of its households overcrowded, Granby had over 10% … When national unemployment was 1.3% of registered workers, it was over 9.4% in Granby. (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 55)

However, a national response to the crisis of the inner-city, exemplified in the experience of Granby, was starting to emerge. This favoured new approaches to housing enabled by modern construction techniques and automobility: namely, concrete tower blocks and car-enabled suburban 'new towns' (Dellaria, 2022). Liverpool Corporation's pioneering prior successes in establishing new suburbs had greatly influenced this national policy shift away from terraced housing, yet crucially, 'responsibility for the successful execution of this national strategy was with the local authorities' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 31). The Corporation's now infamous (but at the time seen as 'visionary') planning department, led by figures such as Graeme Shankland (see LRO/352.042 HIL), subsequently set out by sketching the whole inner city as a virgin site.

In 1966, the entirety of Granby was slated for inclusion in a city-wide program of slum clearances that sought to demolish an unprecedented 78,000 inner-city homes (LRO/331.833 SHE). The Corporation quickly experienced a series of delays in realising this hugely ambitious initiative, considerably underestimating the resources required, which left great swathes of Liverpool's urban core as either post-demolition piles of rubble or perpetually in limbo as they awaited the arrival of bulldozers (ULSCA/A53/8/1-A). Granby fell into this latter category: the announcement of clearances caused an uncertainty that left homes – most already designated as slums – to degrade into even further levels of dilapidation (LRO/331.833 SHE).

This ignited previously unobserved levels of community activism. A new found co-operation emerged between hitherto disconnected community groups – organised not only around religion and race, but also youth work, art and music performance, as well as a Law Centre – who together established a new Community Council 'to awake among residents an interest in the developments taking place around them and instil a certain pride in the area's achievements' (ULSCA/D396/56, p. ii). This collective sought, amongst other things, to promote Granby's diverse culture 'as a vehicle of persuasion, of protest, and even, of local power' (ibid. p. 16) to mobilise against what was perceived to be the grossest of injustices: not only institutional condemnation, but also the devastating inaction that had followed (ULSCA/A53/8/1-A).

This 1960s period is therefore marked by another substantial shift. Again, an institutional masterplan emerged, but this time for the *re*making of Granby, against a backdrop of

deindustrialisation. Granby had now changed beyond the comprehension (and control) of the Corporation, who were unable or unwilling to recognise its social and cultural vibrancy in their own visions for the area. This was reflected in the assessment that 'the area has seldom produced any significant social movements of its own, nor has it produced many indigenous leaders [or] any extensive feeling of "community"' (ULSCA/D396/56, p. 14), which was used to justify the 'decanting' of Granby residents into suburban accommodation (ibid.).

Institutional plans overlooked – and threatened to eliminate – the vibrancy of Granby's material, social and cultural fabric, which was weaving together *via* the Community Council. However, the Corporation's ambition was undermined by its inability to enact clearances, and this marked a key moment in the reconfiguring of macro-micro relations by creating a new, oppositional dynamic: galvanising the agency of Granby residents, who began to collectively organise to present an alternative vision of regeneration at odds with macro-level designs, thereby making such plans *even* harder to realise.

The life and death of the Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP) (1968–1972)

Despite residents' grassroots organising, it took an external organisation to persuade Liverpool Corporation – at least temporarily – to change its plan for clearance and rebuilding of Granby. Specifically, housing and homelessness charity Shelter made, in 1968, a concerted attempt to expand its mission from addressing the symptoms of urban housing problems to tackling its root causes through a pilot project named 'Shelter Neighbourhood Action Plan' (SNAP) (ULSCA/A53/8/1). Shelter sought to take advantage of changing national political attitudes towards inner-city regeneration: the growing costs associated with clearance and rebuilding had prompted a willingness for new experiments with approaches to renovating existing housing through public participation (ULSCA/D345/4/26). Shelter saw this change as an opportunity to pursue a different form of regeneration where 'the authoritarian and unitary planning dogmas would no longer apply' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 43). However, as before with the clearance program, announced only a few years earlier, the specific details for implementation of this radical policy change were not forthcoming from the central government (ibid.).

In what has been retrospectively acknowledged as an ingenious interpretation of legislation (Long, 2019), Shelter representative Des Wilson (see Wilson, 2011) approached the Corporation with a proposal to pilot in Granby 'the rehabilitation of a whole neighbourhood with the full participation of the people' (ibid, p. 70). The SNAP project sought to create an integrated system out of the well-intentioned but still-fragmented efforts of multiple local groups – including the Granby Community Council – and other individuals and organisations who were doggedly attempting to improve life in the neighbourhood despite its slated clearance (LRO/331.833 SHE (1)). Granby was selected as the pilot in part because, in what was becoming a refrain, it exhibited 'the worst aspects of nearly all social problems clump[ed] in an area of slum or partial slum housing' (LRO/331.833 SHE (1), p. 3). However, its multi-racial community, national reputation for cultural dynamism, and strong legacy of local community activism – established in the previous decade – were deemed just as important as the (un)soundness of its brick structures and decorative terraces in driving its selection for the SNAP project (LRO/331.833 SHE; ULSCA/A53/8/1-C). While consenting to SNAP's focus on Granby, the Liverpool Corporation 'welcomed the pilot project in terms which fell short of political

commitment or the promise of the co-operation of its officers' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 41). Though this willingness to engage in a new civic experiment indicated the Corporation's continued readiness to pursue social innovation, the cautious approach was unsurprising to Shelter considering Liverpool's deepening deindustrialisation (ibid.).

In 1969, SNAP recruited a Director, Des McConaghy (see Long, 2019), who established a novel organisational structure for addressing Granby's significant housing challenges. The project recruited local staff and volunteers, enlisting individuals previously associated with the Community Council, such as the Law Centre, to work alongside representatives from Liverpool Corporation's Departments of Housing, Environment Health and Protection, and Family Service Unit, the University of Liverpool's Department of Civic Design, locally elected politicians, and local housing associations and building contractors, amongst others (ULSCA/D345/4/26).

