

# **Dwelling on design: the influence of Logos and Eros, nouns and verbs, on public housing renewal and cooperative alternatives**

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## **Summary**

This chapter explores how Logos and Eros – together representing an animating polarity in Lefebvre’s dialectical thought – infuse different perspectives on dwelling. Drawing on the fundamental insight of John FC Turner and Colin Ward – that dwelling is not simply a noun but also a verb – I show how Lefebvre shares many affinities with these anarchist writers, and outline two opposing approaches to housing, seen as either a fetishized product or a lived process. This is illustrated through an empirical case study of Liverpool’s post-war history of addressing housing deprivation, focusing on a comparison between the 1970s housing cooperative movement, influenced by the ideas of Ward and Turner, and the Militant Tendency’s municipal socialist project, which opposed and attempted to ‘municipalise’ the co-ops. Lastly, I consider what these divergent approaches might mean for Lefebvre’s utopian-socialist revolutionary concern with constructing ‘experimental utopias’ that transcend the

dichotomy between ends and means, between spatial closure and temporal openness.

## **Introduction**

An unequal struggle, sometimes furious, sometimes more low key, takes place between the Logos and the Anti-Logos, these terms being taken in their broadest possible sense—the sense in which Nietzsche used them. The Logos makes inventories, classifies, arranges: it cultivates knowledge and presses it into the service of power. Nietzsche's Grand Desire, by contrast, seeks to overcome divisions—divisions between work and product, between repetitive and differential, or between needs and desires. (Lefebvre 1991: 391-2)

This evocative passage conjures up some of Lefebvre's most fundamental insights in *The Production of Space* (1991) distilled into a single comprehensible idea – an eternal battle between two forces. *Logos* is that principle derived from the Ancient Greeks which Lewis Hyde (1979: xiv) usefully defines as 'reason and logic in general, the principle of differentiation in particular' – those forces which act to divide, isolate and abstract things from each other in order to signify, classify, compartmentalise and give order to the world around us. Though Lefebvre doesn't quite spell it out, that which opposes Logos, what he calls 'Anti-Logos', is perhaps more accurately described as *Eros* – which Hyde, writing about the 'erotic' life of the gift economy as opposed the 'logical' life of market exchange, defines as 'the principle of attraction, union, involvement which binds together' (Hyde 1979: xiv). *Eros* describes the holistic unifying force that flows through everything and 'seeks to overcome divisions' – divisions which Logos imposes on an otherwise undifferentiated cosmic

whole. Following this line of thought, we might say Lefebvre has a clear normative agenda for promoting the 'erotic' life, in this most expansive sense, as a tonic to the societal consequences of narrowly 'logical' thinking. Here, Nietzsche is a significant reference point for Lefebvre, especially his opposition in *The Birth of Tragedy* between Apollo and Dionysus – gods associated respectively with differentiation, order, clarity and calm rationality, and with oneness, excess, intoxication and overflowing creativity (Merrifield 1995). In citing Nietzsche's Grand Desire as the Anti-Logos, Lefebvre is implicitly positioning Apollonian forms of thought with Logos; Dionysian with Eros.

Ontologically speaking, Lefebvre's distinctly dialectical thinking in no way privileges Eros over Logos, nor Dionysus over Apollo, as these polarities are conceptualised dialectically as necessarily co-constitutive and interwoven with each other. However, in more political moments, such as in the opening passage and elsewhere in his writings, he suggests that the latter is winning what he sees as a grand historical battle, an 'unequal struggle'. We can interpret this as an allusion to his original insight into the accelerating historical dominance of abstract space over lived space; the 'devastating conquest of the lived by the conceived, by abstraction' (Lefebvre quoted in Wilson 2013: 3). Excessive Logos feeds abstract space; whilst Eros prefers to inhabit lived space.

