

1.1 The cross-disciplinary encounter

My investigation at the Brunswick combines the research methods of architectural history and of anthropology. On the one hand, I studied extensive archive material relating to the conception and history of the building, and conducted many interviews with the architect, Patrick Hodgkinson, in order to build up a clear picture of the course of developments in its realisation, its positioning in a ‘grand’ history of architecture, and the relationship between the architectural ideas which it embodied and the planning and social context within which it was initially emplaced and has subsequently evolved. This history has now been published as an Occasional Paper of the local history society (Melhuish 2006, Camden History Society), part of its programme of scholarly publications on topics of local historical interest. If there is a significant difference between it and the traditional architectural monograph, it is that it does specifically set out to locate the architectural history within a social and cultural context, and to look at that context as a continuum from the 1960s when the development was first proposed, up until the present day, rather than as one frozen historical moment in time.

The classic monograph is the preferred vehicle of traditional European art historical connoisseurship, based on comparative formal and stylistic analysis. But in 1915 Wolfflin (Wolfflin 1915) included ‘social and cultural analysis’ as one of the five categories of contrasting qualities which should be investigated as part of an objective method of objective art historical evaluation. Wolfflin’s work led to a growth of interest and scholarship in art and design as material culture, in its social-historical context, particularly in America, where the sheer proliferation of material goods during the 20th century demanded a critical response (Votolato 1998). It was here that the influential *Winterthur Portfolio* journal was founded in 1964, specifically to investigate the ‘interrelation between physical objects and human behaviour.’

My intention with the *Life and Times of the Brunswick* was, then, to write something closer to a building ‘biography’ rather than a monograph, giving voice to various different narratives in addition to the architect’s ‘own story’, as he has termed it. One reviewer wrote: ‘*To have produced the usual architectural history which stopped when the keys are handed over would have taught us little, and the Brunswick Centre still has much to teach...*’ (Holder 2007, p56); as it has transpired, one of those

things seems to be that architects do have and retain a powerful sense of authorship in relation to their own creations. For, despite his initial and ongoing support for my research over a period of some 6 years in total, Hodgkinson reacted badly to the publication of the book on this building which he felt contained a surfeit of material that should not have been published because it was irrelevant to his own story, or did not shed an entirely positive light on the building's history.

In a heated exchange of letters published in the *Architects' Journal*, Hodgkinson accused the book of being 'flawed' and 'mealy-mouthed' and called Holder's review 'nonsensical'. He suggested that the residents of the Brunswick were the people who '*know and matter, rather than ... historians who, just guessing.... don't.*' (Hodgkinson 2007, p22), which brings me to the anthropological dimensions of my research. From the outset, my investigation of the Brunswick was always intended to be an anthropological inquiry, using ethnography as the method of research, and so, in addition to the time spend in libraries and in conversation with Hodgkinson himself I also spent a lot of time 'in the field' at the Brunswick, and, as one indignant Brunswick resident put it in his published response to Hodgkinson's letter, '*clocked up hours of interviews with residents, including me and my family*' (Friend 2007, p22) A fraction of this material is published in the final chapter of the book, 'Inside looking out: the residents' story', essentially under the terms of a brief social history of the building in which the voice of the residents is pre-eminent. My own role in this might best be described, in the Barthian terms discussed by Strathern as that of '*writer... who absents himself from the text, treating language as a transparent tool for the ends of explanation and instruction*', as opposed to '*author.. whose texts embody his relationship with the world...*' (Strathern 1987, p24). But this chapter merely forms a prelude to the interpretive ethnographic account and anthropological analysis which I have produced in the capacity of 'author', and which forms the counterpart, or complementary part, of my thesis to the foregoing architectural and historical narrative in which the historical and current context of the work is described and explained.

Whilst the combination of the two disciplinary approaches might have been regarded as academically suspicious in the past, the landscape of scholarly research has changed considerably under the influence of the post-structuralist perspective. Today there is a general acceptance, even where it may still be reluctant, that the boundaries of hitherto discrete academic disciplines have become more fluid, and that

separate disciplines may have insights to offer each other. More specifically, there has been a distinct shift away from the idea of an attainable scientific and quantifiable objectivity in research, at least in the humanities of human sciences. As Schlecker and Hirsch have put it, '*a distanced perspective gave way to an empathic, participant one*' (Schlecker and Hirsch 2001, p72). This has led to an 'embrace', or at least an acknowledgement of the value of anthropological ethnographic methods in many areas, under different names and guises (including 'qualitative', 'observational', or 'evidence-based' research, and, in architecture practice in particular, 'community engagement' or consultation) - not all of which would be recognised as legitimate by anthropologists. In fact, Schlecker and Hirsch refer to '*an intellectual climate of "a conceptual free-for-all" [in which] other disciplines appear to encroach upon anthropology's territory*', and that '*anthropology would have "lost control over its two most basic terms, culture and ethnography"*' (Schlecker and Hirsch, citing Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, p 70). As they point out, it has become increasingly difficult to know where to fix the boundaries of 'the field', or 'the context' of research; rather, researchers have come under pressure to embrace '*multiple contexts and relational limits*', and '*the act of describing things as part of something else*'. This in itself has led to a crisis in ethnography as it constantly strives to '*add up even more contexts*' (p80), when really it needs to be allowed to return to a more intensive focussed approach.

1.1.1. the limits of architectural history/ theory

This thesis is intended to set out a case for the legitimacy and value of applying anthropological methods in the field of architecture, and specifically to the understanding of a building such as the Brunswick, viewed less as a self-contained architectural landmark, firmly bounded within a particular history and ideological discourse of architecture, than as an artefact of material culture which embodies the values of the society in which it is emplaced. Anthropology can provide clear insights into the nature of this interaction, and provides a basis for a more holistic evaluation of the social and cultural significance of the building - and of architecture in general (Melhuish 1996).

One of the reasons why DOCOMOMO opposed the DETR's decision to list the Brunswick before 2000 (2.3.1), was because it was felt that listing would effectively freeze any future change and development of the building. Its position

highlighted the problems inherent to a form of architectural discourse which serves to establish fixed, closed interpretations and meaning – in this case those of the ‘megastructure’ and Brutalism, both of which definitions were central to the proposed Listing schedule. DOCOMOMO-UK argued that, were Listing to take place, these definitions would be fixed for ever, and any natural evolution of the building would be prevented. This, it argued, would be a contradiction in terms of the nature of a ‘megastructure’, the point of which is to absorb and facilitate evolution over time. Another vocal opponent of the proposal to list the Brunswick was the architect himself, who refused to accept the critics’ interpretation of his building as either a megastructure or Brutalist in conception. This again demonstrates the problems inherent to any attempt to establish consensus, in the form of a single discourse, in the processes of evaluating cultural production.

In his study of the Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow, Buchli argues for a need to move away from consensuses and *‘towards... a sensibility that embraces radical discontinuity, “undesirability” and conflict’* (Buchli 199, p 5) in the interpretation of material culture, particularly the material culture of the 20th century, due to the sheer pace of cultural change. Buchli cites the efforts of post-structuralist theorists to establish the importance of context in determining the particular meaning of any given signifier at any particular time, and notes the significance of Bourdieu and Giddens in challenging structuralist assumptions of *‘fixed meanings and deterministic structures’* (p 8) as the ordering principle of any given society, through a fresh emphasis on the notion of individual agency. But Buchli also suggests that Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ and Giddens’ ‘structuration principle’, positing the individual or agent as ‘creative manipulator’, merely established a *‘higher-order structuralist generational grammar’* (p 9) in which a person was still essentially the slave or ‘cultural dupe’ of pre-existing circumstances beyond individual control. Buchli proposes that a more useful sensibility for dealing with the problem of the dynamics of cultural change, open-endedness and multi-vocality is presented in the work of theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Rorty and others such as Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Marilyn Strathern, Judith Butler and Chantal Mouffe. He argues that *‘most of our interpretative tools [predicated on generally Marxian materialist assumptions within a ‘foundationalist’ tradition of western thought] leave us somewhat at a loss to understand’* the *‘superfluity of meaning’* with which the

‘physical architectural artefact and its attendant metaphors are confusingly and painfully pregnant...’ (Buchli 1999, pp 4, 1).

Buchli’s viewpoint underlines the limits of a classically-driven architectural history and theory, in which the judgement and evaluation of architectural artefacts is firmly predicated upon a predetermined concept of aesthetics. Bourdieu appositely defines *‘The pure aesthetic [as] rooted in an ethic, or rather, an ethos of elective distance from the necessities of the natural and social world... the aim of purifying, refining and sublimating primary needs and impulses’* (Bourdieu 1979, p 5) – in other words, as far as it could possibly be from the concerns of the anthropologist. Bourdieu underlines the link between aesthetics, social hierarchy, and the hegemony of ‘taste’, which he characterised as *‘one of the surest signs of true nobility ... the denial of the social conditions of which it is the product’*. He maintained that *‘Intellectuals could be said to believe in the representation.. more than in the things represented’* (p 5) – as an embodiment of taste based on aesthetic judgement - while *‘working-class people expect every image to perform a function... and their judgements make reference, often explicitly, to the norms of morality or agreeability’* (p5). And, further, that *‘art and cultural consumption are predisposed consciously and deliberately or not to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences’* (p 7).

Bourdieu’s analysis of the role of taste in society is very pertinent to the history of the Brunswick in particular, and the appraisal and understanding of architecture in society in general. Lubbock writes of the impact of ‘taste’ on the post-war architectural landscape of London and the defining role that it played in the establishment of a modernist ideology of design that was quite incomprehensible to most ordinary people, from the late 1950s onwards (Lubbock 1995). The capacity to appreciate the new aesthetics, or not, at least highlighted, even if it did not precisely ‘legitimate’, social difference, in the way that Bourdieu describes. Lubbock cites Summerson’s succinct summing up: *‘taste in architecture reached London about 1615: taste that is, in the exclusive, snobbish sense of the recognition of certain fixed values by certain people. Taste was a luxury import from abroad’* (Lubbock 1995, p 157). And so it continued to be, as the avant-garde aesthetic ideas of the European modernists gradually took hold among an educated class of people in Britain in the post-war era, taking shape in the form of developments such as the Royal Festival

Hall, the Roehampton Estate - and, notwithstanding Hodgkinson's protestations of a design conception rooted in the historical English building traditions, the Brunswick.

