

Chapter 4 **The Brunswick as Social Space**

Introduction

The previous two chapters set out the complex circumstances and contested nature of the Brunswick's evolution and materialisation as a powerful aesthetic image, which demanded attention over and above its purpose as a setting for local life in a dense, central urban context. As an acclaimed work of architecture it was critically located within the narrative of Modernist ideology, while conceived by the architect as a homage to specific national and local historic building traditions. But it also revealed itself over time, and as society itself evolved in the post-war period, to have inherent structural and programmatic flaws which needed to be addressed, or 'mended'. As a result of that process, some aspect of its architectural and ideological vision has arguably been lost, in particular the idea of the building as an integrated mix of public and private spaces. To an extent, this has crystallised a differentiation between the notion of the Brunswick as an image which may be repackaged and manipulated to contrasting effect and purpose, and the reality of the Brunswick as a lived social space, or habitat, experienced at a sensory level as the physical framework of daily life.

The following two chapters lay out the results of ethnographic research conducted at the Brunswick (see 1.3.2), interpreted and organised to illustrate a concept of the building, experienced 'from the inside', less as a unified, objectifiable, architectural image than as a subjectively-perceived, sensory mass of segmented and integrated spaces, surfaces and lines of demarcation, which mirror a social landscape built of multiple narratives of individual identity. Chapter 4 focuses primarily on the relationships between public and private spaces and identities, the boundaries that demarcate them, and the ways in which these boundaries are sustained and manipulated. It goes on to consider how these disparate relationships and spaces come together as 'council estate', as a particular form of social and physical identity within the city which is, on the one hand, diametrically opposed in its cultural implications to the phenomenon of the 'architectural icon', and its transcendent, fetish-like power over the imaginary; and yet, on the other hand, is inextricably connected to it by virtue of their mutual association with the Modern Movement tradition.

Chapter 5 focusses more particularly on the space of the home itself, as the point of most intense and personal engagement and identification both with the larger habitat of the Brunswick and the city beyond, and the space in which the greatest personal autonomy is exercised in terms of expressing and representing the social connections which generate a narrative of personal identity within a particular physical environment. The contrasting ways in which people conceive of and represent their ideas of home eloquently express notions of identity, direction and belonging in the world, and highlight the reality of the home space less as a discrete, physically-bounded entity defined by its walls, but rather as a fluid concept, marked out by material signs, within an expanded and expansive notion of habitat, layered with cultural meaning.

4.1. Layers of spatial and social existence

4.1.1 inside and outside spaces

'Mary said a wonderful thing when somebody asked her about living in the Brunswick Centre... she said, "It's wonderful, I never see anybody". I suddenly realised along with that, that the emptiness of the place is actually one of its attractions... you'd think it was slightly menacing. But it's not...'

Conal bought his flat on the sixth floor in 1994. Both he and his partner Mary, an artist, were divorced when they moved in together with her teenage daughter, and shortly afterwards they bought a dog which became a much-loved companion. Mary has since died, the daughter has moved out, and the dog was tragically run over shortly after my last interview with Conal. As he says, *'there were three – four really – of us'* at the beginning, and he *'would have to find whatever little space there was'*, but now he lives in the two-bedroom flat alone, using one room as an office where sometimes an assistant will come and work with him.

Conal maintains a variety of social relations with friends and collaborators outside his home, and also has a girlfriend who lives in her own house in north London. Although he mostly works at home, he has part-time teaching jobs elsewhere, and visits Greece on a regular basis with friends. He has been trying to buy a plot of land there on which to build a house, although this has recently fallen through. His flat is full of objects and images which prompt a ready verbal narrative about different people and places, extending back many years.

Social relationships and interactions are evidently important to Conal, both within and beyond the family (he has two grown-up sons of his own and two grandchildren), but he loves the emptiness inside the Brunswick. This has not always been the case: *'I think I've grown to love the building.... I think I'm much more appreciative of it now than I was when I first moved in'*. It may have been his partner's appreciation, during her illness, which initially opened his eyes to the virtues of its quietness and emptiness. The Brunswick became for her a haven of peace and quiet, and their flat a place where she could paint on increasingly contemplative themes. But now, the fact that the atrium spaces at the heart of the housing blocks remain quiet, uninhabited zones is a great relief to Conal in comparison to the business of the newly refurbished shopping centre. The empty atrium provides an effective buffer from the hubbub of people he describes as shopaholics and caffeine addicts (a not so oblique reference to the alcoholics and drug addicts they have replaced) around the new retail and restaurant outlets he can see from his windows.