In this chapter, I want to elaborate on this central distinction in Lefebvre's dialectical thought, by introducing other related polarities: between ends and means, thing and flow, spatial form and temporal process, and between objects and activities, or nouns and verbs. I bring Lefebvre into a novel conversation with two broadly contemporaneous anarchist writers, John FC Turner and Colin Ward. Their ideas had a significant influence on

the development of cooperative and self-build housing, which we could say channel the spirit of Eros, as alternatives to the kind of system-built mass housing delivered by technocratic bureaucracies, which on the contrary embody Logos. Although this may risk oversimplifying and overstretching these concepts and their interrelations, I hope to show in the following how this heuristic helps clarify our thinking on the way we treat our urban environments and our approach to dwelling as well as, in the conclusion, our understanding of Lefebvre's thought on utopian possibilities for experimental transformation of space. I do this by way of example, focusing on the history of public housing and regeneration in the British city of Liverpool and in particular on various approaches, from top-down comprehensive urban renewal to community-led cooperative projects, which can be seen to perpetuate Logos or Eros in varying combinations.

#### **Liverpool: a brief history of treating housing as a noun or a verb**

Liverpool, with all its commerce, wealth, and grandeur treats its workers with the same barbarity. A full fifth of the population, more than 45,000 human beings, live in narrow, dark, damp, badly-ventilated cellar dwellings, of which there are 7,862 in the city. Besides these cellar dwellings there are 2,270 courts, small spaces built up on all four sides and having but one entrance, a narrow, covered passageway, the whole ordinarily very dirty and inhabited exclusively by proletarians. (Engels 1892)

Engels' experience of Liverpool, and other northern industrial cities, inspired him to write *The Housing Question* (1872), raising grave doubts over the ability of capitalism to house the working classes in humane or minimally sanitary conditions. Conditions have however since improved

since these darkest days of industrialisation, but Liverpool continued to suffer from inadequate housing for much of the twentieth and even into the twenty-first century. Successive municipal modernist projects to improve such appalling conditions first targeted the speculatively-built dockside slums and then the inner-ring of Victorian terraces, replacing each in turn with tenements and tower blocks. These state-led programmes were of a diverse ideological and architectural bent: the Tories' inter-war monumental art deco 'garden' tenement blocks; Labour's post-war modernist 'Slum Clearance Programme', redeveloping terraces as walk-up tenements and high-rise flats; the far left municipal socialist strategy of suburban house-building under the Trotskyist Militant Tendency controlling the Labour Council in the mid-1980s; and, in the 21st century, Labour's neoliberal public-private Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme, which has been characterised elsewhere as a tool of abstract space (Thompson 2017), in a similar vein to its American predecessor HOPE VI (Jones & Popke 2010), but which I lack the space to explore here. Yet despite such differences, all succumbed to the same fallacy – treating dwelling(s) as a noun, a static material object, rather than verb, a dynamic lived process.

Such approaches misapprehend the structural and socioeconomic nature of problems associated with housing deprivation, dilapidation and neighbourhood decline. Housing becomes a fetishized object for planners and policymakers, who lay the problem at the door of the house itself rather than the complex background processes that produce space; treating the material building as the target of their intervention rather than the social relations that produce it. This is one way in which the dominance of abstract space is so problematic: that it acts to fetishize objective, material

space in a similar vein to how 'commodity fetishism' works to divorce products from their productive histories. Lefebvre (1991: 95-6) alludes to this in his insight that modernity is marked by the 'manifest expulsion of time' by fetishized space; that 'with the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space.' In being blinded by abstract space, technocratic planners reproduce, and often exacerbate, the very same problems they are trying to resolve. Indeed, in post-war attempts to address the housing question, Lefebvre (1991: 314) identifies the increasing incursion of abstract space in the discursive shift from 'residence' to 'housing':

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

As the welfare state began to eliminate the worst conditions brought about by capitalist urbanisation, this was achieved through the imposition of standardised units measured according to the 'bare minimum' of acceptable standards, both in terms of material tolerability and the 'lowest possible *threshold of sociability* – the point beyond which survival would be impossible because all social life would have disappeared.' (Lefebvre 1991: 314). Here, Lefebvre articulates the idea that housing delivered through impersonal state bureaucracies – which he refers to as 'habitat', exercised by the rationalising will of Logos, in contrast to 'habiting', infused with the 'erotic' flow of everyday life – *alienates* dwellers from their immediate living environments, disconnects them from

others, and thwarts the forces of Eros from bringing people together for even the most minimal of sociality that makes life at all meaningful, or even tolerable.