Contemporary architectural theory has moved away from the classical concern with universal aesthetic ideals and a hegemony of taste, which the modernists effectively perpetuated, if in a different form (despite the efforts of 'breakaway' groups such as Team X, who strove to reassert a notion of local and vernacular identity in architecture (Melhuish 1996)). Mary McLeod (2000) has described the current – post-structuralist – interest in a concept of 'other' or 'otherness' in architecture. She follows a line very close to Buchli's in dividing contemporary architectural thinking into two broad categories, one consisting of '*self-identified proponents of deconstruction in architecture, who seek to find an architectural equivalent or parallel to the writing of Jacques Derrida*', and the other '*a diverse group of critics and theorists without any collective identity but who are all adherents of Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopia"*' (p 182). She proposes that Derrida's philosophy of difference and 'presence of absence', and Foucault's proposition that certain 'out-of-the-ordinary' places (such as the museum, prison, hospital, brothel etc) provide a clearer insight into the social condition and its 'superfluities of meaning' than utopian or even everyday landscapes, and that both represent a fundamental disjunction with the philosophical position and political agenda of classical architectural history.

But McLeod also points out that there is a continuing neglect of the notion of everyday spaces and everyday life as the significant arena of cultural meaning - the concern of Lefebvre (1974) and de Certeau (1984), whose writings have had considerable influence on contemporary architectural thought. She summarises their concerns as '*not only to depict the power of disciplinary technology, but also to reveal how society resists being reduced by it, not just in the unusual or removed places but in the most ordinary*' (p188). This involves focussing on '*the intensification of sensory impressions, the freedom and positive excesses of consumption as experiences that counter the webs of control and monotony in daily life*' (McLeod 2000, p189), and underscores – though does not spell out - the relevance of an anthropological approach in architectural thinking and practice.

1.1.2 Architecture and anthropologists

If architecture could be said to have embraced the anthropological, at least in some quarters, its interest seems to be reciprocated in a rather limited way. While a number of anthropologists have undertaken research into the vernacular architecture of traditional, small-scale societies (eg Waterson 1991, Preston-Blier 1987, Bourdieu 1977, Bloch 1995, Tambiah 1973), very few have taken an interest in the architecture of complex, urban, industrial and post-industrial societies. Despite the growth of urban anthropology, and anthropology 'at home' (ie conducted by European-American anthropologists in their own societies), such architecture is largely perceived as being fundamentally disconnected in some way from the values and structures of the societies which built it. This may be because the Modern project in architecture constituted such an explicit engagement with notions of cultural alienation and disintegration which are essentially opposed to the project of traditional anthropology, and therefore renders the modernist, or post-modernist architectural artefact both uninteresting and distasteful. The few anthropological and ethnographic studies of modern architecture which have been carried out tend to take as their premise the inherent unacceptability of modernism to society at large and its continuing influence in terms of aesthetic and material expression and methods of procurement; and also, to accept unquestioningly the concept of individual authorship, in terms of architectural design, imposed on communities – in other words, the role that architects were perceived to have assumed as designers and 'social engineers' eager to foist an elitist visionary architecture on the general public. Such studies focus on the ways the alien forms of modernism have been privately or covertly modified by individuals during the life of such buildings, as part of a necessary (and arguably subversive) process of 'appropriation' or 'sublation'; while neglecting to acknowledge the origins and development of such buildings in a complex, social and cultural fabric, and the extent to which they do play a role in concretising and objectifying collective identities and belief systems, not just those of an individual architect working within the modernist aesthetic and ideological system. They include Attfield's Harlow study ((1989), and Miller's investigation of consumption practices on a council estate (1988), but one of the most significant is still Boudon's 35-year old study (1972) of Le Corbusier's housing scheme at Pessac.

Boudon undertook a three-tier analysis of the relationship between architecture and town planning – at theoretical, practical, and town-planning levels –

emphasising the need to study the problem from a sociological as well as an architectural point of view. He enrolled the help of sociologists in investigating the development's potential for adaptability and capacity to accommodate customisation by its inhabitants, and in setting the architectural conception in the context of the times. The research was carried out through non-directive interviews with around 40 people, being only a small proportion of the residents, and also with some of the people who had served on the town council during the construction period. But Henri Lefebvre warned in his Preface to the work that it might be found '*light and insubstantial*' (n.p) – presumably because the sociological analysis, drawn from ethnographic research amongst the inhabitants of the development, might be regarded as intellectually slight in comparison to the lofty architectural and ideological discourse which had driven the inception of the scheme.

However, the growth of material culture studies and visual anthropology as sub-genres of the modern discipline of anthropology seem to indicate that anthropologists could only continue to disregard architecture, understood as a (predominant) form of material culture and technology, rather than as an essentially visual and formal expression of aesthetic theory, at their peril. By visual anthropology, I mean the study of 'visual systems and visible culture', or the culture of representation, rather than the use of visual material (eg film) as a medium of anthropological research (Morphy and Banks 1997). For instance, Thomas has underlined the importance of developing the study of contemporary art as a process of '*iconographic*' representation, '*defining sets of structural practices*' (Thomas 1997, p 265), independently of the theoretical discussion of aesthetic form and content forwarded by art history. His observation that '*In contrast with almost every other area of anthropological enquiry, research on art has persisted in focusing upon small-scale, tribal societies*' (p 263) might equally be applied to architecture. Further, his discussion of the '*growing importance of art in public expressions of national identity and official cultural diplomacy*' (p 266), and its role in giving form to national identities in a climate of challenged '*sovereignty and coherence*' (p 266), seems particularly pertinent to an anthropological discussion of the ways in which official discourses around the Brunswick have constituted an integral part of a government-directed national heritage policy intended to give tangible visual form to an idea of national identity and achievement, ie the Brunswick as a specific landmark in the history of post-war British architecture, built by one of the major national

construction firms of the day, in the contemporary context of a multi-cultural, post-industrial society.

Material culture studies have been more commonly associated with moveable commodities and their role in social processes, or the interactions between people and things in society (eg Appadurai 1986), and have led to a good deal of attention being focussed both on processes of mass consumption in general, and on the private space of the home as the primary domain of personal consumer practices (Miller 1997, 2001); but they also extend to embrace the study of landscape (eg Tilley 1994), and even a broadly phenomenological approach to anthropological research, emphasising the relationship between people and their surroundings as a sensory interaction with material things and conditions, rather than in the traditional terms of (non-physical) social structures and dynamics. Czordas sets out the relevance of such an approach, emphasising embodied experience, to the study of modern western societies and their culture, for: *'The very possibility of individuation, the creation of the individual that we understand as at the core of the ideological structure of western culture, has as its condition of possibility a particular mode of inhabiting the world as a bodily being'* (Czordas 1999, p 144).

Seamon has described a phenomenological approach to research in the field of architecture and the environment, in terms of a *'radical empiricism'*, which is premised on the idea that *'people and environment [ie material or physical surroundings] compose an indivisible whole.'* Seamon identifies the method of study of the relationship between person and world as 'empirical' because it *'arises through firsthand, grounded contact with the phenomenon as it is experienced by the researcher'*, and 'radical' because by it is interpreted by the researcher on the basis of personal sensibility and awareness, and not by the use of *'a priori theory and concepts, hypotheses, predetermined methodological procedures, statistical measures of correlation and the like'* (Seamon n.d).

Seamon largely sums up the principles of ethnographic research and its particular appropriateness to the study of human interaction with the material world. It is a perspective which seems to offer particular potential for a study of modern architecture in a holistic, anthropological sense, capable of revealing depths of cultural meaning at individual and collective level which, as a result of a prevailing discourse of alienation, abstraction, cultural fragmentation, and an emphasis on the notion of imposed, individual authorship, have hitherto been largely dismissed.

Ethnography, founded on the active personal engagement of the anthropologist with individuals and groups at the site of the research, provides a doorway to understanding the nature of everyday 'lived experience' in the material context of a celebrated visual statement of particular aesthetic ideals and aspirations.

1.2. Ethnography as a research method, and its role within anthropology

The original aim of ethnography as it evolved within the British anthropological tradition from the end of the 19th century, and epitomised by the work of Malinowski, was to produce systematic descriptions of 'whole', in other words small-scale societies and their cultures based on empirical, firsthand observation, participation and documentation. The idea was to displace so-called armchair theorising and a priori hypothesis, and to present the truth as objectively and scientifically as possible. There was an expectation that anthropologists would carry out fieldwork, write up their ethnography, and out of that produce a contribution to the anthropological analysis of the organisational bases of human society. For many years, the main subjects of British ethnography were the societies of sub-Saharan Africa, directly resulting from British colonial and political interests in that part of the world. Indeed, anthropological research played a huge role in serving and reinforcing those interests.

Today the scope of anthropology has enormously increased, and the sites of ethnographic research have multiplied exponentially throughout the world. Paradoxically, ethnography has also largely discarded its 'scientific' and objective aspirations, at least in name, re-establishing itself as the 'qualitative' research method par excellence, with a recognition of the subjective dimension of the interpretative process. By contrast, sociology has taken on the mantle of 'scientificism', upheld by methodical, objective, 'quantitative' survey research and number-crunching. For ethnographers, the ideal of the 'whole' society as object of research has been substituted by a validation of the small-scale sample, studied in-depth over time. The Enlightenment premise of human nature as a universally-knowable idea - in which one myth simply represents a transformation of another, as conceptualised by Lévi-Strauss, rather than a new form of human life - has been abandoned in favour of a more fragmented world view, even within the context of the universalising and globalising tendencies represented by modernism and global capitalism.

The recognition of fragmentation and subjectivism as forces to be reckoned with in the practice of ethnography has constituted a huge shift in the practice of contemporary ethnography as the central research method of anthropology. As Geertz writes, ethnography now is more about ‘*evoking*’ rather than ‘*representing*’ cultures (Geertz 1988, citing S.Tyler, p 136). It aims only to ‘*enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, wealth and power, and yet contained in a world where.. it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other’s way*’ (Geertz 1988, p 147). Or, as Miller frames it, writing on the ‘ethnography of modernity’, it is about looking for the particular in the universal, rather than the other way round (Miller 1993). At the same time, he suggests that the conditions of modernity, leading to a decline in the public representation of shared values, mean that contemporary ethnography is most meaningfully carried out ‘behind closed doors’ within the private territory of the home space (Miller 2001, p1) – a search for the universal in the particular.

If contemporary ethnography has undoubtedly taken on a more fragmented and perhaps uncertain character, focussing on the significance of the detail rather than necessarily aspiring to present a comprehensive picture of the overall whole, then it has also, and perhaps problematically (Hirsch 2001, Schlecker and Hirsch 2001), become increasingly ‘multi-sited’, because the conditions of capitalism have transcended the particularity of geographical locality – as the Modern Movement in architecture recognised, and sought to express in an aesthetics of universal functionalism. Every ‘subject’ is linked to a multiplicity of sites by ‘*connections, associations and relationships that transcend particular localities*’, which makes the ethnographer’s task more difficult. Citing Latour (1993), Schlecker and Hirsch note in their essay on the ‘crisis of context’ that the ethnographer must ‘*abandon the study of compartmentalised local contexts and ... follow the actor, around whom a network of alliances with other actors and things (actants) evolves*’ (Schlecker and Hirsch 2001, p 78). Yet at the same time, ‘*good ethnography*’ should still aspire to convey the sense of ‘*being there*’ (Hirsch and Gellner 2001, p 9) – wherever ‘there’ is. The ideal of the researcher’s own ‘participant-observation’ remains as strong as ever, and largely distinguishes ethnography from other forms of social research.