These collective organising principles were informed by nascent citizen participation initiatives in the USA, relayed to SNAP in correspondence between American officials and a University of Liverpool Lecturer from the Department of Civic Design in 1967 (ULSCA/A53/8/1-B). A key emphasis was the importance of physical co-location, which informed key decisions about the location of SNAP's offices in the southern tip of Granby - considered by SNAP to be the neighbourhood's 'best bit' (ULSCA/D345/4/26) - in a derelict police station close to Ducie Street (LRO/331.833 SHE). SNAP undertook a systematic scheme of work in the immediate vicinity, including surveying the structural integrity of properties, consulting with residents, training on cooperative principles for participatory governance of housing, and offering legal advice – all aimed at facilitating the renovation of existing housing and/or relocation to newly built homes (ULSCA/A53/8/1).

Between 1969 and 1972, SNAP supported the renovation of 514 homes in Granby (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 181). Of crucial importance are the spatiality of these interventions and their material legacy: approximately 70% of renovated homes were concentrated in the southern areas near the SNAP offices on Beaconsfield, Cairns, Jermyn, Ducie and Granby Streets (ibid.). This provided essential physical infrastructure for the CLT some forty years later.

However, after SNAP was disbanded, in 1972, there was a discernible lack of forward momentum (ULSCA/A53/8/1-D). The Corporation had temporarily accommodated SNAP but had not meaningfully attempted to absorb its principles of participation into its own operations. This disconnect was further exacerbated by the reorganisation of Liverpool Corporation by consultants McKinsey, started in 1970 and completed in 1972 (ULSCA/A53/8/1), which sought to drive efficiencies through mergers of public departments. The restructure eradicated the autonomy of, amongst others, the Departments of Housing, City Planning, and Environmental Health – who had crucially worked most closely with SNAP – instead assimilating them into one 'super-department' that created the opposite-to-intended effect: 'horizontal co-ordination became even more critical and, understandably, more difficult to achieve' (LRO/331.833 SHE, p. 89).

In this sense, SNAP proved an indispensable – but partial – intervention into Granby's built environment. It sought to synchronise institutional and community needs, succeeding in renovating hundreds of homes in a spatially demarcated area proximal to its offices. How SNAP managed to strike a balance between Liverpool Corporation's involvement and genuine community participation is a testament to the time and resources invested. However, while the Corporation's consent was critical, written correspondences testify that the relationship was tense, with SNAP often regarded as interfering in the established institutional

approach to urban management (ULSCA/A53/8/1-D; ULSCA/D345/4/26-A). Nonetheless, SNAP and its legacy of both materially improving homes and substantially shifting power to residents constitute a key microhistorical 'focal event' (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023). A charitable actor outside the existing institutional apparatus managed to disrupt Granby's trajectory towards clearance and rebuild, beginning to forge a new vision for the area 'by creating a will and a need and a desire on the part of all the community to help itself, to concern itself and to act itself' (Morgan, 1973, p. 71). Yet, while this success can be partially attributed to SNAP operating *outside* the machinations of the Corporation, this very fact also hindered the development of any meaningful institutional legacy. This lack of post-SNAP momentum in Granby would worsen in subsequent years amidst changes to both local and national political situations.

Contexts and consequences of the Toxteth Uprising (1972–1990)

By 1972, Liverpool's economic decline, which had already produced devastating effects in the city, entered a further precipitous phase. 80,000 jobs were lost between 1972 and 1982, what was left of the mercantile trade collapsed, and half of the city's manufacturing sector closed (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2014). This economic crisis extinguished any residual institutional enthusiasm or resources for continued experimentation with new approaches to regeneration. Minutes from a 1976 meeting of Liverpool City Council, as the local authority was now named, remarked that seeking in-depth but incrementally implemented renovations (as advocated by SNAP) was like 'pouring water into a bath without a plug' (ULSCA/D396/48-B).

The prevailing sentiment was for a return to a 'one-size-fits-all' approach; clearances were back on the agenda and targeted Granby's northern homes (see Figure 2), which were in the poorest condition having not been previously renovated by SNAP (LRO/331.833
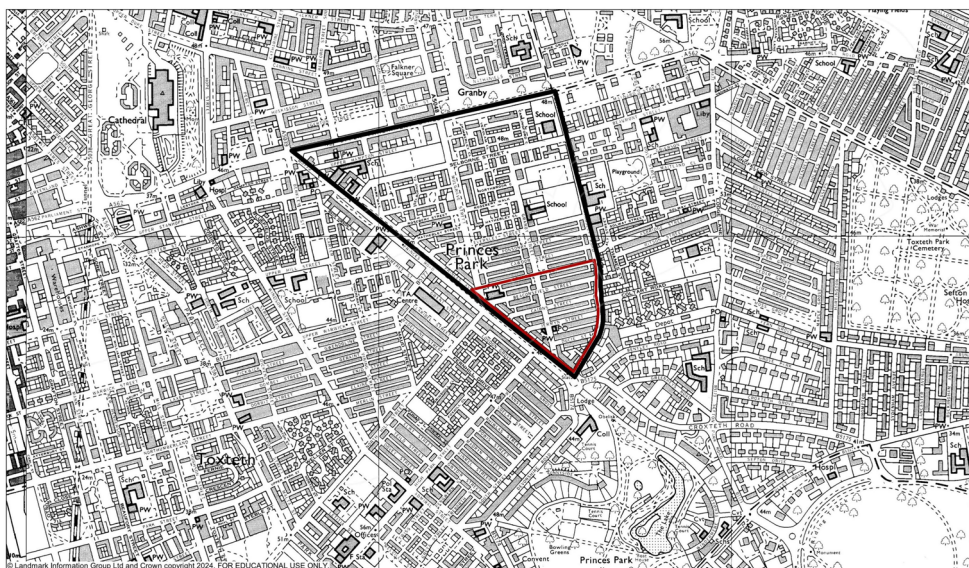

Figure 2. Map showing Radburn housing in the north of Granby in 1980s.

SHE). In 1976, seven rows of historic terraces were swiftly demolished and replaced with new *tabula rasa* council housing comprising over 700 homes constructed of the cheapest materials available following 'Radburn' design principles (completed in 1980) (ULSCA/D396/48-A; LRO/363.585 HOU). The rebuilding work – affecting over 50% of Granby – included re-laying streets, and truncating the length of Granby Street so it was no longer a primary artery into central Liverpool, impacting both retail and footfall (LRO/942.753/WHA).