This is a thesis supported, if not expressed quite so strongly, right across the political spectrum. At one end we find the likes of geographer Alice Coleman, who argued that the design of concrete tower blocks in particular were responsible for social problems in deprived estates, by removing any real sense of ownership or pride and removing all obvious incentives to care and maintain property. Her work, notably *Utopia on Trial* (1985), was very influential in the development of Thatcher's policies, particularly the Right to Buy and the replacement of collectivist housing estates with more privatist family houses – a rare example of a geography academic enjoying real impact (Jacobs & Lees 2013). Her ideas also gained traction amongst the 'Militant' Labour Council in Liverpool, pitting socialist councillors against the growing housing cooperative movement, their Labour-voting constituencies – a strange twist of fate, which I explore below.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find anarchist arguments, particularly those of the so-called 'anarchist architect' John FC Turner and 'anarchist planner' Colin Ward, who emphasise the politically-empowering, spiritually-fulfilling and identity-forming qualities that flow from self-autonomy and collective control over living environments. The bureaucratic alienation of public landlordism, argues Ward (1985) is a kind of 'municipal serfdom' that treats tenants as 'inert objects' rather than active subjects and is responsible for the swift physical dilapidation of council housing estates.

This theory is borne out by Liverpool's experience with mass modernist housing. By far the most notorious of developments were known locally as 'the Piggeries'. Tony Lane (1978: 338-9) explains some of the motivations leading to the demolition of tenements and tower blocks like the Piggeries after only a few years of use:

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

Ironically, the old 'slum' terraced housing was simply replaced with new slums. Modernist system-built housing produced simplistic, largely cosmetic *end solutions* to complex problems, proving too inflexible and unresponsive to residents' needs and their desires to change their dwellings in accordance with their everyday lives. In short, they placed too much emphasis on the building itself, seen as a static noun, inhibiting the vital flow of collective activities needed to sustain it. So what's the alternative?

#### *Liverpool's cooperative revolution*

In 1970s Liverpool, working class communities began struggling against the 'Corpy' – the colloquial term for Liverpool City Council, the 'Corporation' – and their slum clearance programme which displaced tenants to new towns and outer estates. Residents campaigned for



cooperative alternatives with direct involvement in the design, development, ownership and management of their housing. It was at the birth of this movement that Ward's, and by extension Turner's, ideas found their expression, as Ward retrospectively explains:

The proudest moment of my housing advocacy was when the Weller Street Co-op chairman, Billy Floyd, introduced me at a meeting by waving a tattered copy of *Tenants Take Over* and saying: "Here's the man who wrote the Old Testament...But we built the New Jerusalem!" (Ward & Goodway 2003: 74-5)

Here, the Old Testament refers to Ward's (1974) book, *Tenants Take Over*, which articulates his radical manifesto for 'collective dweller control'; whilst the New Jerusalem is the Weller Street Co-op, the country's first co-op to be designed, developed, owned and managed by its working class residents. Weller Street in turn ignited what has been dubbed Liverpool's 'new-build cooperative revolution' (CDS 1994), the country's largest and most innovative housing cooperative movement. It heralded a radical new model, the 'Weller Way' of doing things (McDonald 1986). This new model of public housing, or 'Public Housing 2.0' as it was heralded, incorporated radical new ideas around dweller control, design democracy and participatory techniques – then being experimented with in what became known as the 'community architecture' movement – and inspired groups of council tenants to develop successive waves of new-build co-ops across Merseyside. It represented an extraordinary shift from a situation in which most of Liverpool's working class residents were housed by the Corpy without control over the design, location or management of their home, to one in which residents had for the first time genuine dweller control.