But the questioning of traditional assumptions about the ethnographer’s objectivity and authority has made the process of research and interpretation still more complex. While a priori models and hypotheses have never had a place in

ethnography, it is now generally accepted that any ethnographer who enters the field comes pre-equipped with particular preconceptions and models of understanding which cannot be separated out from the person they are, shaped by social background, education, and experience. The ethnographer's task is therefore complicated by the need to operate with a new self-awareness, an acknowledgement of his or her own subjectivity. This has led to various experiments in the form and content of ethnographic authorship, especially in terms of suppressing the ethnographer's own voice, and giving greater authentic 'presence', even 'ownership', to the multiple voices of the people who are the subject of research. These issues have become particularly pertinent as anthropologists have begun to work increasingly in the field 'at home', within the context of their own societies, where the cultural distance between researcher and subject may be relatively insignificant, and the ideal of a fully 'objective' perspective virtually impossible to achieve.

Maintaining the anonymity of respondents is one of the established conventions of ethnographic writing, but even this has been brought into question by the perceived need for a radical renegotiation of the power relationship between ethnographer and respondent. If the respondent is to be given greater 'voice' and presence in the ethnographic text, then, surely, it has been suggested, the premise of anonymity simply becomes untenable. But Strathern convincingly argues that the concept of some kind of 'joint authorship' between the ethnographer and his/her 'subjects' is suspicious and ultimately cannot fulfil the aims of ethnography. As she points out, the ethnographer's role is to give some sense of people's '*own relationship to what has been said.... how they "own" their words*' (Strathern 1987, p19). It is not simply about '*rendering back to the residents [of the village] an account immediately contiguous with those they had given*' (p18) which, as she points out, is tantamount to writing social history or biography – a very different enterprise. It is the same difference represented by the 'residents' story' in the final chapter of my *Life and Times of the Brunswick*, compared to the ethnographic account contained in Chps 4 and 5 of this thesis.

But Strathern also gives consideration to the problems of 'auto-anthropology', as she calls it, or anthropology 'at home', in one's '*own social universe*' – the situation I faced at the Brunswick. She highlights one of the key issues - apart from establishing and maintaining sufficient cultural distance to 'see' the field of research with any clear sense of perspective – as being '*whether or not*

investigator/investigated are equally at home, as it were, with the kinds of premises about social life which inform anthropological enquiry' (p16). She suggests that her own student researchers at the village of Elmdon were perhaps '*too coy*' (p31) in explaining fully to their respondents what their research interest really was, assuming, perhaps, that they simply wouldn't be able to understand it. The Elmdoners apparently had no problem understanding '*our stated research in "history"*' , but, says Strathern, '*Pressed to the point, I think they would also have agreed that society is a proper object of study.*' Furthermore, she suggests, if the researchers had been more direct about the real focus of their research, '*It would have helped us feel more at home*' (p 31).

1.3. Conducting ethnographic research at the Brunswick

1.3.1 Conditions and problems of working 'at home'

Strathern's comments about the experience of conducting ethnographic research at Elmdon, in Cambridgeshire, very much echo my own experience at the Brunswick where my tendency was to do precisely what her researchers did, and tell my respondents, or potential respondents, that I was there simply to research the history of the place. Although I did also tell people that I wanted to hear about their 'experience of living at the Brunswick', and, subsequently, in a further round of interviews, more specifically about their experience of 'making a home at the Brunswick' (Appendix 3), I found that they were often baffled as to why their experiences should be of any interest to me. This proved quite hard to explain in everyday terms, although some respondents showed more understanding than others – notably one woman who had herself studied anthropology and knew exactly what the idea was, but who was hardly representative of my sample. If, on the other hand, I presented myself in the light of an art historian or even a journalist, I found that residents would usually respond more readily and openly, having had considerable prior experience of such inquiries related to the redevelopment and listing controversies, and the exhibition on the Art of the 60s, which included the Brunswick, at Tate Britain (2004). I found that some residents had developed a certain self-awareness in relation to the media, and that our conversations would develop along the lines which they assumed the media was interested in, but which I really wanted to avoid.

Sheer media-exposure, or media 'saviness' on the part of a large proportion of the ordinary population represents, perhaps, another disadvantage for the anthropologist of working 'at home', at least in an urban context in the UK. Reality television and lifestyle journalism provides a endless stream of 'real-life' stories told through the media which are absorbed by the individual and collective consciousness, and influence the way that people think about and present themselves to others. This may increase the difficulties for the anthropologist of building up an authentic picture of people's lives, as recounted by the subjects of research themselves. At the Brunswick I sometimes felt that my respondents were telling me the things they thought I wanted to hear, on the basis of their personal experience of 'the media', rather than responding to the questions I was actually asking them as an ethnographer operating outside the media. Another related aspect of this conundrum was that some of the people who became my respondents did so precisely because they had already been cast in the role of 'spokesperson' at the Brunswick, and this again led to a certain kind of self-awareness which shaped our conversations in a particular way, not determined by me as researcher.

As for myself, I also shared my respondents' self-awareness. I was acutely aware that I did not arrive at the Brunswick as an independent, objective observer, a 'blank canvas', but that I came with a considerable amount of prior knowledge of the place – though unarmed with any prior hypotheses about it. For one thing, I had known the architect, Patrick Hodgkinson, though not particularly well, for some years prior to starting my research at the Brunswick, and that was indeed one reason for choosing the Brunswick as my case study. My husband had worked with him on the academic staff of Bath University for some years. For another thing, I had worked for a long time as an architectural journalist, and was fully aware of the media controversy around the Brunswick, although I had not written directly on it myself. Finally, I lived not far away from the Brunswick, and my husband had an office in the same neighbourhood, which meant that I would often pass by it, or through it, during the course of my own everyday life. Furthermore, we knew various people who lived in it, though I had only visited the place once as a guest before I began my research.

So much for my prior knowledge. On top of that I had to take into account my own background as a white British Londoner brought up in a Victorian-Edwardian middle-class suburb south of the river, university-educated outside London, and since then employed as a freelance journalist and writer in the world of architecture and

design. I was fully aware of my respondents assessing the various signifiers of my own identity (appearance, clothing, manner of speaking, any details inadvertently given away about my own life), as I entered their lives from a different but closely related social realm to their own. Although not all of my respondents turned the tables on me by asking me questions about myself, many did, showing a particular interest in where I lived (was I local?) and my family situation (did I have a husband and children?) When I responded to these two particular questions in the affirmative I would often find that people seemed to warm towards me; but at the same time I became both aware, and wary of a tendency to over-identify with their lives in conversation as a means of encouraging them to open up further.

I was also very concerned that the particular nature of my own background and social networks would serve to predetermine the nature of my ethnographic sample at the Brunswick in ways which I would be powerless to counteract, although I did my best to do so. Another of the problems related to anthropological work in a complex urban context is that the social landscape with which one hopes to engage is not simple, transparent or particularly visible, as it would most likely be in a small-scale non-western society of the sort that anthropologists would traditionally conduct their ethnographic fieldwork in. To an extent it is true that much of it lies ‘behind closed doors’, rather than being played out within a public arena – although there was one particular café in the Brunswick precinct which served as a public meeting-place for some residents. My original point of contact with the Brunswick as a social setting was in fact the architect, who had very little connection with the social landscape of the place at all, except insofar as he had one good friend who lived there, and also various acquaintances among the residents which he had made during the process of his protestations against the redevelopment of the building. These residents were mostly people who had been involved with running or representing the Tenants and Residents Association committee, which is how he had met them. These people, with whom I conducted my first interviews, formed the starting-point for an ethnographic ‘sample’, augmented by other individuals who had an official role of some description in relation to Brunswick affairs – the wardens for the sheltered housing, estate manager, site superintendant, housing manager, and local councillor, in addition to English Heritage officials and the executive architects and developer for the redevelopment. But I was anxious to explore alternative routes ‘into’ the

Brunswick which might provide a more objective and socially varied selection of respondents.

However, I found this to be difficult, for a number of reasons – one being data protection, another disadvantage to working in the ‘home field’. In the initial phase of my research I tried to contact local organisations around the Brunswick, which I thought could potentially provide a disparate selection of contacts within the estate, but quickly established that they would not give me access to data about their users. One of the characteristics of the neighbourhood in which the estate is located is the very large number of community resources concerned with childcare, healthcare, ethnic groups, the elderly [Fig 11] – and even, at that time, a new project set up to conduct an extensive ‘oral history’ of the area peripheral to the enormous Kings Cross redevelopment [Fig 12]. Kings Cross Voices seemed to be embarking on research which was strikingly similar to my own, though much more general and open-ended in its goals, but, as it transpired, their field of investigation would not extend as far south as the Brunswick itself. Contrary to my initial fears, I never crossed paths with any of their researchers, drawn from the local community, trespassing on what I considered to be my ‘own’ territory at the Brunswick. However, I had also hoped that they might provide a more positive and useful source of local contacts outside the Brunswick itself which might be useful to my own research. As it turned out, they could only provide the names of people already in the public domain, such as councillors and local government officials, who were not really the contacts I was seeking.

The same proved true of the local health centre, where I interviewed a health visitor whose circuit included the Brunswick. She explained that she could not pass on any names of people who could potentially be respondents, but suggested that I could put up a notice myself in the health centre asking people to contact me. I had much the same experience at the local Family Centre, where I interviewed the director, the Neighbourhood Centre, and the Bengali Centre, all of which failed to provide any concrete contacts, either because they explicitly said they were unable to, or because they offered to make introductions which never materialised, from which I read a certain reluctance to do so, or suggested that I would have difficulties establishing a relationship of trust with suspicious respondents, implying it was not worth the effort.

At this point, I became a parent representative on the newly-formed local Sure Start committee, a new children's resources initiative set up by the government, as a result of my own use of the local children's services in the area. This seemed like a good 'gateway' into the local 'community', and I hoped I might meet Brunswick parents through it. I had also considered becoming involved in voluntary work at the Neighbourhood Centre, or visiting the elderly at home in the Brunswick as a volunteer. However all of these possibilities seemed to pose ethical problems in the end. I did not want to appear to be 'infiltrating' local organisations, especially those serving the needs of the more vulnerable (eg the elderly) in a way which might be construed as misleading, even deceptive, in terms of my real purpose for being there. Also, although I wanted to find ways of developing an 'insider' perspective, I did not want to get over-involved in local social scenarios in such a way that would complicate and compromise my role as an independent observer and researcher. I became increasingly aware, in considering the possibilities for my ethnographic strategy, that defining the boundary between participation and observation was a tricky issue, especially in a context where political and ethical sensitivities ran quite high.