Through the late 1970s, those that remained in Granby's southern extremity – residing in the neighbourhood's last remaining Victorian terraces – were again subjected to an enforced temporariness. These homes, many in good condition thanks to SNAP, were earmarked for not-yet-but-imminent demolition. The condemnation involved short-term withdrawal of infrastructural investment and material renovations as the authorities prepared for pending demolition (ULSCA/D396/48-C). However, more insidious tactics may have been at play, with Granby's southern streets serving as location for creating a 'delinquent area' (see Gill, 1977) that could – at least for a time – accommodate criminal and other unsavoury activities from elsewhere (LRO/331.833 SHE).

The institutional (mis)treatment of Granby precipitated a rise in everyday hostilities, particularly resulting from extensive Police enforcement of 'stop and search' measures targeting young Black men (Hamnet, 1983). This came to a head violently in the 1981 Toxteth Uprising, nine days of civil disturbance across south Liverpool (LRO/340 LAW/14/3/4). Granby Street itself was the precise location of the arrest of Leroy Cooper that sparked the first night of unrest (ULSCA/D396/57/9, 10). Much has already been written about the uprising in terms of institutional racism of the police and the systematic mistreatment of some of Liverpool's poorest citizens (e.g. Brown, 2005; Cowell et al., 1982). But as one 'Professional Workers Group' – the residual legal professionals once comprising the Community Council, established some two decades earlier – summarised in a meeting with the City Council in 1984, after listing the accumulation of injustices experienced by Granby residents in the years leading up to the Uprising: 'there is no pleasure in saying, "I told you so"' (ULSCA/D396/48-A). Any progress made at the beginning of the decade towards consensual relations between residents and local institutions established by SNAP had been undone.

Throughout the 1980s, life in the Granby area became increasingly bleak. Those who lived through this era recalled how jarring the inaction was by the City Council – the now infamous 'management of decline' (see Parker & Atkinson, 2020) – in the years that followed the Uprising in 1981. No clean up or repair, but instead the cessation of already dwindling public services such as refuse collection and investigation of crimes (LRO/942.753/WHA). A vicious cycle, already well-established, had become further entrenched: more empty houses, fewer people wanting to move in, and increased closures of entertainment venues and shops – which became both symptom and cause of Viscount Mersey's visceral experiences of Granby during his 1987 visit, recounted in Parliament:

> I was there last Friday, and I was nearly moved to tears … The black heart of the area is the Granby Triangle. It is bounded by Kingsley Road, Princes Avenue and Upper Parliament Street where the riots were. It houses some 40,000 black people in the worst conditions that I have come across in this country. The main artery is Granby Street. The shops in it are all boarded up and it is not possible to make a living as a retailer within the triangle … [with] 85 percent unemployment. What makes this 85 percent figure even more remarkable is that all round Toxteth good things are happening. (Hansard, 1987)

In this period, the possibilities of participation between Liverpool City Council and Granby residents evaporated. The clearance and rebuild of the northern areas undermined Granby's identity, retail, and connectivity, while the mismanagement of the institutional relations – especially the Police – served as antecedents to the Toxteth Uprising. This represented a profound change in macro-micro dynamics in just a decade. Whilst the co-operation that was so essential to SNAP now appeared unthinkable, its material legacy, crucially, remained well-preserved in the southern tip of Granby.

A new grassroots initiative: Granby Residents Association (1990s)

By 1990, national government was making direct interventions to regenerate Liverpool as a consequence of the Toxteth Uprising (Parker & Atkinson, 2020). Despite progress being achieved elsewhere, the Liverpool City Council reported in the same year that Granby still 'exhibits some of the worst social, economic and physical conditions in inner Liverpool' (LRO/363.585 HOU, p. 4). This included a damning internal assessment of the 700 council homes in the north, only ten years old, but already obsolete:

> The estate suffered from the design deficiencies…including high density, exposed walkways, insecure common access to flats and maisonettes, non-traditional separation of cars and pedestrians, lack of suitable parking facilities. Together with poor maintenance, these deficiencies led to major problems for residents. (LRO/363.585 HOU, pp. 7–8)

Another clearance and rebuild was proposed to rectify this situation. However, also acknowledged was the 'urgent needs of the older housing area' (ibid, p. 9) – referring to the seven remaining terraced streets in the south, which had not received attention since the SNAP refurbishment work nearly 20 years earlier. In a move that, at least initially, appeared to channel the legacy of SNAP, Liverpool City Council proposed renovation of historic terraces in 'partnership with local groups and residents to ensure full participation … coordinating the activities of various key agencies operating in the area to secure the resources required for a more effective approach' (ibid, pp. 16–17).

The Council gave local housing associations responsibility for managing this participatory process, including assessing the condition of properties, consulting residents, and formulating a strategy to address Granby's diverse housing needs – now characterised by a significant north/south divide (LRO/340 LAW/11/1/1). Outsourcing was chosen in part because of a belief in greater efficiencies of non-government organisations, but also due to the Council's lack of resources: the housing associations owned the condemned homes in the north, as well as most of – but crucially, not *all* – of the historic terraces in south Granby (LRO/363.585 HOU). Their consultation concluded in 1994 and proved to be highly contentious, as well as a key moment in the later emergence of Granby Four Streets CLT.

Unlike SNAP, the consultation bore few marks of a participatory approach. Instead, housing associations spent three years developing plans for wholesale demolition and rebuild of Granby, informing residents of this by post (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-A). This was received exceptionally poorly by residents who had already endured nearly 30 years of such plans (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-B). Rather than accept the proposal, a group of residents including Dorothy Kuya – an influential race relations activist who emerged as a key figure in the wake of 1981 unrest – as well as members of longstanding community organisations such as the Law Centre and Shelter, whose collective involvement in the community could be traced

back to the SNAP initiative and beyond, decided to make use of the public fund for civic representation maintained by Liverpool City Council to establish Granby Residents Association (GRA) (LRO/340 LAW/11/1/1). Importantly, the core members of GRA were mostly owners of homes that had benefitted from SNAP refurbishment, concentrated south of Beaconsfield Street (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-C).