Whilst Ward had some discernible impact on the pioneering Weller Street Co-op, he in turn was strongly influenced by Turner's (1972) ideas of 'user autonomy', derived from the self-build 'autoconstruction' Turner witnessed in South American informal settlements. In his prolific writings Ward often cites what he calls Turner's First Law of Housing:

When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contributions in the design, construction, or management of their housing, both this process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. (Turner & Fichter 1972: 241)

Turner in particular draws our attention to the anarchist insight that *means* are just as important as *ends*; that dwelling is a verb as well as a noun – an active lived process of doing, as well as a static material resource, the building itself (Turner 1972). So how does treating housing like a verb rather than a noun, a lived process over a fetishized object, actually play out in the development of cooperative housing? And how did these cooperative experiments affect the lives of their inhabitants?

The leading secondary co-op agency, Cooperative Development Services (CDS), played a crucial role in the movement's development – working with the Weller Street community to co-produce the 'Weller Way', which was to set the trend for the rest. First, CDS suggested architects, developers, and agents for co-ops to shortlist and then interview; the Weller Street committee insisted that 'the architects act as advisers and scribes' (McDonald 1986: 84). Architects worked with Weller Street co-op to pioneer a radically democratic design process that would put flesh on the theoretical bones of Ward's 'dweller control' concept. Participatory techniques and 'planning for real' exercises, such as group modelling

exercises, were innovated to traverse the wall separating technical architectural knowledge (i.e. Logos) from the lived experience of inhabitants (Eros). Spin-off benefits of such intensive involvement included individual empowerment through teaching new skills; tackling socioeconomic needs by producing more responsive designs, lowering long-term maintenance costs; and building better communities, in developing community confidence and sense of ownership, thereby instilling responsibility for housing, helping deter vandalism, crime and neglect, and giving people a political voice in local decision-making.

Empowerment meant life-changing education for individuals – providing people the knowledge and skills to find new employment, often in professional practices such as architectural firms – but also a deeper sense of mutuality, community togetherness and collective political power.

Communities were indeed politicised. Co-op campaigns were like a kind of ‘political school’ for many, who had cut their teeth on political campaigning and collective negotiation with key gatekeepers, and who were inspired and empowered to go into politics full-time, representing their communities and often becoming councillors and cabinet members, of which there are countless individual examples. In these various ways, therefore, the intensive campaign and design process was a vital move in making new co-op neighbourhoods more than just a collection of better quality material dwellings: it also strengthened collective capacities for community self-government over the social activity of dwelling.

In providing the resources and skills for people to make significant steps towards housing themselves, the co-op movement in many ways bridged the growing chasm between the ends and means of dwelling, between lived process and end product, bringing the user and the producer of

housing into closer synergy. The movement made real steps towards resolving the alienation at the root of the problems of housing deprivation; and embedded the seeds of an alternative model of regeneration which would later inspire a new generation of grassroots action in immersive, participatory and democratic dwelling design: Liverpool's budding Community Land Trust (CLT) movement (Thompson 2015, 2017).

Importantly, the co-op campaigns protected communities from being broken up and displaced to the new towns and outer estates then being built on the metropolitan periphery. They not only brought communities closer together through the deeply political process of what many saw as a 'battle' or a 'war' with the Corpy over how they were housed – an exercise which helped highlight what exactly they were fighting for – but it also thereby preserved and enhanced existing ways of life, rooted in religious and clan identities, neighbourliness, trade unionism, local Labour Party organising, and various everyday practices of mutual aid, informal gift economies, and networks of solidarity. These 'erotic' forms of life were effectively threatened by the 'logical' exercise of cutting through urban space and rationalising neighbourhoods in slum clearances and modernist reconstruction.

But no sooner had the movement begun to snowball – with thirty or so co-ops built or in the pipeline, having gained support from Council policy, led by a Liberal administration, which had turned away from comprehensive renewal – than a surprising new political threat emerged, dramatically curtailing the life of the movement.