Conal himself has no interest in these sorts of activities, but, more importantly, he dislikes the fact that the newcomers are people *'who you don't know!'*. The relationship between the precinct space and the living-room windows of the flats looking over the precinct is acoustically very intimate, even though the line of vision is across towards the windows of the opposite block, or the upper storeys of the older buildings on Bernard Street, and up to the sky, not down. To get a view of the precinct you need to stand up and look down with some deliberation.

For these reasons, it has become an especial pleasure for Conal to be able to walk out of his flat into the empty space of the atrium where he unlikely to bump into anybody that he doesn't know, nor even anyone that he does know. As a person who does not depend on chance encounters or 'gossip opportunities', as another resident puts it, to sustain a social existence, it suits him very well. Moreover, it generates an extended zone of privacy and belonging around his flat which perhaps compensates to some extent for the small size of the flat itself. His sense of proprietorship within his own territory is effectively extended by his awareness of his own flat as part of a more global scheme, which he is particularly able to visualise and hold in his mind's eye because he is an architect and very familiar with the plans of the Brunswick. His reiteration of the term *'end bedroom'*, to describe the second bedroom where he has his office, implies an awareness of linearity and horizontality in the spatial dimensions of his life, and a tangible sense of the extent of the three-and-a-half bays

of the building, and its overall structural framework, beyond the brick-built party walls of his own space. So although another resident describes Conal's flat as '*very interior*' (compared to her own), in terms of the way he has done it up, his own perception of the space seems more expansive.

Conal's enjoyment of the empty atrium space also stems from the fact that it shows that security is working at the Brunswick, and that undesirable intruders have been successfully excluded. One of his main points of disagreement with the original design of the building is the idea of the permeable 'internal street' connected to the public spaces outside via numerous open access points. He believes it was a big mistake to underestimate the importance of security, although at the time when the Brunswick was built, the social problems later to be presented by alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes entering the housing blocks were not foreseen.

For most residents, it is the street outside, beyond the security doors to the blocks, where social interactions with local friends and acquaintances occur, in and outside the shops, but in contrast to the traditional residential street, not immediately outside their homes. Stephanie, who is largely housebound, tells me she is lucky to live on the 'outside' of the Brunswick, because it looks over the street and the pub, rather than onto the precinct and the opposite block, and so gives her some sense of connection to the city without having to go anywhere. She says she used to enjoy the atrium space as well, until they sealed up the 'view-holes' to the outside, and secured the entrances, because it felt like being 'outside' without going out, but in its current, internalised form she finds it oppressive. But Conal, who is connected to the city beyond the Brunswick by a strong network of social connections, prefers to maintain everyday, local social contacts at a distance from his own front door. As a dog-owner, he experiences the local squares as another context for sociable exchanges with others walking their dogs, including residents whom he is much less likely to meet inside the boundaries of the Brunswick itself.

4.1.2 local and global communities

The floor on which Conal lives, together with the top floor above it, and the floor below, are perceived by others who live there as having a strong sense of 'community' compared to the lower floors of the Brunswick. Conal does not really refer to his neighbours, and although some of them do visit socially, it is because he also happens to have a relationship with them outside his Brunswick life, rather than

because they are neighbours per se. In fact, there is a higher proportion of ‘newcomers’ (see 1.4.3) on the upper floors. Some of these people, who tend to have good jobs and wide social networks extending beyond the immediate locality, have chosen to invest in the local community they believe they have found at the Brunswick as a kind of project, partly because they have not previously experienced that kind of life, lived at local level within the global city.

Susan, who initially shared her flat with a flatmate, but has now established a more conventional household set-up with her boyfriend and their baby, says that ‘*we genuinely didn’t know our neighbours*’ where she lived before (in the St George’s Fields housing development of similar design to the Brunswick, near Marble Arch). By contrast, ‘*the community’s much better here.*’ She describes the drawn-out, unusually intimate, process of buying the flat from the elderly couple who lived there as like ‘*buying a flat from your granny*’, and she also refers to her neighbour, Elsie, who would invite them round for meals and ask favours of them, in the same terms. When she took her maternity leave, and started to see her Brunswick neighbours in the street during the day, for the first time, there was much excitement at the realisation she was going to have a baby, because, they said, ‘*we haven’t had a baby up here [on the upper floors] for years!*’ There is a real sense of Susan’s ambitions to put down roots in what she perceives as ‘*a very close community*’, which is paralleled, in both a literal and metaphorical sense, by the initiative she has taken in setting up a ‘gardening club’ with one of the older, ‘original’ residents.