The GRA marked a significant moment in organising resistance in Granby. In 1994, they published a manifesto that formally opposed the housing associations' plans on the basis of: their predilection to build lower quality and smaller – yet also more expensive – housing stock; the inadequate compulsory purchase order (CPO) compensation (forcing owner-occupiers to accept a loss on the market value of their properties and take on expensive new mortgages in adjacent higher value areas); the lack of a formal commitment or plan to bring residents back into the area after construction of new homes had been completed; and the absence of any provision for new shops and entertainment venues (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-B). What followed was a sustained campaign to galvanise local opposition to demolition and point out these inherent flaws in what the GRA declared to be a 'farcical' consultation (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-C).

The GRA also proposed an alternative: to 'Build Granby Up Don't Knock It Down', which involved members conducting their own consultation engaging '318 households in a house-to-house survey [where] 201 were "totally opposed to plans to demolish my home and hundreds of other terraced homes in the area"' (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-C). Mirroring SNAP's participatory processes, GRA advocated for gradual but in-depth refurbishment of homes gaining widespread support of over 60% of residents in the area (ibid.). However, many residents did not actually own their homes – required to prevent immediate forced eviction – so housing associations proceeded to remove their tenants *en masse*. So, while core GRA home-owners, buoyed by the strong response to their consultation, fiercely resisted CPOs throughout the latter 1990s, the poorest (predominately Black) Granby residents were evicted (LRO/305.896042753 EDU).

The 1990s revealed complex layers of historical agency sparked by the Council's attempt to reassert itself through a new regeneration plan. The stated intent for a participatory-led approach focusing on renovations, reminiscent of SNAP, was not delivered. As landlords, housing associations had much to gain from clearance and rebuild, not least increased rents and property values. Their advocacy of this approach was received as not merely self-interested, but a dreadful betrayal of residents, whose desires were unacknowledged. But the threat of demolition revived residents' self-organising: to craft their own vision for regenerating Granby.

The GRA's work was remarkably similar to SNAP's approach – going door-to-door, representing residents' own views – while also building on the material legacy of SNAP-renovated homes, where most GRA members lived. Though this group did not have much political power and comprised only a small handful of homeowners concentrated in south Granby, they managed to put up serious resistance that prevented the clearance of their terraced streets: it only took one remaining resident in a row of terraces to prevent the demolition of the entire row. The staunch tactics of GRA were therefore pivotal in preventing the wholesale clearance of the few historic terraces that remained in Granby at this time. Even more remarkable is that they were funded by Liverpool City Council despite organising to oppose the Council's principal agent, the housing associations.

An uneasy alliance: the formation of Granby Four Streets CLT (2000–2011)

By the turn of the Millennium, the only historic terraced homes in Granby were on Beacons-field, Cairns, Jermyn and Ducie Streets, as well as parts of Granby Street (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-D). The stubborn resistance of GRA homeowners meant the terraces were still standing, but many residents had been evicted: their homes boarded up and abandoned for the foresee-able future, with the last remnants of commercial activity disappearing with them (D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-E). The housing associations' plan for rebuilding Granby had been delayed by over a decade and was now seen as a costly failure (LRO/340 LAW/11/1/3).

This was the context in which a new national initiative, the Housing Market Renewal (HMR), was announced. HMR sought to reduce reliance on housing associations by providing new legal powers to larger and more financially powerful private-sector partners to unilat-erally demolish homes (McGowan et al., 2020). In 2004, all of Granby's remaining terraces were *again* earmarked for demolition as part of HMR in Liverpool City Council's updated 'Granby Toxteth Regeneration Framework Masterplan'. This planning document proposed to use 'private sector led development' (LRO/711.4 LLE, p. 15) to bring the area 'back to life with a combination of new builds' (ibid., p. 9). Whilst still proposing clearances and rebuilds, this nonetheless marked a distinct change in approach: following the HMR prerogative, the Council planned to embrace the private sector and remove 'long-term state subsidy for all types of development or the continuation of any form of strategy based on the continuing reliance of the high level and oversupply of social housing in the area' (ibid, p. 13).

The GRA, now in existence for 12 years, regrouped to campaign vigorously against this new Council proposal, galvanised around the 'same old rhetoric about lack of demand for the area and for terraced houses and how the people and the area were the problem and how new build bungalows were the answer' (LRO/711.4 LLE, p. 12). The imminent threat of bulldozers reignited community activism with attendance at weekly meetings regularly exceeding 70 people (D/KUYA/13/1/6/1-A). Protest activities increased in focus and intensity, including: written correspondences with elected Members of Parliament; public letters pub-lished in the *Liverpool Echo* and *Liverpool Daily Post*; the picketing of local housing association offices; regular GRA attendance at Liverpool City Council executive meetings; as well as the organisation of multiple protests outside council offices in City Hall, the Metropolitan Cathedral and Liverpool Lime Street railway station (D/KUYA/13/1/6/1-A). Furthermore, and despite the persistence of acrimonious relations for over 20 years, GRA also attempted to engage meaningfully with Liverpool City Council, opening a formal dialogue in 2007 to explore the possibility of a compromise, which was locally reported as a 'groundbreaking' development after 20 years of poor relations (D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-A).

Due to this willingness to engage in constructive discussions, GRA received a small ongo-ing community grant from Liverpool City Council of £10,000 per annum, which was used to make small changes to Granby's historic streets even though its future remained uncertain. These included organising mass litter picking events, urban artistic interventions, reclaiming derelict spaces, gardening activities, and the establishment of a monthly street market in 2007 (D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-A). The return to Granby of artistic and cultural expression echoed the longstanding tradition from the 1950s, having been increasingly rare since the late 1990s (LRO/306 HUG/1/4/1). Such new activities quite literally brought life back to the neighbour-hood: despite the perpetual threat of HMR, the social vibrancy and flourishing fauna served as a symbolic show of 'the strength of local people's commitment to the neighbourhood

that has been extraordinary over the decades' (D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-B). For the first time in 20 years, new people frequented to the area, especially those living in adjacent streets. This was reported in local and national newspapers, which spread word of Granby's turnaround and favourably broadcasted the GRA's capacity for urban renewal with limited resources (ibid.).