*Militant mono-mania for housing design*

Within less than half a decade of the completion of Weller Streets, following the council election in 1983 of the Labour Party led by the Militant Tendency, the new build cooperative revolution was dissipated by an agenda of centralised local state control over the means of social reproduction (Taafe & Mulhearn 1988). Militant saw co-ops as a 'bourgeois conspiracy' and a threat to municipal housing – much like how Engels saw Proudhon's anarchism as 'bourgeois socialism' or mere reformism – and forcefully quashed co-op development through 'municipalisation'. Gestating co-ops were either aborted or taken into municipal ownership, as part of a bold and ambitious £350 million housing renewal programme, the Urban Regeneration Strategy (URS), which met targets of 1,000 new homes built per year up to 1988 – a remarkable achievement for a time under Thatcher when, nationally, council housebuilding had come to a standstill (Grosskurth 1985; Mars 1987).

Militant believed that large-scale municipal house-building would revitalise Liverpool's economy and environment by providing jobs and decent homes for all, but became seduced by a form of design determinism – seeing dwelling as a noun rather than a verb. Their assessment of council housing designs revealed 'one bright spot' of 'problem-free' semi-detached housing built in the inter-war period; this 'insight was the germ of the URS housing programme' (Grosskurth 1985: 26). At around the same time, Alice Coleman (1985) was popularising her ideas on the 'design disadvantage' of modernist council housing estates, which she had adapted from Oscar Newman's theory of 'defensible space' (Jacobs & Lees 2013). Ironically, despite the clear influence of Coleman's ideas on Militant's most despised ideological opponent – Thatcherism – they nonetheless came to the same conclusions. Coleman gave her seal of

approval to Militant housing policy, publicly stating that 'Liverpool has got it right', which leading Militant members were proud to report: 'she completely concurred with the main thrust of the URS and of the council's conviction that the majority of people preferred to live in traditional houses' (Taafe & Mulhearn 1988: 159).

The URS development principles that Coleman praised were published as new guidelines which prescribed that only houses and bungalows, semi-detached where possible, were to be built, laid out in rational, grid-like street patterns – inspired by Logos. No cul-de-sacs, clusters or inward-facing dwellings; no shared surfaces, common areas or play spaces; only conventional road layouts with private gardens (Grosskurth 1985). This was bad news for uncompleted co-ops – for co-op designs tended to favour denser, communal spaces that encouraged community interaction. Many of the more interesting courtyard designs with inward-facing neighbourhood spaces, community centres and focal points for collective gathering – essential to the social life of a co-op – were now in contravention of the URS guidelines. Not only did Militant take co-op developments that had yet to sign a council agreement under council control, they also radically altered their design to reflect their belief in plain suburban housing, thereby threatening the social existence of these co-ops.

In many respects, however, Militant had accurately captured the mood of many tenants, alienated by several decades of living in dysfunctional and decaying council flats. However, the resulting products were perhaps less desirable, derided by many as 'Hatton houses' – a doll's house or 'storybook look' of a traditional family home, which in practice was often too small for tenants' furniture and which conspired against the

neighbourliness and collective street-life that the dense terraces and tenements had at least facilitated and which the co-ops were explicitly designed to engender. Militant's monomania for 'logical' housing designs was found guilty of spatial determinism by critics – including CDS Chief Exec Catherine Meredith, who accused Militant of a 'megalomaniac belief in housing type' (quoted in Mars 1987: 27) – for failing to recognise the importance of dweller control in the management and maintenance of housing. Militant ultimately fell victim to a kind of product fetishism. The Coleman/Militant 'design modification' approach worked on the assumption that people wanted semi-detached houses, overseeing the fact that working class co-op tenants had opted for terraces, enclosed courtyards, cul-de-sacs and communal features in the participatory design processes at the heart of the new build co-op movement.

### **Discussion: towards experimental utopias?**

For Colin Ward (1973: 11), do-it-yourself and self-help experiments in cooperative living based on the everyday practices of mutual aid, such as the Liverpool co-ops, are 'like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste...' The similarities between Ward's pragmatic, distinctly English anarchism and Lefebvre's romantic French utopianism are striking – though strangely overlooked in the literature. Both contend that Marx and Engels misapprehended the inextricable interrelationship between ends and means – that revolutionary or insurrectionary action cannot alone procure lasting change without first cultivating new forms of social life as the necessary socioeconomic and cultural basis for any substantively different future society. So too for the technocratic action of comprehensive renewal – which of course characterised Soviet state socialist planning.