Susan never speaks of ‘empty’ spaces at the Brunswick, and is enjoying the busyness of the precinct, especially now that she has given up work to look after her baby, and regularly meets up, outside the new Starbucks, with the other new mothers for whom it provides a meeting-place. Released from her office day away from the Brunswick, her world has become geographically more localised, and simultaneously the precinct, which she would not formerly have used that much, has become a more attractive and less obviously ‘local’ place to be, compensating for that loss of daily engagement with the wider city. By contrast, Conal, who works from home, has no need or reason to engage with the activities of the precinct during the day apart from shopping at Waitrose, and therefore finds it disruptive and disturbing.

Susan’s perception of the Brunswick community seems somewhat idealised, however, compared to the sentiments offered by some longer-term residents there. She is not alone among newcomers to embrace a community ethos, since Lana also

relates how she abandoned her home in Notting Hill Gate to mix with more ‘*ordinary, everyday*’ people at the Brunswick. Whereas Notting Hill had been taken over by ‘*flash cars, flash people.... Sunday supplement people*’, the Brunswick represented ‘*everyday life. Such a mixture.*’ Whereas Notting Hill was highly defined in territorial terms, as ‘west London’, Bloomsbury is, to Lana, territorially ‘*neutral*’, delightfully undefinable within a partisan geographical hierarchy of London’s different areas, but at the same time ‘*the centre of the universe*’, the gateway to a network of global social relationships which are embodied for her by the Indian family members she used to meet with as a child in this area.

This apotheosis of the everyday and the local in the form of the Brunswick estate by some of those newcomers who have ready access to other, non-local social networks, is embodied in the narrative of one long-term resident, Gloria, who is part of a highly ‘emplaced’ family network going back several generations, and has a strong sense of attachment to the local area: ‘*basically my roots are here, and deep are the roots*’. In common with many other first generation residents, she was relocated to O’Donnell Court at the Brunswick from her home in a local street (Great Ormond Street), along with neighbours and relatives, including her aunt and her mother. She says that ‘*one thing that Camden [council] ... had the good sense [to do]*’, was to allocate the new housing so that it was occupied from the outset by ‘*well, a lot of the people you’d known all your life.*’ Her three immediate neighbours from Great Ormond Street live ‘*across the landing, and ... up the stairs*’, she says, pointing to a notion of the Brunswick as a big house (cf 6.1.2), and her aunt lives ‘*over the way*’ in Foundling Court.

Notwithstanding the close presence of friends and relatives, ‘*you could live here for a year and not see anybody*’. Gloria accepts that as ‘*the nature of flats*’, defining neighbours as people who are ‘*there if you need them*’, but not necessarily to interact with on a daily basis. They are also there when you don’t particularly want them, like her immediate next-door neighbour, whose flat smells so bad it has to be cleaned regularly by the council, and whose noisy television has forced Gloria to confront him, announcing ‘*I’m your neighbour*’ as a declaration of reciprocal obligations.

Ruth, another of the ‘original’ council tenants to move in, defines neighbours as essentially the people who live immediately either side of you, beyond whom her social interactions within the Brunswick seem fairly limited, even though she chaired

the TRA in its early days. She ‘plant-sits’ for one of them, who uses his flat pretty much as a London pied-a-terre, a not uncommon situation at the Brunswick. Ruth lives in one of the rare end-of-bay maisonettes in Foundling Court, spanning the third and fourth floors. She reveals that originally there was an idea to put a second front door in on the upper floor. She says she likes the idea that *‘you’d have neighbours up there as well’*, the implication being that neighbours are defined horizontally rather than vertically, in direct relationship to the main entrance and exit point of the home. Her comment suggests there is little vertical social interaction, ie between floors, at the Brunswick.