These issues eventually led me to withdraw from the Sure Start board, because, although I had declared my interest as a researcher to those in charge of the organisation, it became apparent that others directly involved in the committee were not aware of my dual role, and I felt very uncomfortable that it was not as transparent as I would have liked it to be, and that I was in fact engaging in a process closer to 'auto-observation' – assuming the behaviour of the participants, without disclosing my role as ethnographer, and registering my own responses. This was a situation which I also experienced during the two-week period that I stayed in the Brunswick, flat-sitting at the invitation of a couple among my respondents. However, disclosing my research purposes led people to become wary and uncomfortable, and question the legitimacy of my presence there. Furthermore, a technical issue had arisen over the fact that I did not have a local home address, and therefore was not officially eligible to be involved on the committee as a 'parent' in any case. The fact that I could not, in effect, be classed as a 'local' as such was interesting in that it seemed to underline a distance between myself as an ethnographer and my 'subjects' that was real after all, even though, as an anthropologist working 'at home', I also felt self-conscious during the course of my research about what I experienced as a comparative lack of distance

between myself and my respondents. It made me realise that even working within a big multi-cultural city like London, an anthropologist could quite realistically operate within the role of ‘outsider’, or ‘stranger’ in a neighbourhood located only a few miles from his or her own home address.

Following these initiatives, which increasingly began to seem like false starts, even though they helped me to build up a sketchy picture of the local area and of non-Brunswick residents’ impressions of the Brunswick from outside it, I began to refocus on the Brunswick itself. I decided I would not spend any more time creeping around the outside in the hopes of somehow ‘infiltrating’ the community within, but that I should concentrate on securing avenues of direct, explicit engagement with a cross-section of residents.

1.3.2 methods of engagement within the Brunswick

My key contacts within the Brunswick were the residents whom the architect had put me in touch with previously, and whom I had already interviewed in the past. These included most of the obvious ‘keyholders’ at the Brunswick, and through them I was informed of forthcoming Tenants and Residents’ meetings which I attended. Again, I found myself slightly uncomfortable in this context, since it was assumed that I must be a Brunswick resident by most attendees, and my real role was not publicly announced by the committee officials as it was felt that some people might not be happy about the idea of having a ‘researcher’ in their midst, whose presence they had not been consulted on. Eventually, however, after a discussion with committee officials, I arranged for a notice to be put in the Newsletter [Fig 13, Appendix 1), stating my aims as a researcher and inviting residents to contact me if they were interested in participating in my research project. I stated that I wanted to talk to people about ‘their experience of living at the Brunswick’ as part of an investigation into *‘how people live in “urban villages” in central London’*, and qualified this by explaining my interest in life at the Brunswick *‘because of the unusual design, and the prospect of change and development.’* This, I thought, would be readily understood by residents, and also might help stimulate them to respond to my enquiries, as I knew that feelings about the proposed redevelopment were running high, and that there was a strong perception that residents’ views were neither being properly canvassed nor taken account of.

Disappointingly, and even though I had been warned by the newsletter editor that nothing in the newsletter ever elicited any kind of response from residents, I received only one reply directly as a result of the notice, which proved to be from a former LSE Anthropology student who had herself considered doing a PhD on the social dynamics of the area. And, as a result of attention being drawn to the notice in a TRA meeting, I was approached by two further residents following the meeting, both elderly, one describing herself as ‘a perpetual student’, and the other explaining that she had been previously interviewed by a woman journalist who had prepared material on the Brunswick for the exhibition at Tate Britain on the Art of the ‘60s. In other words, the three responses which I received hardly represented a cross-section of residents, and I felt that I would have to rely on word-of-mouth contacts from residents whom I had already met in order to make any headway in my investigations at the Brunswick. Even though I was wary of this as an essentially self-selecting process, I came to accept that this in itself provided certain insights into the social dynamics of the Brunswick which were relevant to my research.

Operating on this basis, it became relatively easy to set up interviews with residents, either in or outside their homes, and I found that those whom I was able to gain access to through other people’s recommendations were generally very open about talking to me and generous in the time they would spend with me, even though some of them continued to profess surprise that I would have any interest in them. In total, I visited some 19 households inside the Brunswick, up to three times each, in addition to the 20 interviews I conducted with respondents outside the Brunswick, including Camden Council officials and councillors, representatives of local community organisations, the English Heritage case-worker, the architect, and representatives of the developer.

My first two rounds of interviews with Brunswick householders were focussed on their lives in general, in an attempt to build up a broad, open-ended picture of their social networks in and beyond the Brunswick. I used a loosely-structured interview guide, but allowed people to develop their own lines of conversation with me, even though they had a tendency to focus explicitly on the subject of the Brunswick itself as a building and what they thought about the ongoing controversy over its redevelopment, which was not exactly what I was interested in. I found that I had to keep trying to broaden the conversation out again, but my respondents found it more

difficult to understand why I should be interested in other aspects of their lives or why that should be of relevance to my research.

In the third round of interviews, I told my respondents that I wanted to focus specifically on their experiences of home-making inside their own flats. I also suggested that I would like to visit them with a photographer who would take pictures of their flats, their things, and themselves, if they agreed to that. At this point I found that one or two people dropped out, on the grounds that they were too busy, or their flats too untidy, from which I understood that my proposal was just too much of an intrusion into their private lives and the intimate domain of the home. But, to my surprise, most people agreed and, furthermore, they also gave consent, some with evident pleasure, both to the publication of pictures in my book on the Brunswick, and to their inclusion in a three-day slide exhibition, 'Inside Looking Out', which we mounted as part of the revived Bloomsbury Festival launching the refurbished shopping precinct in October 2006. I was interested to find that, rather than being concerned about the possible invasion of their privacy which this might represent, most residents seemed pleased and excited at the prospect of their lives at the Brunswick being presented in the public domain in the context of an event which was otherwise very much focussed on the building without its inhabitants. That pleasure was considerably heightened when they heard that the slideshow was to be played as a visual backdrop for the developers' official press launch of the new development, and, indeed, the enlarged, intimate, and highly personalised images of Brunswick interiors took on quite a subversive character when viewed as a backdrop behind the official speakers at the lectern.

Interviews were taped and transcribed, providing the material for which case studies were written for each of the key households, numbering 15 out of the 19. Up to this point, I had continued to have some concerns about what I perceived as the limits of my 'sample' (section 1.4.3), and experimented to see if I could address that by circulating a questionnaire to households identified, on the basis of electoral register information, as being possibly more representative of ethnic minority groups or larger household configurations than the respondents which I already had. This again proved to be an unsuccessful strategy, when only 3 out of 30 were returned in the stamped addressed envelopes I had provided, two of which were from exactly the type of articulate, professional white couples I was hoping to avoid. However, when it came to writing up the case studies, I was surprised and pleased to find how rich

and varied the data I had already gathered appeared to be – a reminder of the potential value of in-depth research using small samples, compared to large-scale, methodical survey research which may seem to cover more ground, but is unlikely to provide the same insights.

In contrast to traditional ethnographic research, of course, the interviewing process, even when each respondent is revisited several times, cannot match up to the full immersion in a society which one might hope to achieve. Although I managed to ‘flat-sit’ for one household in Foundling Court for a brief two weeks while they were away on holiday, that was the limit of my ‘residence’ in the field, and it was not long enough to get settled there – only enough time to register some firsthand impressions of living there. And although I frequented the Brunswick a good deal, in addition to my visits for scheduled interviews – hanging around in the precinct and its run-down cafes, doing my shopping there, taking pictures and wandering around the inside of the housing blocks when I got the opportunity, trying to observe life at the Brunswick without actually intervening in it myself, I always felt conspicuous and suspicious as a potential loiterer in its under-populated, highly-visible and ambiguous public/private spaces. I did not feel able to follow Lyn Lofland’s example in her studies of the public realm (Lofland and Lofland 1995), and sit making notes at the site for four to five hours at a time, partly because I did not have the notation or other means to record simultaneous events and details effectively, and partly because my time was limited and I wasn’t sure that would have been the best use of it. Also, by 2005 the place had been turned into a building site. While on the one hand the supposed anonymity of the big city, which might be considered an advantage in the practice of anthropology ‘at home’, seemed to offer little protection for an undeclared researcher operating within a specific geographical territory, especially in view of the heightened security concerns and consequent distrust of other people’s motives that already existed at the Brunswick, I felt on the other that the public spaces of the Brunswick itself did not really provide a significant platform for the visible parts of resident’s lives, even while it constituted a fundamental structuring presence in terms of how it embodied and shaped the connections between inside and outside; and that there was some truth in the idea that the most meaningful part of the ethnography would have to take place in private, ‘behind closed doors’. Even in the context of the public meetings I attended – and there were many, due to the number of issues being raised and presented around the redevelopment and repair of the building - I found there

were limits to my observation of the interaction rituals of public behaviour, because the role-playing among different residents became so familiar to me, and even the course of the discussions would take on a repetitive and predictable character, so that after a while I simply felt I was not gaining any fresh insights into the social dynamics of the Brunswick, and more or less stopped attending. Instead I embraced the interview process, taking heart from Hirsch and Gellner's assertion (with reference to the ethnography of organisations) that '*repeated interviewing can achieve ethnographic depth*' (p 6).

1. 4. Description of the field

1.4.1. demographic, geographic and cultural characteristics of the area

The Brunswick is located in an area of central London known as Bloomsbury, sometimes Holborn, and formerly St Pancras. It is just to the east and north of the West End, to which it forms a tourist hinterland: and lies just south of the Euston Road with its major rail termini of Kings Cross, St Pancras and Euston, and, since 1998, the British Library complex [Fig 14]. It is an area perhaps better known today for its academic and medical institutions, hotels and tourist-orientated shops and restaurants, rather than for its residential communities, or even its office development. The Brunswick lies a couple of blocks east of the main north-south artery through the area, Woburn Place/Southampton Row, which is bordered by Tavistock and Russell Squares on the west side, and the British Medical Association and a string of large hotels on the east. The area around the squares is dominated by the buildings of University College London and the British Museum. The university's buildings and student halls also extend to the east of Southampton Row, but the dominating institution on this side is now Great Ormond Street Hospital for children, located just off Queen's Square to the south of the Brunswick, and the Royal Neurological Hospital beside it.