Seen as technologies of abstract space, the modernist mentality of the slum clearance programme and URS privilege the thingness over the flow of space, focusing on the end-product, the final design, over the process of getting there – neglecting the lived space of inhabitants. The Corpy's successive municipal-socialist visions of good clean housing for all, rationally designed and executed, can in Lefebvrian terms be seen as 'utopist' (Pinder 2013) – abstract, transcendental visions of an ideal city, procured through spatial closure, totalitarian in their prescriptions on social life – rather than truly 'utopian': concrete explorations of the possible in everyday life, or what Lefebvre calls 'experimental utopias' (Pinder 2013). This distinction captures a deep tension in utopian-socialist thought between openness and closure, change and fixity, or process and object, which David Harvey (2000: 183) diagnoses thus:

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

The paradox is such that utopias are created as endlessly open projects of reimagining and reinventing social relations through idealist visions, tending never to come to a point of closure, keeping possibilities open for constant evolution; whilst at the same time needing to realise and materialise this vision in a definite socio-spatial form, which, as Harvey astutely recognises, is inherently counter-utopian, foreclosing change and therefore authoritarian. Interestingly, Harvey (2000) accuses Lefebvre of an 'agonistic romanticism', for refusing to make specific spatial recommendations or definitions of utopian futures for fear of falling into the totalitarian trap of reproducing technocratic abstract space. But



Lefebvre's aversion to closure is not so much per se as with the authorial source of utopian design: insisting that utopian projects must flow from users and inhabitants themselves, from their quotidian experiences in experimenting with possibilities in practice, not from detached planners or visionaries – resonating with Ward's 'dweller control'.

Harvey's (2000) solution of a dialectical utopianism that acknowledges spatio-temporal interplay is succinctly expressed by Lefebvre (1991: 189-90):

The idea of a new life is at once realistic and illusory...The fact is that the space which contains the realized preconditions of another life is the same one as prohibits what those preconditions make possible...To change life, however, we must first change space.

But for Lefebvre, just as for Ward and Turner, it matters precisely *how* space is changed. The Militant's URS made the very same mistake as the post-war modernist designs it critiqued. Supposedly alienating high-rise flats and council estates may have been replaced by more popular, human-scale traditional houses, but the distant paternalistic bureaucratic structure remained unmoved. These approaches foreclosed the possibility of ongoing change: lacking the necessary temporal openness and flexibility for genuine engagement of users with their environment. The promise of participatory design techniques and cooperative governance relations in co-ops and other mutual models like CLTs lies in greater degrees of interaction between users, and between dweller and dwelling, such that a dialectical spatio-temporal process of experimental-utopian change *may* occur.

In this way, change is not brought about from on high, through some birds' eye blueprint plan, delivered in one fell swoop of comprehensive renewal. Rather, in the case of the co-ops, it was done incrementally and iteratively; the 'end users' themselves experimented with design possibilities in close collaboration with their architects to see what was desirable, workable and possible within physical and political limits. The co-ops are not perfectly realised 'experimental utopias' allowing for endless experimentation with spatial form for exploration of revolutionary ways of life – for the very act of choosing a design and constructing a building involves setting in relative permanency a spatial configuration which necessarily enhances or precludes certain ways of life over others. Moreover, the regulatory landscape determining the process of co-op development – they were after all publicly funded through the Housing Corporation – meant that designs had to accord with certain, often conservative and limiting, regulations which inevitably constrained the full exercise of residents' imaginations and collective agency. Indeed, architectural critics at the time derided the co-ops as 'ordinary' and 'uninspiring' suburban designs, out of place with their urban contexts (Mars 1987).

But these critics missed the point: the spatial structure of the co-ops reflected the democratic process of getting there, and enabled the continued interaction of residents as a co-op community. However, this nonetheless highlights the constraints of conventional construction methods: that experimental change can only go so far when you are dealing with bricks and mortar, let alone rules and regulations. A higher degree of spatial closure marks the co-ops than say the more truly self-build designs of the South American informal settlements studied by Turner. The emerging CLTs in Liverpool perhaps better demonstrate how material environments

can be an organic evolving spatial expression of inhabitants' lived space and political imaginaries: old terraced houses radically reimagined and internally reworked in combination with the grassroots transformation of public space through guerrilla gardening and community art (Thompson 2015).