Although retired, Ruth has a busy life outside the Brunswick as a proactive member of various activist groups and campaigns, and therefore does not need to feel part of a ‘community’ within the Brunswick. When she says *‘we’re such a good community’* her reference is to members of the wider local community who got involved with the campaign to save the Post Office in Marchmont Street. Her social life *‘is tied up with the film shows* [organised at the Renoir cinema in the precinct by the London Film Co-Op, of which she is Membership Secretary] *and book stall’*, held to raise funds for the Socialist Worker *Morning Star* at the local Neighbourhood Association, where she sits on the management committee (formerly as chairman). When her daughter was a child she was also active in campaigning for the local nursery and childcare provision. As a result, she is well-known locally, and occasionally hosts meetings of fellow committee members and campaigners in her flat. But her best friend is a Costa Rican woman who now lives in Mexico, while her interactions with her female flatmate are dismissed in the words *‘we pass each other fleetingly’*. She seems to be unaware of recent initiatives to improve the Brunswick taken by ‘newcomers’ on the TA, although she does attend TA meetings, and made some efforts independently to organise transport for the elderly and infirm after the supermarket in the precinct closed, forcing residents to do their grocery shopping elsewhere.

Ruth’s outlook is essentially framed by global political agendas, and she has recently visited Palestine as part of a consciousness-raising initiative, even though she also engages with the issues that concern her at a geographically local level. When another resident, Stephanie, complains that the Brunswick is *‘the most unfriendly place I’ve ever lived’*, it reflects the fact that many residents have less interest in engaging with the immediate context of neighbours and fellow inhabitants than in

their personal social interests and contacts beyond the Brunswick, except when the debate around the future of the building itself refocuses their attention. The atrium space is empty, because residents are having their conversations with other people elsewhere. But Stephanie, who *'used to be involved with community things, but I can't cope with them any more'* (due to illness), believes it is because the design militates against social interaction in the public spaces. Conversations resonate throughout the A-frame, and it is impossible to walk two abreast on the walkways because they are too narrow. The terraces have been abandoned as a social arena, because of complaints about noise and fears of their misuse.

Like Ruth, Stephanie is also a single mother her brought up her daughter at the Brunswick, and was involved with campaigns to save a nursery (not the same one). This led to a friendship with another Brunswick mother who worked there. Stephanie also ran the TA during the 90s, but she doesn't seem to have good friends at the Brunswick, while her contacts with the social world beyond it seem to be conducted largely by email. She says she misses the *'gossip opportunities'* provided by the old supermarket, but the implication is that she prefers to skim the surface of social relations rather than engage too deeply in them.

Stephanie describes Brunswick residents as *'just ordinary people'*, who feel *'repressed by the building'*. But whereas Lana and other newcomers such as Annie and Anthony, who have extensive social networks in the city beyond, and have come to the Brunswick specifically to find a 'local community', seem to equate 'ordinary' with 'interesting', Stephanie (who was rehoused here by the council) criticises the majority as *'ignorant'*, and *'xenophobic'*. She highlights the fact that she is not one of those, despite also being a council tenant, by mentioning that *'it's surprising the number of people with degrees on the estate'*, including herself. Her reference to the place as an 'estate', which is quite rare at the Brunswick, helps to evoke the territorial, 'xenophobic' image of the place that she conjures up. According to her, most Brunswick residents would never venture north of the Euston Road - and, conversely, the Brunswick is *'one area George [her ex-boyfriend] wouldn't go'*, since he lives in the north of the borough, which means that Stephanie is safe here. But Stephanie suggests that Brunswick residents' 'xenophobia' even extends to seeing their estate as fundamentally superior to surrounding local housing estates, despite its chronic maintenance problems and rundown appearance. By contrast, accounts such as Gloria's, which stress the beauty, history, and *'upmarket'* character of the local area,

highlight a sense of pride on the part of long-established locals in their neighbourhood generally, rather than suggesting any real xenophobia, and Stephanie's accusation against them may perhaps reflect her own feelings of isolation from the city at large, especially when so many other residents stress the advantages of living at the Brunswick in terms of its proximity to the attractions and amenities of central London: *'on top of everything'*, as one first-generation council tenant puts it.