Historically, the most important buildings in this area lying between Southampton Row and Grays Inn Road were the Italian Hospital on Queen's Square, and the Foundling Hospital, built in the midst of Lambs Conduit Fields in 1739. In 1788 the Foundling hospital was still an isolated building standing in a rural setting, but the Governors of the Hospital spearheaded development around it, following the lead established by the Bedford Estate in the area around Russell Square to the west. Despite a public outcry and the prospect of losing open country, the Foundling

Hospital estate commissioned the architect S P Cockerell to come up with a masterplan for the area, which included the formation of Mecklenburgh and Brunswick Squares to the east and west sides of the hospital, and new housing designed to accommodate all classes. In 1792, the estate was approached by builder James Burton, who eventually acquired control of most of the western part of the Foundling estate, around and beyond Brunswick Square, on which he built nearly 600 houses by 1802 [Fig 15].

The regular layout of Georgian terraces and squares are today the defining feature of the urban fabric of Bloomsbury, despite the clearance that has taken place especially since the Second World War, in response to a mixture of bomb damage and the expansionist initiatives of the university and hospitals. A considerable amount of redevelopment has taken place, introducing much larger building blocks, while the Foundling Hospital itself, which was demolished in 1926, has been replaced by an extensive children's playground and associated services, known as Coram's Fields, which forms a green centrepiece to the neighbourhood [Fig 16].

In the 19th century, the development of the major rail termini of Kings Cross, St Pancras and Euston just to the north of the area helped to define it as a reception point for visitors to London from the north, and many of the older-established hotels sprang up at this time. This role remains as important as ever, introducing a transient character to the population which is enhanced by the considerable ebb and flow of students and hospital patients. But there are long-established residential communities here too, including academics and intellectuals attracted by the university and British Museum, an Italian community which developed around the presence of the Italian hospital, and a strong local working-class population which is proud of its roots in the area. Today these have been joined by significant Chinese, Bengali, and Filipino populations, attracted by job opportunities in the many local hotels and restaurants, as well as refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia, and a continuous flow of homeless people from outside London, often with drug and alcohol problems.

Local councillor Penny Abraham notes that the Kings Cross and Brunswick ward of the London Borough of Camden is '*perceived as a commercial area, yet there are 9000 people living here, sandwiched between one form of commercial activity or another*' (PA 11-04). She also points out that it has '*one of the highest levels of inequality*.' She does a regular '*listening canvas*' covering about 20 blocks of flats in the area, to establish the key problems experienced by local residents.

Mainly these are ‘*housing-related*’, to do with overcrowding or maintenance issues, sometimes more general social problems. In the post-war era, housing in the area comprised a mixture of often run-down Georgian terraces [Fig 16], ranging through a hierarchy of grand to everyday, Victorian-Edwardian social housing on the tenement block model, built by philanthropic trusts such as Peabody, and some more upmarket mansion blocks built particularly from the 1930s onwards [Fig 16]. In 1965, when the old borough system was re-organised, the new London Borough of Camden, one of the largest of the 32, took an initiative to build new housing in the area specifically to bring back family life south of the Euston Rd and counteract the ‘creeping institutionalisation’ of the area. Great quantities of older properties were bought up, some of which were demolished and replaced by new council estates [Fig 16], and many people were rehoused at the time. The Brunswick scheme had already been initiated by a private developer as a speculative project, involving the controversial clearance of a large swathe of supposedly ‘jerry-built’, substandard Georgian houses built by Bruton [LT 2]; but when it ran into financial difficulties, Camden was quick to buy the lease on the housing element as a high-profile addition to its social housing stock.

Abraham states that, as a result of the Thatcher government’s right-to-buy legislation in the 1980s, around one-third of the occupiers of any housing block in the area are middle-class leaseholders. There has been a deliberate reduction of the discount on the purchase price offered to council tenants, in order to try and stem the tide towards private ownership, which has not fitted in with the housing agenda of Camden’s supposedly ‘militant’ left-wing council. Of the remaining two-thirds of occupants, one-third are long-term tenants, often from long-established local families, and one-third are vulnerable or homeless people who are given housing priority and allocated one-bed flats and studios.

According to Sofina, the Bangladeshi Family Link Worker at Chadswell Healthy Living Centre on the nearby Cromer Street estate (heart of the four-generation Bangladeshi community in the area), overcrowding is a problem in the neighbourhood generally, and unemployment is high, but people do not tend to leave it (Sf 10-04). Most of the employed Bangladeshi/ Bengali men have restaurant work, while the women do not aspire to any paid work. She mentions that she knows of two single Bengali mothers who live at the Brunswick, but does not give me their contact details.

Fiona Moorhouse, a health visitor based at the Hunter Street Health Centre (an Edwardian building that was formerly the Royal Free Medical School) opposite the Brunswick says that the Bangladeshi community in the neighbourhood stands at 55% (FM 7-04), many of whom are her clients. She confirms they do not like to move 'north of the Euston Road', despite the poor state of repair of much of the housing here, and the high cost of local shopping; and she suggests there is some tension between them and a '*hard core of true Kings Cross and Holborn families*', mainly due to pressure on resources such as children's nursery places. A lot of the African families in the neighbourhood are asylum seekers, and can be '*quite difficult*' in terms of their interactions with neighbours and community workers, but, Moorhouse maintains, it is not connected with racism: '*you can be anything here*', she says, and the families themselves experience the area as '*nice and welcoming*.' The election of Camden mayor Nasim Ali, a local Bangladeshi boy, in 2003 was considered highly symbolic of the extent to which the Bangladeshi community had become settled and accepted in the area. But, as Abdul Hai, a Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association youth worker explains, a great deal of local community work is focussed around the task of giving a sense of direction to young and potentially disaffected Bangladeshis in the neighbourhood who may see Ali as a huge role model, precisely because they do not feel themselves 'settled' at all.

My respondents among the elderly users of KCBNA, which provides lunches, bingo and other activities and outings for pensioners, were a group of five ladies over 70 (two Irish, two English, and one Italian), who had lived in the area for between 48 and 60 years each (four on the Cromer Street Estate, and one in a university-owned Edwardian mansion block, Brunswick Mansions, opposite the Brunswick, now sold to a private developer for luxury flats). They told me they couldn't talk to their neighbours because they are '*all foreign*' (AAMEM 04-04), so you '*can't sit down and have a chin wag*.' One tells me '*the cockneys used to be lovely*', but now one of them has Polish neighbour next door, and a Chinese family above her. Despite the communication problems, they are still '*lovely people*', and she says, '*We're learning to get on with each other*'; but the problem with their Bangladeshi neighbours on the estate is that they are '*dirty*' and spit in the street, and '*you're not allowed to tell them not to do it*.'

Clearly, there is some sense of dislocation and disempowerment among the elderly in the neighbourhood, in particular; but overall, Moorhouse says, there is '*a*

cohesion and community within the locality', and that she '*can see the community very clearly*' through her work. She is not alone in noting that the problems caused by drugs used to be much worse than they are now, and that a huge improvement has taken place in terms of the environment and allocation of social resources. Drugs, prostitution and homelessness are all less visible than they were, although there are still two large hostels in the area, and plenty of families in temporary private rental accommodation paid for by the council. But one of the notable features of the neighbourhood around the Brunswick is how well provided it seems to be with social and community resources – with the exception of good schools. Of the four Holborn primary schools, only one, well to the east of the area, is really recommended by locals, and there is no local secondary school at all, most children going on to schools in the Borough of Westminster or, if they have no other choice, to the large Camden comprehensive on the north of Euston Road which is not well thought of, but attended by most of the Bangladeshi children. By contrast, Corams Fields and Coram Family provide, between the two organisations, a vast range of family services, including two nurseries, a family centre, two playschemes, and various drop-in facilities, the focus being on promoting good models of parenting, particularly to less advantaged families. Even so, the neighbourhood was also chosen for one of the flagship Sure Start (Sure Start Kings Cross and Holborn) area programmes (2004), providing children's 'early years' services, indicating a perceived acute social need for additional resources.

Lucy Draper, Coram Parents Centre Co-Ordinator, describes the local population as '*quite poor*', but stresses that poverty, ethnic identity, and social needs cannot automatically be linked. For instance, some of the most affluent residents in the area are black African families brought over by fathers who come to study at the university. Draper says that the wives can be completely '*lost*' in social and cultural terms, and benefit from the services offered by her organisation in the same way economically disadvantaged local or refugee families. Draper describes the area in general as '*not family friendly*' (LD 04-04), due to the high-profile presence of students, business people and tourists to whom shops and restaurants mainly cater. But just around the corner, the Health Centre itself is described by Moorhouse as '*really well known*', a neighbourhood centre of the sort that '*was going to be the big new thing 10-15 years ago*' (FM 7-04). It provides a wide range of health and social services, focussing on dental health, diabetes, midwifery and eczema in particular.

Bloomsbury has the highest neo-natal death rate in Camden, and eczema is also a high-profile problem which has now been linked to pollutants resulting from decreased air flow.

In Camden Council's Unitary Development Plan, this area is designated as part of a central London 'Clear Zone' (extending from Tottenham Court Road in the west to Grays Inn Road in the East, and Euston Road in the north to High Holborn in the south), in recognition of the problems caused by high traffic flow through it. The Clear Zone designation is intended to focus attention on finding alternative solutions to traffic and congestion within the area, which also now falls into the central London congestion charge zone created by the Mayor's office and operated by a citywide body, Transport for London. In June 2001, Space Syntax, the commercial arm of Hillier and Hanson's Space Syntax research centre at UCL, produced a report on the Development of a Clear Zone Pedestrian Movement Model, which was based on counting pedestrian flow for different social groups – 'locals', 'tourists', 'suits' etc . Using a combination of Ordnance Survey base maps, spatial integration levels (meaning geographical permeability or interconnectedness of streets, facilitating pedestrian flow), and pedestrian movement rates, they revealed that Bloomsbury was the third 'most integrated' area, in terms of a combination of 'what you can see' and 'where you can go', after Fitzrovia, with its gridiron street pattern, and the West end, where organic patterns spreading from the City merge with the gridiron pattern. The area immediately around the Brunswick itself was characterised by green and yellow 'permeability' lines indicating 'median' spatial integration (Space Syntax 2001).

According to Space Syntax, *'patterns of pedestrian movement, vehicular movement, land use and residential crime in urban areas are directly affected by urban form and spatial layout.'* However their analysis is extremely functional, and hardly takes people into account as actors in the social networks which activate spatial morphologies. As a result, their findings shed little light on urban social phenomenon such as territorialism, which is a key feature of social life around the Brunswick among certain groups of people. According to Abdul Hai, territorial issues are immensely important in defining social relations (including conflict and crime) in the neighbourhood, particularly among young Bangladeshi boys and men living around, although not generally within, the Brunswick. He claims that people have been killed over territorial 'rights', focussed on different estates, and a Brunswick resident confirms that a fight will break out if one group of young people is found to be sitting

on a wall in the ‘wrong’ place. Hai says he has no idea what makes them behave in this way, or why they should develop such a strong sense of place and connection to place in particular area, but it may simply be a symbol of other types of social association rather than an intrinsic loyalty to geographic territory [Fig 20].