This relative flexibility stands in stark contrast to ready-made system-built modernist housing estates, which simply aren't flexible or malleable enough to respond to residents' desires for dweller control. In fact, they ossified around people's lives, much like a large-scale concrete dam holds back a reservoir of flowing water. The potential energy contained in by such a spatial (en)closure is huge – but if the dam cracks, then this frustrated kinetic energy is suddenly released as a deluge, much like the pent-up political energies unleashed amongst communities campaigning for co-op alternatives.

The scene I've just painted above focuses still too much on the housing product, the material object, suggesting how all too easy it is to get lured in by the fetishism of material objects. The true power of the co-op projects was their focus on the *process* of housing production: in the participatory design techniques which not only helped bring about these more sensitive designs but also mobilised a process of empowerment which would infuse the lives of the participants and the collective life of the co-op long after the campaign, design and development 'phases' were completed.

The picture is of course not all pretty. Co-ops often turned inwards, adopting a defensive kind of urbanism which reflected the harsh treatment they received from the Corpy and the hostile socioeconomic environment to which they literally turned their backs, through cul-de-sac designs, but

also the religious sectarianism that gripped Liverpool, then more than now. It is understandable, then, why the Militants' URS guidelines sought to rid their municipal housing of these kinds of design features which to them only propagated the elitism and nepotism that flew in the face of egalitarian principles of universal basic public services underpinning any form of socialism. Impersonal justice and rationality – Logos – does indeed have its place after all. Moreover, after the intense campaign process was over, many co-op residents developed a kind of 'post-development blues', where the mundane reality of collecting rent arrears and managing day-to-day maintenance whittled away the will, particularly of subsequent generations without the memory of collective action to sustain them, to cooperate and participate in the ongoing life of the co-op. As a result, many co-ops have outsourced their management requirements to professionals, the contemporary heirs of agencies like CDS, who could do it more efficiently and effectively – another example where Logos is essential. We might also see the more positive outcomes of the co-ops in these terms: lower maintenance costs, more efficient cost-benefits, individual empowerment to find jobs and political positions of power and so on – these are all examples of benefits flowing from more 'erotic' approaches to dwelling being translated into the language of Logos, and for good reason.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined two opposing tendencies in the historical production of space – towards the abstract logic of Logos, privileging absolute ends and spatial closure, or the 'erotic' life of Eros, amenable to more open-ended and evolving interaction – and then sought to identify these forces in empirical developments over Liverpool's recent housing history. Whilst the technocratic mentality of top-down state-led

regeneration programmes can be seen to personify Logos, the cooperative housing movement that flourished as a community-led do-it-yourself alternative to comprehensive urban renewal embodies to a much greater extent Eros. This distinction is not intended as a strict divide, but rather offered up as a dialectic, whereby each informs the other; a heuristic that might help us see how our treatment of dwelling – from its narrowly material reading as a noun to its most expansive sense as a verb – is shaped by our variously ‘logical’ or ‘erotic’ perspectives and the different approaches we thereby take to producing and reproducing our urban environments.

This chapter also warns that a militant belief in the end product and final design of housing – fetishizing dwelling as a noun over a verb – can have so many damaging, even if unintended, consequences for inhabitants. However, although the balance between Eros and Logos may tilt too far one way or the other, they must always be, as Lefebvre enjoins, treated as part of a dialectical whole: without one, the other cannot be. On this final point I want to close this chapter as it opened, with the wise words of Lewis Hyde (1979: 38) who, in describing the ‘essential polarity between the part and the whole, the one and the many’ that animates the vital dialectic of Logos and Eros, has this to say:

Every age must find its balance between the two, and in every age the domination of either one will bring with it the call for its opposite.

Ultimately I hope to have shown, by the light cast by Lefebvre’s thought, how a world increasingly dominated by abstraction nonetheless contains the *preconditions of another life*.

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