The GRA continued to self-organise, exploring novel ways that they could take further control of their community. This involved investigating the possibility of common ownership through a CLT – which was now starting to emerge in the UK after changes in housing legislation in 2008 – to build on their participatory momentum but also the material legacy of initiatives such as SNAP. Dorothy Kuya corresponded with Des McConaghy (SNAP Director between 1969 and 1972), who provided advice on how to negotiate with the Council (D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-B), whilst other GRA members associated with Shelter and the Law Centre conducted research into the legal requirements of forming a CLT (D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-C). They also nurtured relations with Liverpool City Council, who were keen to generate positive publicity surrounding their recent re-engagement with Granby and had requested the recording of a celebratory film of a meeting between Council and GRA members, as well as developers associated with the ongoing HMR initiative (D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-D).

Suddenly, change came – and fast. Following the election of a new national government in 2010, the HMR initiative closed abruptly in 2011 (D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-A). The result was a total collapse of Liverpool City Council plans for wholesale redevelopment of Granby, which had emerged and re-emerged in various guises since 1966. Sensing an opportunity, GRA seized the moment. They disbanded and re-constituted as Granby Four Streets CLT, with the 'four streets' referring to Beaconsfield, Cairns, Jermyn and Ducie Streets – where the terraces remained intact, albeit mostly derelict. Now in a strong bargaining position and with extensive community support and legal knowledge, the CLT successfully negotiated to transfer ownership of 10 of the 132 derelict homes in Granby from the Council to the CLT, as well as securing a from the Council a substantial loan for their refurbishment (D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-B).

As the newly instituted CLT noted in its manifesto: they had 'quite simply stopped waiting for top-down regeneration and are doing it for ourselves, and by ourselves' (D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-C). The formation of Granby Four Streets CLT seized on a moment of changed national legislation, just as with SNAP in 1968. Yet, as before, Granby's diverse culture and well-organised local protests resurged to nourish local power. These were just as important as macro-level changes in helping to realise the CLT. Through their transformation into a CLT, GRA relied on wider community support, legal skills and political connections involving people and organisations beyond GRA members and residents, such as Shelter, SNAP (with the re-emergence of important historical actors such as Des McConaghy), Law Centre actors and others whose involvement stretched back to the 1990s and, in some cases, even earlier. Interestingly, the position of Liverpool City Council changed once more: they proved willing to support and fund the CLT, albeit only after exhausting all possible alternatives.

Discussion and conclusions

Our microhistorical approach has traced processes of urban regeneration as complex macro- and micro-level interactions, shaped by diverse groups and individuals, whose influence in driving change in Granby varied during our different temporal periods. Analysing these

intersecting temporal dynamics allowed us to illustrate the overlapping historical agency involved in the creation of a social entrepreneurial venture, exemplified through the formation of Granby Four Streets CLT. Following the principles of microhistory (Lantela, 2024), the observations informing our analysis were grounded in the detailed study of a specific historical setting, which we discerned in our combination of a narrow spatial focus with wide temporal frame to unveil the roles and identities of past (and present) actors that drove entrepreneurial change through their agency (Van Lent et al., 2023). We now discuss these findings to develop a broader set of theoretical insights relating to the complex historical processes underpinning social entrepreneurship, transferrable to wider settings (e.g. Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023).

This discussion focuses on our theoretical contributions to understanding the multiple, and often unintended, social and material legacies associated with institutional action (Koehne et al., 2022; Stirzaker et al., 2021), which at different times facilitated and inhibited the social entrepreneurial phenomenon under investigation (Nowak & Raffaelli, 2022). We initially elaborate on how our historical approach followed an interactive processual dynamic that unfolded across multiple temporal episodes, which involved the continuous interplay between institutions and Granby residents. This allows us to extend existing theorisations of institutions and social entrepreneurship through our explanation of the productive capacity of *conflictual* macro- and micro relations that sparked new forms of social alliances and material attachments that were important antecedents in the formation of the Granby Four Streets CLT as a novel social entrepreneurial venture. We develop these explanations relating to the wider temporal processes at play in such emergent strategies of social entrepreneurship (Johannisson, 2018; Newth & Woods, 2014), which we illustrate in a discussion of the overlapping and intersecting agencies of the multiple *intergenerational* actors that we observed, allowing us to make important theoretical extensions relating to who becomes involved in the formation of social ventures (Nicholls, 2013; Steyaert & Dey, 2010).

As noted above, the formation of the Granby Four Streets CLT involved the formal transference of assets – the vacant homes themselves – from the Liverpool City Council, as well as the provision of public monies as start-up capital for renovations. But at the same time, alongside these ostensibly supportive acts, our historical analysis also revealed how the (then-named) Liverpool Corporation was often reluctant to support such resident initiatives, allowing Granby to deteriorate into some of the worst living conditions in the country. Despite an institutional willingness to engage in SNAP's innovative approach, this progress was soon undone in the disastrous unravelling of community relations, which reached its nadir in the years immediately preceding the 1981 Toxteth Uprising. Throughout our historical account, institutional forces in the city faced multiple and unprecedented urban challenges associated with deindustrialisation, and also were the key conduit of changing national political initiatives (e.g. Decker, 2015) that sought to reverse this trend. But their repeated attempts at renewal oversaw the demolition of much historic housing stock in Granby and replacement with poorer quality homes. Crucially, the most concerted institutional efforts were for wholesale clearance and rebuild: a shocking five demolitions were proposed, each generative of ardent resistance from residents. This is evidenced throughout our historical narrative but emerges most profoundly in the formation of GRA and its continued operations from 1994 up to the final years preceding the formation of the CLT.

Social entrepreneurship research in the contextual tradition has rightfully called attention to the importance of collaborative harmony in the social relations between different actors (de Bruin et al., 2017). Sometimes emphasising the generative role of institutions in this process; for example, scholars suggest that institutional actors can operate as positive forces for spurring entrepreneurial solutions to social problems (Stervinou et al., 2021). We theoretically extend this work by analytically engaging a wide temporal frame that reveals more complex relationships at play. Through our detailed analysis of intersecting macro- and micro urban processes, we are therefore able to provide a theoretical explanation for the role that conflictual relations – arising from the interplay of institutional (in)action and self-organising – can have in generating historical social and material legacies that influence social entrepreneurship.