The reverse side of this coin is a process of gradual re-gentrification of the area. Middle-class professional families have begun moving back into the rundown Georgian terraced houses to the north and east of the Brunswick, many of which had been turned into cheap and unsavoury hotels and brothels in the hinterland around Kings Cross mainline railway station. While such houses are often seen as inconvenient for their staircases and old-fashioned features by immigrant families, especially as many are listed, preventing any significant alteration and modernisation, they represent a certain status for the middle-classes, and are seen as more desirable than flats, particularly because they have gardens. Moorhouse contrasts the situation of an architect’s family she knows living in a Georgian house in Argyle Street sandwiched between two hotels, which they’ve made ‘really nice’ inside, and that of an African family with a child suffering from HIV/Aids living in a similar house in Regents Square. They have to carry the child up and down the stairs constantly, and as they were not allowed to put an entryphone buzzer on the front door, due to the house’s listed status, they would throw the keys out of the window when the Health Visitor arrived, so she can let herself in and they can avoid running downstairs. So, although the historic architectural fabric of the neighbourhood is appealing and meaningful in terms of the values and ideals it represents to certain sectors of the population, it cannot be assumed that it represents the same things to everybody, or even that it looks the same at all when from ‘other’ social and cultural perspectives. Similarly, while the spatial morphology of the area may be shown to direct and promote certain directions and frequencies of ‘pedestrian movement’, this analysis in itself ultimately cannot tell approaching the whole story of social occupation and interaction in a particular geographical area.

1.4.2 the Brunswick: social and physical parameters

For some people, the Brunswick arrived in this area like a ‘spaceship’ – completely out of place. Out of scale, made in the wrong materials, it just didn’t seem to fit in, notwithstanding the architect’s insistence that it had been inspired by the same Georgian terraces which it appeared to dominate and displace. As my respondents at

KCBNA put it to me, '*there's too much cement in it!*' But worse was the fact that it had been so under-maintained for so many years: '*They should do something about it. It's been neglected. Keeps being sold*' (AAMEM 04-04). As an eyesore, it was a blight on the neighbourhood, although the shopping facilities which it accommodated, in the shape of Safeways in the precinct, were valued by everybody. In fact, in my conversations about the Brunswick with other people living in the neighbourhood, this was generally the first thing they mentioned, rather than any views on its design or other social significance.

Yet, in terms of a comparison to other housing estates in the area, the Brunswick is perceived as standing out in various ways. For one thing, as Councillor Abraham tells me, poverty is very much a social reality in the council housing of this area, but less so at the Brunswick than elsewhere. However, although she maintains that one-third of flats in any local block are now owner-occupied, the proportion at the Brunswick is smaller than this, at least at the time of the 2001 Census. This shows only one-sixth of flats as owner-occupied, while approximately 70% of the flats are rented from the council. This is accounted for partly by the fact that the Brunswick has a large proportion of Sheltered housing, managed directly by District Housing, which has prevented the flow of flats onto the open market. This means that the Brunswick has a significant population of elderly or otherwise vulnerable residents, described by Abraham as '*suddenly quite feisty*'. Out of 311 Households (the total number of households/ people varies from one statistics table to the next) recorded by the Census, 77 are occupied by pensioners, 69 of which are pensioners living alone. Out of the 677 people recorded living there, 236 are shown as being 60 years and above, while 232 are aged 30 to 60 years, 80 are in their 20s, 44 between 20 and 10 years old, and 78 are children under 10.

By contrast with the 'feisty' Sheltered Tenants, Abraham suggests that in 2004 other residents at the Brunswick had '*lost the will to speak up*', despite being '*well-represented by the TA*'. This she attributed to general scepticism about freeholder Allied London's '*will to look after them.*' This points to another feature of the Brunswick which distinguishes it from comparable estates, and that is the fact that, as a mixed-use development, the commercial and retail elements are owned and run separately from the housing, which has led historically to considerable tension and conflict between the freeholder (formerly Rugby Estates, owners of much of the land around Great Ormond Street) and Camden Council as the leaseholder, over

responsibilities for maintenance and repairs to the housing. As a result, the Brunswick has been very run-down for many years, and residents have felt to some extent disempowered in terms of their ability to make effective representations concerning the maintenance of the block. Many residents suggest that, because of the unusual situation between the council and the freeholder, the council cares less about the Brunswick than about other estates where it has total control, and this makes them feel comparatively helpless. But even so, I am told that the Brunswick is considered 'upmarket' compared to its neighbours, largely because of the high standard of accommodation, in terms of the size and brightness of the flats, which it offers.

In terms of the social makeup of the population, Fiona Moorhouse describes the Brunswick as '*quite mixed*', without many children, and suggests that Camden Council is currently using it as 'temporary accommodation'. She says that there used to be '*a bit of racism*' there, with fires lit outside the doors of two Bangladeshi and one African family. Most recently she has been in contact with a Filipino mother of two whose much older American husband died following the birth of her second child. She has helped to make the arrangements for this woman to be re-housed in another flat at the Brunswick. According to Abrahams, there is a significant Ghanaian community there, who are '*staunch supporters of the Labour party*.' But my impression of the Brunswick, corroborated by some of my respondents, is that it is occupied by a predominantly white population. According to the Census statistics, out of 669 people recorded, 374 give their ethnic origin as British, 34 as Irish, and 67 as 'other white' – a total of 475. The next highest proportion of the population is Bangladeshi, at 55 persons, followed by 48 black Africans. Black Caribbean are negligible at 6, and Chinese at 11. Indians stand at 6, Pakistanis at nil, 'other Asian' at 10, 'other black' at 14, 'other ethnic' at 25, and mixed ethnic origin at 19. These figures are also reflected in those for religious affiliation, in which the vast majority are Christian (385), followed by those of 'no religion' (111), and thirdly Muslims (78). There are 16 Jewish occupants, 6 Hindu, and 6 Buddhist.

As for overall household composition, out of the 398 households recorded, 232 are technically occupied by 1 person living alone (of which around half are pensioners); 134 by 1 family; 42 by lone-parent households, and 32 by 'other' types of household, 3 of which are 'all student', and 10 of which are 'all pensioner' (ie pensioners not living alone), the remainder presumably being childless couples of one sort or another. Of the 673 people recorded for this purpose, 517 give their status as

single or separated, divorced or widowed, of whom 324 are 'household reference persons'; while only 156 are married or re-married, confirming that the Brunswick population is weighted towards single people.

In terms of the affluence or otherwise of the population, the census figures show around half the population of 16-74 year olds to be in work, and half not in work in the week before the census. Of the latter half, the majority are described as 'economically inactive', but only 18 actually unemployed, 9 of whom are long-term unemployed. Of the population in work, rather less than half are shown to be in lower managerial/ professional and clerical occupations ('C1'), having 25 children among them; while the remainder are made up of more or less equal numbers in higher professional/managerial occupations ('A/B') on the one hand (with 15 children between them), and semi or unskilled manual workers ('D') on the other (10 children between them), in addition to a somewhat smaller proportion of skilled manual workers ('C2': 6 children). While these figures cannot give a totally accurate picture of the social composition of the Brunswick's population, they provide some sort of guidance which helps to build up a picture of the field of research.

The building itself comprises two long and large housing blocks set parallel to each other either side of an open precinct which is slightly elevated above ground level [Fig 2, Figs 17-19, **LT 3**]. The blocks are orientated east-west, one, Foundling Court, facing outwards onto Marchmont Street [Fig 18a, 19a], including its pub and shops at the upper end, and the blank face of the large hotel which occupies the lower half of the street on the west side. O'Donnell Court faces outwards east over Brunswick Square (to which it was originally designed to be connected by a bridge across the road), and is quite heavily shaded by large plane trees which line the street on that side [Figs 19b, 21].

The precinct itself delineates a north-south axis originally intended to extend as far as Tavistock Place [Fig 43], and used to be open at both ends, although the north end has now been filled in with the construction of a new supermarket building for Waitrose [Fig 5]. The precinct is also accessible from east and west via the dramatic large portal or portico on the east side, approached by steps from the street and sheltering the box-like structure of the Renoir cinema [Fig 17]; and, from the west, via Coram Arcade, or the 'tunnel', through the housing block from Marchmont Street [Fig 6]. The precinct was formerly lined by an arcade of bush-hammered

concrete columns on each side [Fig 22], with shop fronts set back behind it, but this has now been filled in to form a new shopfront further forward into the precinct, creating a narrower central space [Fig 5]. This narrowing effect has been enhanced by the installation of a new light-weight continuous canopy projecting into the space above the shopfront.

The central precinct was originally partly covered over by the terraces above at second floor, or 'podium' level, which extended right around the central void [Fig 23]. The architect's idea had been to create a public garden area at this level, reached by the grand external staircase [**LT 5**] which was demolished in 2001 in response to security concerns. But public use of the terrace level has never been realised, due to the ambiguity of the relationship between this space and the private zone of the housing which looks down on it. At the same time that the staircase was demolished (having been walled up for many years), the connecting parts of the terrace area and footbridges were also removed, effectively separating the two blocks from each other. Although temporary footbridges were reinstated for some time, to connect the buildings and facilitate pedestrian access from one to another [Fig 9], they too have now gone.

The primary access to the flats themselves is via a series of 4 entrance doors opening onto the street on each side in the 300-m long facades of the housing blocks, and articulating the three-and-a half bays of the construction. Each entrance point is outlined formally by its lift-tower projecting above the roof of the building – now illuminated with green lights for added effect as part of the refurbishment of the building. The entrances used to be open [Fig 24], leading onto the staircases and lifts that vertically connect the seven storeys of the blocks, but electronically operated doors were installed to counter security problems. There were also access points from the precinct via what were known as the 'back stairs', leading up to the terrace level. These have now been reduced to one on each side.

At second floor level, the blocks are revealed from the inside as vast open-ended, open-topped, A-frame structures, rising to an apex high above [Fig 25, 26, 28]. The flats are organised in a 'perimeter' and 'main' block either side, the former looking out onto the street, the latter looking onto the precinct inside (Fig 26). In the perimeter blocks, the flats are located between the ground and fourth floor levels. In the main blocks, they are located between second and seventh floor levels, with shops beneath them fronting onto the precinct. The perimeter and main blocks 'hang' off

the A-frame structure, and are connected at second floor level by a broad concourse which opens through the main block onto the terraces (Fig 27), and also serves a number of studio spaces ranged along this side which are rented out commercially.