4.1.3 perceptions of difference

The concept of some kind of social hierarchy within the Brunswick itself is hinted at by many residents, but less in terms of the educational qualifications which mean so much to Stephanie, or even of ownership v. council tenancy, than of simple longevity of residence: a temporal rather than spatial dimension. Even the educated Stephanie has fallen prey to this sense of precedence. Having been resident there 18 years herself, she is indignant that a disabled woman tenant who regularly criticises the leaseholders has *'only been here about 5 years - you'd think she'd been here for ever!'*

And again, the otherwise globally-minded activist, Ruth, who has refused to buy her flat from the council for ethical and political reasons, states with quiet certainty and pride that she was *'one of the first to move in [in 1971]... this corner of the estate was the first bit to be finished'*. June, who was relocated to O'Donnell Court when it opened from housing in Coram Street that was under refurbishment, and has since bought her flat at the council tenants' discount, expresses a sense of deliberate detachment from the 'newcomers': *'I know who Conal is vaguely, but I couldn't identify him out of two or three people who I think may be Conal'*. She makes a clear distinction between herself and *'people buying into the Brunswick as a proper purchase'*, saying that *'the choice they made was very, very different from mine'*, and therefore they have *'a different concept of their flat within the Brunswick from me, because I just came as a tenant who had a transfer'*. While she also used to be involved with the TA, and the early campaigns to save the Brunswick from redevelopment, she seems to have withdrawn as a result of those new and 'different' people making their presence felt, and she is somewhat disparaging about what she perceives as their lack of knowledge about the estate: *'the people who have taken charge now are on the whole not people who know much about the history of the*

estate.... Sometimes I try and put them in the picture but I don't think they appreciate it.'

For June, and others, it is a lack of knowledge and experience that essentially differentiates the newcomers from the old-timers, rather than better education or greater affluence – although the 'choice' which that has enabled also leads to a different kind of attitude towards the way the new people inhabit the flats. She bought her flat simply because she thinks it would have been stupid not to, given the very low price, although she didn't really approve of the right-to-buy legislation (cf 1.4.1). Non-buyers like Ruth, and Kevin the caretaker, have been loyal to their political ideals but Kevin sometimes sharply regrets it – *'if I'd have projected 20 years on, think, this is my passport back to Ireland... I lie awake for a couple of nights!'*. By contrast, other first-generation council tenants were persuaded to buy at the large discount offered, essentially with their children's futures in mind. As Lorraine puts it, they bought *'for when we get old and grey, if we want to sell we've got the money in the bank... the two boys they can do what they want with the flat'*. Gloria's only daughter has become an extremely successful stand-up comedian and is unlikely to need the flat or the money in future, but Gloria still likes to think that she will appreciate the legacy out of sentimental attachment to her childhood home - her 'roots', in Gloria's words.

Gloria believes the newcomers are a good thing because they have knowledge of a different kind – not local knowledge, but 'expertise' in specialist fields, especially architecture and engineering, which they can bring in from outside to bear on internal Brunswick issues. Furthermore they 'work hard' on the Brunswick's behalf. But ultimately she disagrees with them as to what should be done at the Brunswick, and she won't bow to the new hegemony of taste which is threatened by their increasing influence. Lorraine, too, is conscious of a difference of 'taste' between her and the newcomers, though she can't quite define it: *'a lot of the people who've bought flats are sort of ... more intelligent, no, what's the word, la-di-da to me... very nice people... they've started taking over, and of course they do more, they know what they're talking about...'*. While she has also bought her flat, she draws a clear distinction between the incomers and old-timers like herself, who *'feel like we're part of the survivors'*. From her point of view, social changes at the Brunswick have made her feel less at home in a place where she, like Gloria, knew many of her neighbours when she moved in as a newly-married, pregnant young woman who had

grown up nearby. For her, the answer might be to move out, right out of London, but she doesn't know if she could do it, because: *'I've lived round here all my life.'*

However, the social stratification of the Brunswick is perceived more in terms of different 'cliques', or 'circles', than as a defined hierarchy, based on education, taste, or wealth, and these cliques are largely understood in terms of their connections to the city beyond the housing blocks. Stephanie describes the *'young professionals'* who have a certain *'level of education and aesthetic sense'*, and are starting families at the Brunswick, as having *'their own clique'* which becomes visible in the context of the Coram's Fields.. The children's playground constitutes a stage on which the social dynamics of the local area, including the Brunswick, are manifested in easily-read groupings of families who use the park at different times and in different ways.