In this way, our findings challenge the simplicity implied in the notion that social entrepreneurship emerges within 'institutional voids' (Mair & Marti, 2009). We have shown not only the wider dynamics of how institutional initiatives are formulated (Koehne et al., 2022), but also how their unintended consequences manifested in the texture of everyday activities (Popp, 2020). At the micro-level, various 'active individuals, conscious actors' (Magnússon & Szijártó, 2013, p. 5) exerted their agency by negotiating, extending, diverging – or even outright resisting – the rationality of macro-level forces to produce new historical trajectories (Levi, 2001). Tracing these intersecting trajectories helps us explain the creation of Granby CLT as a novel social venture, and in doing so, we add a more multi-layered theoretical understanding to the entanglement of institutions with social entrepreneurship (Gillett et al., 2019), where our focus on longer temporal patterns demonstrated how seemingly constraining institutional acts can *themselves* become enabling (Nowak & Raffaelli, 2022), stimulating profound social resistances which moved people to action. We have therefore shown that institutional agency, even if initially appearing ineffectual, absent (Grimes et al., 2013), or a 'void', always has a legacy – igniting social dynamics, setting new precedents – that often, even counterintuitively, make social entrepreneurship possible.

In fact, our theoretical explanation for social entrepreneurship shows not only the productive effects of conflictual institutional and community relations, where an institutional agency can inadvertently spark new social relations, but also how this process becomes conducive to the formation of meaningful place attachments that find their realisation in the eventual formation of social ventures that seek to preserve or reclaim aspects of urban material infrastructure (Barinaga, 2017). The extent of Granby's material dilapidation arose from the entrenched positions of the authorities (for clearances) and residents (for renovations), which persisted for some 60 years. This led to the eventual total breakdown of material conditions in the neighbourhood, which precipitated the collapse of everyday life in Granby: boarded-up terraces, closed nightclubs, and vacant shops. Yet, contrast this physical decline with the persistence of residents that remained, holding onto memories of Granby in its heyday. The terraces themselves, boarded up or not – and those in the soundest condition were renovated by SNAP – served as the only material connection to Granby's past, which residents persistently attempted to reclaim in modest ways, even when demolition seemed imminent. Here, Shelter's visionary SNAP project, a physical intervention to renovate homes, was a crucial microhistorical 'focal event' (Hargadon & Wadhwani, 2023), nurturing a sentiment among Granby residents that they had something worth protecting, a point the authorities themselves were reluctant to officially acknowledge.

Residents' attachments to place endured through the Toxteth Uprising and its fallout, while also re-emerging periodically in response to multiple threatened clearances. And, in the build-up to forming the CLT, residents harnessed Granby's faded – but nonetheless enduring – cultural legacy through the establishment of a community market, urban gardening, and artistic forms of urban reclamation. Our findings thus demonstrate an important theoretical consideration for the role of place attachments: showing how they are cultivated through what have been called material 'disruptions', and how this stimulates social entrepreneurship (Brenton & Slawinski, 2023).

To conclude, we have endeavoured to show how social entrepreneurship comes into being through the temporally distributed, multiple and overlapping agencies of different historical actors and materials. We have therefore attempted to disentangle the complex web of relations that comprise the historical foundations of social entrepreneurship. Our microhistorical study of the formation of a CLT involved the unearthing of 'clues' (Ginzburg, 1989) that revealed the hitherto concealed historical dynamism that resides in the many different 'fragments, partial objects and archetypes that can inhabit and give form to current approaches to social entrepreneurship' (Steyaert & Dey, 2010, p. 242). Sometimes, those actors and institutions we encountered in our analysis were seeking grand gestures, but we also found many others who harnessed modest alternations, and implemented piece-meal changes that progressed incrementally as they built up and coalesced – not without struggle – into the eventual formation of the CLT, often residually building on events that that had occurred decades previously. Throughout our account, we also identified many protagonists whose activities may be described as entrepreneurial: Des McGonaghy at SNAP, Dorothy Kuya of GRA, amongst many others. However, we do not see them as unilateral 'heroic' makers of social entrepreneurship (Nicholls, 2013) – more as conduits of much broader urban patterns (Bobadilla et al., 2019). The agency of these individuals was of course crucial, and they demonstrated skill and resourcefulness (Zahra et al., 2009), but they cannot be solely credited for the changes we observed. Des McGonaghy worked with others to orchestrate SNAP, relying on the Council, community groups, and more. That project's renovations laid the material foundations for Dorothy Kuya and her counterparts in GRA, while SNAP-involved individuals, including Kuya, but also Shelter and Law Centre employees, drove the CLT formation decades later, these plans *still* requiring Council support to come to fruition.

Our work therefore resonates with efforts to reorientate understandings of social entrepreneurship as relational by focusing on temporal processes (Blundel & Lyon, 2015; Johannisson, 2018), which we have demonstrated in our account of how multiple intergenerational agencies coalesce over time as part of a much wider tapestry of historic interaction, thereby providing new theoretical explanations for why and how people contribute to social entrepreneurship.

Note

1. For further information about Granby Four Streets CLT see: www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Archival materials

Liverpool Records Office:

LRO/285.1 EMM. Granby Street Messenger, March, May and June 1958.

LRO/305.896042753 EDU. Explorations of Black identity in the Granby/Toxteth area of Liverpool, 1994.

LRO/306 HUG/1/4/1. Community members and Art-Work at Granby Street Party, Aug 1997.

LRO/331.833 SHE. Another chance for cities: SNAP 69/72, Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project (SNAP) 1972.

LRO/331.833 SHE (1). Reprieve for Slums: A Shelter Report of current social conditions in the Granby Ward of Liverpool 1972.

LRO/340 LAW/11/1/3. Granby Toxteth Review Grassroots quarterly publication, issue 1, 2, 5,7 and 8, 2002–2012.

LRO/340 LAW/11/1/1: 'Granby Triangle: The New Build Approach', article and accompanying leaflet (from Housing Associations), in the Granby Toxteth Community News, Aug/Sept 1994.

LRO/340 LAW/14/3/4. Tape labelled 'Granby Walk' side 1–22nd November 1988, 2 people talking about the police and how they interact with the Liverpool 8 area after the Toxteth uprising, side 2-unidentified group of people talking about Liverpool 8 area, duration side 1 18:35, side 2 14:50.

LRO/352.042 HIL. Graeme Shankland, 1965 Report: Replanning Liverpool: its wider context.

LRO/363.585 HOU. Housing Investment Programme: strategy statement and submission area profile (Granby/Toxteth) 1993/94.