The special feature of the Brunswick's profile is the horizontally-terraced, or 'ziggurat' outline of the housing blocks, comprising stepped-back glazed and balconied frontages on each side, which rise above the precinct with considerable power, glinting in the sunlight or reflecting the clouds in the sky, depending on the weather (Fig 8, **LT 4**). The somewhat ethereal quality of this appearance used to form a dramatic contrast with the heavy solidity of the fair-faced concrete with which the blocks are faced, although this has now been painted cream in accordance with the architect's original wishes. It would also have created a kind of extension of the glass-roofed shopping hall which was originally intended to occupy the centre of the precinct space, rising just above the level of the surrounding terrace-gardens, and which the saw-toothed roof of the new supermarket is supposed to have been inspired by, though less successfully [**LT 43**].

The structure of the Brunswick appears to be solidly concrete, and was lauded as a bold adventure in the use of new materials at the time of its construction. But while the A-frame structure is pre-cast reinforced concrete, and the floor plates and external faces of the building were constructed in concrete panels made in-situ, the party walls of the flats, or infill structure, are in fact made of brick. Thus the building is essentially a hybrid, which eludes clear categorisation in terms of an architectural ideology of materials.

The Brunswick flats open off long parallel walkways, sometimes called access galleries, sometimes corridors [Figs 28, 29]. These are supported by the monolithic concrete A-frame structure which forms a lofty, triangular atrium space down the middle. Although there are four entrances at pavement level, the middle two are now hardly used, so that the sub-division of the blocks into vertical bays, which explains the otherwise incomprehensible numbering of the flats (Appendix 2), is not really articulated on the inside, and the walkways are experienced as long unbroken vistas from end to end. The seven levels vary in character. The flats on the ground and first floors open off entirely internal corridors beneath the atrium space, which are more or less hidden from view. The second floor level reads as the main communal concourse, and is generally known as 'the podium'. As the residents who live here have a lot of space outside their front doors, they sometimes leave various items there,

almost using the space like a front yard. The levels above, however, are very narrow walkways, with hardly enough space to allow two people to walk along together. Levels 3 and 4 are two-sided, with a glazed canopy at level 4 to keep off the rain. But levels 5, 6, and 7 are one-sided, open to the view over rooftops on the outside edge of the blocks [Fig 29]. They have a different, more open feel, and have been described as superior in quality. One resident on the fifth floor, who considered buying a flat on the podium, says *'I think now we know more about lower down we would have been a bit more reticent.'* And the very internal first and ground floor levels, which also accommodate the store-rooms, are described by a seventh-floor resident as 'sinister'.

The long perspectives down the access galleries, punctuated by rows of doors and kitchen windows, are lightened by glimpses of foliage and sunlight through the far-off open ends [Fig 25, 28, 29], contrasting with the shadowy interior and heavy concrete of the internal structure. The view down into the broad, internal concourse below, contrasting with the sudden unexpected view out over rooftops and cityscape from the sixth and seventh floors at the top also helps to build up a sense of rhythm and sequence within the monotony of the linear perspective, which is brought to life by the personal details colouring the approach to each person's front door [Fig 29].

The circulation space of the housing blocks is quite the opposite of domestic, in terms of its large-scale, hard industrial materials, and semi-open-air quality. Residents' responses to it are varied: it is described both as being 'like a big ship', or 'a cathedral', but also as a 'concrete jungle'. Because the open ends and top to the structure allow the wind and rain to get in, it does not feel completely sheltered. One resident writes, in protest at the lack of maintenance and refurbishment, *'Whenever it rains we have to paddle to our flats... The rain can remain on the corridors for days on end.'* The heavy-duty, unpainted, stained and blemished concrete structure and facings relate to a world of infrastructure and industrial construction: a mixture of in-situ concrete and load-bearing masonry with some pre-cast concrete balustrades and upstands and blockwork infill. The programme it was designed to fulfil was that of mass housing, not domesticity as such.

The entrances to the microcosmic domestic worlds of the flats are diminutive and undistinguished: they could almost be mistaken for cupboard doors. At the beginning, as one resident recalls, all the front doors were red, emphasising the mass-produced nature of the building and the non-hierarchical ideals of council housing,

and the immediate threshold to each flat was emphatically neutral. But that has changed. Front doors have been repainted and decorated – a horseshoe nailed on, coloured tiles with the house number fixed to the wall, secondary metal gates attached, and, more recently, plants moved out onto the walkways from the balconies during the progress of building work, resulting in a very considerable change of aspect to the common parts. The odd pair of slippers or trainers lies on a doormat, the occasional notice warning of a dog, or advertising the presence of God at a particular residence. Even a packet of Daz dimly viewed through the dirty-looking obscured glass of a kitchen window works to distinguish one home from another, while the position of flats in relation to staircases and lifts and neighbours also gives occupiers a distinct sense of location within the blocks [Fig 29].

In counterpoint to these small details, markers of individual recognition and identification, the Tenants Association, currently run by an engineer and an architect, has recently organised for each ground floor entrance hall to be painted a different colour. As one resident says, *'It looks nice.... people come up and say what block do you live in? You can tell people red entrance, blue, yellow, whatever.'* But, when asked that question, she reveals: *'I can't remember! Hold on, what are we? Blue, yes blue because we're opposite the pub'*, suggesting that the concrete walls of the building are more permeable to the exterior landscape, even since the security doors have been in place, than the solid boundary they might appear.

Behind the internal front doors are the flats. The original speculative scheme had been for a broad spectrum of accommodation, encompassing at two ends of the scale penthouse flats on top of the 'main blocks', and hostel accommodation for nurses and students in the 'perimeter blocks', with a range of studios to three-bedroom flats in between. Between 1965 and 1968 Hodgkinson redesigned the accommodation, at the council's direction, to provide only standard one- and two-bedroom flats and one-room bedsits and a small number of two-bedroom maisonettes, which also involved lopping off the top floor. The accommodation was intended to house families, although it was subsequently criticised for the small size and limited number of bedrooms. But Hodgkinson was also clear that prospective residents would need to be what he called 'urbanites' – the implication being that they would be out and about a good deal, enjoying what a city has to offer, and likely to spend less time at home than non-urbanites.

The ground and first floor flats, located in the perimeter blocks only, comprise mainly bedsits and one-bed flats, intended mainly for elderly and frail tenants, many of whom will be provided for within the sheltered housing system (ie they have an alarm system to call the resident warden when necessary). There are also store-rooms at these levels, used by residents throughout the building. On the second floor, there are bedsits, one-bed flats and two-bed flats facing onto the street, and, on the opposite side, bedsits and one-bed flats mixed with commercial studios in the main block facing onto the precinct (Fig 30). Levels three to seven have twice the ratio of two-bedroom to one-bedroom flats, and only a very few studios located at the far ends of the blocks. The rare split-level maisonettes span levels three and four, located one at each end of each bay on the street side only of the blocks [Fig 31].

The internal space of all the different types of flat is organised on a 13'6" grid, which is a reduction from the original, more generous 18-ft grid. This span gives the width of a living-room and of two bedrooms side by side. The basic plan comprises a front door opening off the access walkway, and into a small entrance hall, 6' x 6' (reduced to a narrow passage in bedsits), with kitchen and living-room, divided by a shoulder-height partition, opening to one side, and bathroom, WC, and bedroom(s) to the other [Fig 32]. In the maisonettes, the bedrooms, bathroom and WC are located on the upper level, with a staircase rising from the entrance hall. There are substantial built-in cupboards located in the hall, and in the master bedroom.

Kitchens and bathrooms have small windows opening onto the access galleries, some of which have been blocked up, but all the living-rooms in the flats have big 'greenhouse' style windows, with an area of raked glazing on top, and glazing the full width of the space below, with metal-framed casements [Fig 33]. These look out either onto the precinct, for flats on that side (originally termed the 'the main block'), or over Marchmont Street/ Brunswick Square, for flats on the street side (termed the 'perimeter block') of Foundling Court/ O'Donnell Court respectively. The two-bedroom and one-bedroom flats all have balconies, accessed from both the living-room and bedrooms via glazed balcony doors, but the bedsits have no balconies. The maisonettes do not have the greenhouse style windows, but instead they enjoy French doors opening onto larger terraces.

The flats were not intended to be futuristic or even particularly modern in character, but simply 'homely'. The original plans, drawing on medieval traditions of

house-design, provided for a more open-plan organisation of the space, with bedrooms opening directly off the living-room, and bathrooms directly off bedrooms, reducing extraneous circulation space and number of doors – as one resident, points out, a two-bedroom flat has 16 doors in it, including doors to the built-in storage, 10 of which open into the small entrance hall. The more cellular, self-contained disposition of the rooms echoes what would be found in a standard terraced cottage of the last 200 years.

When the flats were first handed over to tenants, they were painted cream, fitted with brown linoleum flooring and PVC skirtings, a set of fairly basic, floor-level kitchen cupboards and sink, and equivalent bathroom fittings [Fig 34]. There were also brown paper concertina blinds to pull down over the raked glazing of the living-room windows, and glass lampshades, some of which can still be seen. The doors were hollow, ‘not brilliant’, but one aspect of the original fitting-out which really stands out for its high quality and modern design today is the stainless steel door furniture, made by a Swedish manufacturer, Svenn. The metal-frame Crittall glazing system would have been advanced for its time, but is now in need of repair and upgrading with double-glazed, solar-protected units, and the other feature of the flats which at the time stood out in comparison to other housing as quite ‘high-tech’ was the ‘blow-out’ hot air heating system, delivered via grilles in the living-room and bedrooms [Fig 35], which was considered superior to standard hot water central heating systems, and led to a large proportion of the Brunswick being designated as sheltered housing for the elderly and frail. This system has however proved to be problematic in its operation and effectiveness, and is due to be replaced soon with a conventional hot-water system and radiators to all flats.

1.4.3 the sample: details of households interviewed

Out of my consolidated group of respondents at the Brunswick, all but one were white, of English, Irish, or Italian origin, and one who was of Indian origin had been brought up in England. Seven were or had been professionals (two retired teachers, three architects, a structural engineer, and three journalists), three were artists, and four worked or had done in service industries (printing, floristry, nursing, home-care, shelter-housing supervision, caretaking). Two suffered from long-term illness. Overall, ten households were made up of people who were retired (though engaged in voluntary work), or not working. Seven households which I shall term ‘original’ had

moved in when the building was first opened, in 1972, another six were ‘long-term’ residents (around 20 years’ standing), and the remaining six were relatively recent ‘newcomers’ (up to 10 years residence). None were so-called ‘yuppies’ (less than five years residence). Nine households comprised single women living on their own, five of whom had one grown-up child, four being childless. Two households consisted of a professional couple with young children, and one a childless professional couple, who later split up; while one of the ‘original’ households comprised a retired couple (the wife currently working again as a school dinner lady), living with one of their two grown-up sons at home – a man in his ‘30s, and one of the ‘long-term’ households was a couple with their two teenage girls. Both of the latter households dropped out of the research process at the last stage, as did the two residents suffering long-term illness.