LRO/643 HOU Conditions of houses, etc. in the Granby Ward, joint report of the Medical Officer of Health; the Director of Housing and the City Planning Officer, 1966.

LRO/711.4 LLE. Granby Toxteth regeneration framework masterplan, 2004.

LRO/942.753 FRO. From Pitt Street to Granby, 2019. Writing On The Wall.

LRO/942.753/WHA. What's Your Granby Story? 2015, Writing On The Wall.

LRO/M367 MYA/M/8/58. 'Community Celebration' – Community Action in the Granby Area 1974.

University of Liverpool Special Collections & Archives:

ULSCA/A53/8/1. S.N.A.P.: Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project, 1967–1971:

ULSCA/A53/8/1-A: Meeting minutes, Granby Neighbourhood Association and Granby Councillor Margaret Simey.

ULSCA/A53/8/1-B: Letter from Department of Housing and Urban Development Model Cities Administration (USA), 30th October 1967.

ULSCA/A53/8/1-C: Report on Consultation and Participation in Corporation Policy Decisions by Residents' Associations and Community Councils, 1970.

ULSCA/A53/8/1-D: Letter from SNAP member to local government official, 12th May 1972.

ULSCA/D345/4/26. Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project, Liverpool: Correspondence Transcript of Casework Conference, 18 May '71. 'Granby Times', June 1971:

ULSCA/D345/4/26-A: Transcript of Casework Conference between SNAP members, 16th May 1971.

ULSCA/D345/4/26-B: Letter from SNAP member to 'Nile Street Enterprises' requesting funding for a co-operative organisation, 17th December 1971.

ULSCA/D396/48-A: Report from 'A Professional Workers Group in Toxteth, 1984.

ULSCA/D396/48-B: Note on draft report of Inner Area Study, Granby, 7th November 1976.

ULSCA/D396/48-C: Report by Liverpool District Labour Party, proposal for a new 'Inner City Partnership' 1980/81, September 1979.

ULSCA/D396/56. 'The Effects of Post-War Social Legislation on an Urban Community, [Toxteth 1958–1963], 1991.

ULSCA/D396/57/9, 10. Margaret Simey talks about the Toxteth Riots on BBC Radio 4 'Women's Hour' – 20 July 1988.

National Museums Liverpool, Dorothy Kuya Archive:

D/KUYA/13/1/6/1-A: GRA, January 2004; Email correspondence between GRA members about Liverpool Echo campaign, 11th October 2006; Press statement to Liverpool Daily Post and Liverpool Echo regarding protest outside Liverpool Town Hall and Organised Pickets at Housing Associations, no date.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-A: Press statement regarding formation of Granby Community Partnership: 'Community Partnership Brings New Life to Granby', 31st October 2007.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-B: Email exchange with Des McConaghy, 26ᵗʰ February 2008.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-C: Document titled 'CLT Step by Step Guide – Forming a CLT' with information relating to s79 of 'Housing and Regeneration Act 2008'.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/3-D: Email titled 'Proposal to film Granby Community Partnership Meeting' from Liverpool City Council, 21 August 2007.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-A: GRA Draft report titled 'Review and critique of the Granby Community Partnership', 21 June 2010.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-B: Granby Four Streets CLT Manifesto: 'Clouds and Silver Linings', 2011.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/4-C: Granby Four Streets CLT Report: 'Taking Things Forward', 2011.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-A: 'Granby Triangle Regeneration' interview with Dorothy Kuya, in 'Black Housing', July-September 1994.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-B: 'The Regeneration of the Granby Triangle – A Paper by the Granby Residents Association', November 1994.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-C: Granby Residents Association: Leaflet for residents titled 'Housing Association Nonsense', September 1994.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-D: 'Housing Report in the Southern Half of Granby', The Jangler, July 2003.

D/KUYA/13/1/6/5-E: 'Community Spirit or Ghost', The Jangler, September 2003.

References

Alonso, A. D., Kok, S. K., O'Brien, S., & O'Shea, M. (2020). The significance of grassroots and inclusive innovation in harnessing social entrepreneurship and urban regeneration. *European Business Review*, *32*(4), 667–686. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-05-2019-0102

Barinaga, E. (2017). Tinkering with space: The organizational practices of a nascent social venture. *Organization Studies*, *38*(7), 937–958. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840616670434

Blundel, R., & Lyon, F. (2015). Towards a 'long view': Historical perspectives on the scaling and replication of social ventures. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, *6*(1), 80–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2014.954258

Bobadilla, N., Goransson, M., & Pichault, F. (2019). Urban entrepreneurship through art-based interventions: Unveiling a translation process. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *31*(5-6), 378–399. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2018.1539125

Brenton, J., & Slawinski, N. (2023). Collaborating for community regeneration: Facilitating partnerships in, through, and for place. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *184*(4), 815–834. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05365-5

British Broadcasting Corporation. (2014). *The Mersey Militants*. BBC Radio 4, 8 November.

Brown, J. N. (2005). *Dropping anchor, setting sail: Geographies of race in Black Liverpool*. Princeton University Press.

Cohen, T. V. (2019). *Roman tales: A reader's guide to the art of microhistory*. Routledge.

Cowell, D., Jones, T., & Young, J. (Eds.) (1982). *Policing the riots*. Junction Books.

Dacin, T., Dacin, P., & Tracey, P. (2011). Social entrepreneurship: A critique and future directions. *Organization Science*, *22*(5), 1203–1213. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0620

de Bruin, A., Shaw, E., & Lewis, K. (2017). The collaborative dynamic in social entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *29*(7-8), 575–585. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1328902

Dellaria, S. (2022). A new town and a numbers game: Runcorn, Merseyside, and Liverpool. *Planning Perspectives*, *37*(2), 243–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2021.1934518

Decker, S. (2015). Mothership reconnection: Microhistory and institutional work compared. In P. Genoe McLaren, A. J. Mills, & T. G. Weatherbee (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to management and organizational history* (pp. 222–238). Routledge.

Gill, O. (1977). *Luke Street: Housing policy, conflict, and the creation of the delinquent area*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Gillett, A., Loader, K., Doherty, B., & Scott, J. (2019). An examination of the tensions in a hybrid collaboration: A longitudinal study of an Empty Homes Project. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *157*(4), 949–967. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3962-7

Ginzburg, C. (1989). Clues: Roots of an evidential paradigm. In C. Ginzberg (Ed.), *Clues, myths and the historical method* (pp. 96–125). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Grimes, M., McMullen, J., Vogus, T., & Miller, T. (2013). Studying the origins of social entrepreneurship: Compassion and the role of embedded agency. *Academy of Management Review*, *38*, 460–463.

Hargadon, A. B., & Wadhwani, R. D. (2023). Theorizing with microhistory. *Academy of Management Review*, *48*, 681–696.

Hamnet, C. (1983). The conditions in England's inner cities on the eve of the 1981 riots. *Area*, *15*, 7–13.

Hansard. (1943). Commons debate on population statistics, 10 June 1943, vol. 390.

Hansard. (1987). House of Lords debate on inner cities, 21 October 1987, vol. 489, cc147–228.

Haugh, H. M. (2022). Changing places: The generative effects of community embeddedness in place. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *34*(7-8), 542–566. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2071998

Holm, D. V., & Beyes, T. (2022). How art becomes organization: Reimagining aesthetics, sites and politics of entrepreneurship. *Organization Studies*, *43*(2), 227–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840621998571

Hota, P. K. (2023). Tracing the intellectual evolution of social entrepreneurship research: Past advances, current trends, and future directions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *182*(3), 637–659. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04962-6

Johannisson, B. (2018). Disclosing everyday practices constituting social entrepreneuring – A case of necessity effectuation. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *30*(3-4), 390–406. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1413770

Kang, T. (2017). Bricolage in the urban cultural sector: The case of Bradford city of film. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *29*(3-4), 340–356. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2016.1271461

Koehne, F., Woodward, R., & Honig, B. (2022). The potentials and perils of prosocial power: Transnational social entrepreneurship dynamics in vulnerable places. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *37*(4), 106206. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2022.106206

Lantela, P. (2024). Knowledge from the margins – The epistemological promise of microhistorical theorizing in organization studies. *Organization Theory*, *5*(2), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877241257211

Lechterman, T. M., & Mair, J. (2024). Social enterprises as agents of social justice: A Rawlsian perspective on institutional capacity. *Organization Studies*, *45*(9), 1301–1323. https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406241261435

Levi, G. (2001). On microhistory. In P. Burke (Ed.), *New perspectives on historical writing* (pp. 97–119). Pennsylvania State University Press.

Long, M. (2019). 'To spend is to choose': Des McConaghy and expenditure-based planning. *Town Planning Review*, *90*(6), 601–623. https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2019.39

Lumpkin, T., Bacq, S., & Pidduck, R. (2018). Where change happens: Community-level phenomena in social entrepreneurship research. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *56*(1), 24–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12379

Magnússon, S., & Szijártó, I. (2013). *What is microhistory? Theory and practice*. Routledge.

Mair, J., & Marti, I. (2009). Entrepreneurship in and around institutional voids: A case study from Bangladesh. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *24*(5), 419–435. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2008.04.006

McGowan, J., Dembski, S., & Moore, T. (2020). Co-opting the streets of Liverpool: Self-organization and the role of local authorities. *Planning Practice & Research*, *35*(4), 363–379. https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2020.1740416

Montgomery, W., Dacin, P., & Dacin, T. (2012). Collective social entrepreneurship: Collaboratively shaping social good. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *111*(3), 375–388. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1501-5

Morgan, J. B. (1973). Liverpool: Active police involvement with the community. *The Police Journal*, *46*(1), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258X7304600111

Newth, J., & Woods, C. (2014). Resistance to social entrepreneurship: How context shapes innovation. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, *5*(2), 192–213. https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2014.889739

Nicholls, A. (2013). Editorial: Heroes. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, *4*(2), 109–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2013.820385

Nowak, V., & Raffaelli, P. (2022). The interconnected influences of institutional and social embeddedness on processes of social innovation: A Polanyian perspective. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *34*(3-4), 319–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2049376

Parker, S., & Atkinson, R. (2020). Disorderly cities and the policy-making field: The 1981 English riots and the management of urban decline. *British Politics*, *15*(2), 160–177. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41293-018-00094-0

Peredo, A. M., & McLean, M. (2020). Decommodification in action: Common property as countermovement. *Organization*, *27*(6), 817–839. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419867202

Peredo, A. M., Haugh, H. M., & McLean, M. (2018). Common property: Uncommon forms of prosocial organizing. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *33*(5), 591–602. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2017.11.003

Pooley, C. G., & Irish, S. (1994). Housing and health in Liverpool, circa 1870-1940. *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, *143*, 193–220.

Popp, A. (2020). Histories of business and the everyday. *Enterprise & Society*, *21*(3), 622–637. https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2020.43

Potts, D. (2020). *Broken cities: Inside the global housing crisis*. Bloomsbury.

Sharples, J. (2004). *Liverpool: Pevsner Architectural Guide*. Yale University Press.

Steyaert, C., & Dey, P. (2010). Nine verbs to keep the social entrepreneurship research agenda 'dangerous'. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, *1*(2), 231–254. https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2010.511817

Stervinou, S., Bayle-Cordier, J., Narvaiza, L., Aragón, C., & Iturrioz, C. (2021). Exploring the interplay between context and enterprise purpose in participative social entrepreneurship: The perceptions of worker cooperative entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *33*(9-10), 758–788. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2021.1914740

Stirzaker, R., Galloway, L., Muhonen, J., & Christopoulos, D. (2021). The drivers of social entrepreneurship: Agency, context, compassion and opportunism. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *27*(6), 1381–1402. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-07-2020-0461

Van Lent, W., Hunt, R., & Lerner, D. (2023). Historiography and the excavation of nascent business venturing. *Small Business Economics*, *61*(1), 285–303. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00691-w

Wilks-Heeg, S. (2003). From world city to pariah city? Liverpool and the global economy, 1850-2000. In R. Munck (Ed.), *Reinventing the city: Liverpool in comparative perspective* (pp. 36–52). Liverpool University Press.

Wilson, D. (2011). *Memoirs of a minor public figure – Des Wilson*. Quartet.

Zahra, S. A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D. O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009). A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *24*(5), 519–532. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2008.04.007