Brief summary of core households:

R1: June

Single retired woman, a former primary school teacher with a specialism in French, never married and no children. Former secretary to the TRA. Brought up in Nottingham. ‘Original’ household, lives in O’Donnell Court looking over precinct, started as a council tenant but bought her flat under right-to-buy, despite her principles. Had previously lived in the area round Cromer Street, prior to that in a ‘settlement’ in Bermondsey. Had also spent some time teaching in Newfoundland many years ago. Rents out her second bedroom to a lodger, usually a local student. She visits the theatre a lot, and does various types of voluntary work including being a churchwarden at the local church of St Pancras.

R3: Lorraine

Married and still living with her husband, and one of her two grown-up sons. The other son has moved to Essex. Worked as home-carer before retirement, has recently taken up employment again as a dinner lady at a primary school in Covent Garden. Brought up in the neighbourhood, ‘original’ household, moved to Brunswick as council tenants when newly-married and pregnant with her first son from a flat in Drury Lane. Subsequently moved to top-floor flat in Founding Court which they bought from council. She attends TRA meetings regularly, where she is known as one of the ‘Three Graces’, a group of very vocal women who have all lived there for many years.

R4: Bob and Jean

Brother and sister in their 80s, long-term residents, moved in to Foundling Court as council tenants with their elderly mother, from a flat in Rosebery Avenue. They had also lived at various other addresses in the Holborn area. Bob worked as a print manager for the Times before the industrial disputes which led him to take early retirement. Since then has worked as a city guide and lecturer on local history. His sister worked as an embroideress, from home, for Ede and Ravenscroft from the time she left school, and cared for their mother until her death. They bought their flat following Bob's early retirement. She is largely housebound due to arthritis.

R5: Lynn

Single woman with a grown-up son who has recently left home and become a fireman. She has never lived in the flat in O'Donnell Court with his father or any other partner. She works for Camden Council as an advisory teacher to the borough's nurseries. She came to live at the Brunswick as an 'original' council tenant from the comparable Alexandra Road estate in Swiss Cottage, and subsequently bought her flat. She is not a Londoner by birth. She has taken up voluntary work as a campaigner for Palestine issues, and is considering moving from the Brunswick due to the changes that have occurred there, and because she is thinking about radically changing her way of life.

R6: Rob and Francoise (subsequently Amanda)

Rob and Francoise moved in to Foundling Court as leaseholder 'newcomers' together, having shared a flat which they owned in Brixton for many years before, and then briefly rented in Stoke Newington. They are in their late '40s, and have no children. Rob comes from Southampton, and Francoise was from Paris. He is a structural engineer, and she worked sporadically as a freelance journalist. They were very active in Brunswick affairs, and he has been Chairman of the TRA for the last 5 years. Francoise organised an art event at the Brunswick. During my research they split up, and Francoise returned to Paris. Rob lived in the flat for a short time on his own, but started a relationship with another woman, a younger Hong-Kong Chinese woman who works in the same firm, and it appeared that she was increasingly living with him at the flat.

R10: Lana

Lives alone in her flat in Foundling Court, but has a grown-up son, two grandchildren, and a partner who lives in another flat in the Brunswick (James), whom she has also

been caring for during the last few years following a serious accident. She is an artist and university teacher, and moved to the Brunswick as a 'newcomer' leaseholder from Notting Hill Gate in west London, where she had lived for many years. Lana has Indian roots, but was brought up in the north of England. She is around 60 years old, describes herself as having been a 'hippy' parent, and has recently had a heart attack which led to her taking a term off work.

R11: Conal

Lives alone in his flat in Foundling Court now, but moved in with his late partner, an artist who suffered a long terminal illness and died a few years ago, and initially her teenage daughter. He now has a girlfriend who lives elsewhere in north London. He is an architect, with two grown-up sons, an ex-wife who lives in Italy, and two grandchildren. He runs his own one-man practice from his flat, and teaches part-time. He is a 'newcomer' leaseholder, who is a good friend with the architect of the Brunswick, Patrick Hodgkinson, and taught with him for some time at Bath University. He had a dog almost from the first days at the Brunswick, which was run over towards the end of my research. His background is Irish.

R12: Annie and Anthony

A professional couple who moved in to Foundling Court as newcomer leaseholders. She is a journalist and editor of a design magazine, he is an architect with his own practice based at an office in north London. She was brought up in Camden Town, and her father was an architect who worked on the Brunswick project as assistant to Hodgkinson. Annie did a foundation course in fine art and painting, and took a degree in architecture in London, then moved to Edinburgh and Birmingham to do journalism. Anthony was born in Nairobi, and his father was an air-traffic controller, but when the family moved to England they became publicans and moved around a succession of pubs in the suburbs of west London, ending up in Hampton Wick. He studied architecture in Kingston, before coming to live in central London in various different places. As a couple they initially bought an ex-council flat in a 1970s building in Clerkenwell, before moving to the Brunswick. They both work full-time, and had two daughters under 6, but during the course of the research Annie became pregnant with another child, and was preparing to take another spell of maternity leave.

R13: Kevin

Supervisor caretaker at the Brunswick and long-term resident of Foundling Court with his wife, a social worker for Westminster Council, and teenage son. They both come from Ireland originally, and go back to Ireland every summer. Formerly lived in Hackney on a 'rough' council estate in short-term accommodation. During the time they have lived at the Brunswick his wife studied for an MA degree, before taking up her current full-time job. Kevin is around at home during the week more than his wife, due to the site-based nature of his work and regularly cooks the evening meal. Their son left his secondary school in the borough of Westminster during the research period, and worked briefly in the new Waitrose before taking up a university place in Bristol. Kevin and his wife have not taken up their right-to-buy, because it would conflict with their social and political convictions.

R14: Ruth

Described to me by Kevin as an 'ex-communist'. Originally comes from Totnes in Devon, where her father was a teacher at Dartington Hall, the liberal arts college. He also ran the Children's Theatre Service in Devon during the Second World War. Her mother had trained as an architect. The family moved to Hackney in London when she was still a child, where she missed the countryside. She studied at Northern Polytechnic and lived in Islington during the week, south London at weekends. She worked for the International Students Union and lived in Prague for two years. At some point she moved to a house on the edge of the Regents Park Estate in Camden and had a daughter. She was relocated to Foundling Court as an 'original' council tenant when the council compulsorily purchased the house she was living in to build the Regents Park Estate. She moved when she was in her early 30s and her daughter was one, and has lived in a maisonette there since. She worked for the post office and on a Labour newspaper until it folded. Her daughter now has a child of her own and had recently moved out of the maisonette where they had been staying and away to Brighton. Ruth now has a lodger who helps her run the Socialist Film Co-Op. She is also involved in many other left-wing organisations and activist groups, has been chairman of KCBNA, and a secretary of the Brunswick TRA when it was first set up. She has travelled widely, including to Cuba and Palestine in connection with her political interests. She has not bought her flat, for political reasons.

R15: Stephanie

Single, about 50 years old, with a grown-up daughter who has recently moved out to live in student halls of residence while studying nearby at UCL. Her mother was Dutch, and she had a Catholic upbringing in Surrey. She is a long-term council tenant who was rehoused in Foundling Court with her baby daughter, from a flat in Swiss Cottage, when she fled from her violent partner who was subsequently killed in a road accident. She had previously worked as a secretary for estate agents and as a shop assistant, but has been unemployed ever since she moved in, although she became a mature student at London School of Economics while her daughter was still a baby, and gained a degree in anthropology. She became very involved in community issues in the neighbourhood and at the Brunswick, but is no longer involved, due to ill health. She suffers from epilepsy.

R16: Giulia

Single, in her '80s, a long-term council tenant housed in Foundling Court on her retirement from work as a nursing auxiliary in local hospitals. Prior to that had lived in hospital accommodation. Originally from Italy, where she left school at elementary level and looked after her two brothers after the death of their parents at the ages of 46 and 48, before leaving for England at the age of 35. She started out working as a cleaner at the Italian Hospital in Queen's Square. One of her brothers has recently died, and one is still living in Italy. The deceased brother used to come and stay with her in London for quite long periods of time, and she herself visits her other brother every year for a period of several weeks, despite her recent heart attack. She considered returning to Italy for good on her retirement, but wasn't happy and came back to London where she was housed in a hostel before moving into her flat. She has Communist sympathies, goes to church, and used to participate in various local activities for the elderly.

R17: Susan

Now living in the Foundling Court flat with her partner, and during the research period became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. Moved in as a newcomer leaseholder with a gay male flatmate, and when he moved out to another local ex-council flat replaced him with a woman flatmate. Susan is an architect, in her mid to late 30s, who has been working for a large practice, as is her partner and her previous flatmates. She previously lived in a very similar development, St George's Fields at Marble Arch, in a flat rented from the daughter of the architect she worked for at the

time. She sat on the Community Working Party set up by Allied London to facilitate communication between the different parties during the development of their proposals for the Brunswick, but withdrew from it because it was too much like work. She has been keen to get involved in community affairs at the Brunswick, and has set up the Gardening Club with Gloria.

R18: Gloria

Single, in her 60s, with a grown-up daughter who has recently become a well-known TV comic. She is an original council tenant who was rehoused to O'Donnell Court from a local flat in Great Ormond Street, along with her mother, sister and aunt (in different flats). She was brought up in the area, and runs a florist shop nearby. She comes from a family of florists, who all worked around the west end. She has never married or lived with a partner in her flat, but she cared for both her mother and her disabled sister who came to live with her and her daughter in the flat one after the other. She attends Brunswick meetings and runs the Gardening Club with Susan.

R19 James (partner of Lana)

Single, divorced or separated from his wife before he moved into the Brunswick from nearby Regents Square, as an original council tenant. Remains a council tenant, though has tried to buy his flat, but, according to partner Lana, was stalled in his efforts by the council. A well-known photographer in the world of art and architecture, who had a serious bicycle accident in which he suffered brain damage. Since then he has been re-learning how to talk, so I did not interview him in the same way as the other respondents. His relationship with Lana predated her own move to the Brunswick. She briefly stayed with him in his two-bedroom flat in Foundling Court, which he has used as darkroom, office, and photographic studio since moving there, but they decided they did not want to share their living arrangements on a permanent basis.