One of these 'young professionals' refers to *'mums that knew each other from the park'* in relation to a different set from her own, and elaborates: *'I don't think you can talk about a single community at all here [at the Brunswick].... There are a lot of different circles and groups here.'* Lorraine suggests a key distinction is ethnic, between white families and Indian families, who stay away from the playground until the evening, after the white families have gone home. She says the problem is that the Indians *'didn't want to mix with our children'*, not the other way around. Then there is the class distinction between the young professionals and the so-called *'Holborn mafia'* – working-class white families from the area around Lambs Conduit Street who formerly had a strong representation within the upper floors of Foundling Court, and made their presence felt, as Stephanie recalls: *'Mari had a party for her daughter's 18th, and the Holborn mafia on the 5th and 6th floors were screaming and shouting, banging on the door, making more noise than the party....'* But there also territorial distinctions within the local working-class white community: Stephanie describes another occasion when *'Maggie across the way'* died, and streams of 'Covent Garden' people came up to the flat. She underlines the class dimension of social dynamics here, in her comment that *'working-class people'* will save up their whole lives for funerals organised on this scale, ideally with a horse-drawn glass hearse, with the intention that *'the whole neighbourhood will hear about it'*.

These kinds of local allegiances connect different groups within the Brunswick to specific areas of the city, but others almost deliberately avoid local attachment in favour of a more global social sweep. Gloria loves to be recognised and acknowledged – *'it's nice to recognise someone when you walk out... or be*

recognised... It's one of the most important things in life to be acknowledged' – but Kevin, partly because of the nature of his job, jealously guards his anonymity, and avoids going to local pubs where he might be accosted by tenants wanting to talk about 'work' matters. For him, Ireland, his place of birth, is a place where *'it just seems easy to slip into friendships'*, whereas his home at the Brunswick is essentially a place of work where it is important to retain a certain detachment. June will spend many weekends visiting friends who are scattered around the country. While she has one good friend living 'up the road', with whom she goes to the theatre, she says she is *'friendly with'* people at the Brunswick, but has nobody she would count as a 'real' friend because they do not share her interest in theatre. She is emphatic that she conceptualises her 'home' as being in 'central London', where the theatres and galleries are situated, and not at the Brunswick per se.

Giulia is an elderly Italian lady who has lived at the Brunswick for 18 years, since her retirement as a nursing auxiliary, and she also values highly the proximity of her flat to the cultural attractions of central London. She was *'enchanted'* by the accessibility of culture and education in London, compared to her home town in Italy. Although she has had many social relationships within Foundling Court, and has been friendly with some of her fellow immigrant neighbours, including Italians and Poles, they are not the main focus of her social existence. She gives the impression that, despite their shared cultural roots, she stands apart from her Italian neighbours because of her Communist leanings which constitute a more significant cultural difference. She likes to chat to many different kinds of people locally, especially through the local churches, and join in with day trips organised by a local centre for the elderly. The advantage of living at the Brunswick, for some, is that it facilitates these kind of social interactions, without forcing a person to get more deeply involved with local neighbours and their differences of background and outlook.

Similarly, Lynn and June enjoy looking down at people walking through the precinct (a pleasure taken away by the construction of the new canopies) – because *'the view humanises us'*, as Lynn puts it. But at the same time they can keep their distance. Lynn prefers to put her energies into visits to Palestine and learning Arabic, while considering whether it would suit her better to move to a quieter location. Her 21-year old son has recently moved out of the flat, and she finds his sense of emotional detachment from it impressive: he keeps reminding her that *'it's just bricks and mortar'*. Annie and Anthony also maintain a slightly detached view of their

fellow residents at the Brunswick, which they describe objectively as '*a mixed community that has interesting people*'. They invest their real energies in a social network made up of like-minded people, several of whom have bought into other architecturally-interesting council estates, which forms another kind of community transcending territorial boundaries. Their sense of connectedness at the Brunswick is perhaps stronger in relation to the building itself, evaluated in architectural terms, than with the people who inhabit it.

But these different kinds of social worlds, whether locally focussed or more widely extended, provide a common sense of 'emplacement' that distinguishes both long-term and more recent inhabitants from those Brunswick tenants who are '*put in by the council*', people '*from outside London*', who are given priority on the housing list because they would otherwise be homeless. They may be economic immigrants, refugees, recently-released 'offenders', alcoholics, drug addicts or suffering from illness that entitles them to sheltered housing provision. They are perceived as floating, disconnected, and potentially troublesome – a world apart, or perhaps, 'in-between' - precisely because they do not have the kind of social networks that connect other residents to the city beyond their homes and that give them a sense of positive social identity. These people, whose behaviour may be erratic and disruptive, even aggressive, generate a sense of fear and insecurity amongst their fellow residents, because they represent a potential threat to the integrity of the threshold between home and public space, inside and outside, and ultimately a threat to the integrity of 'home' itself, in the broadest sense.

Lorraine indicates a direct correlation between people who don't belong, and their transgressive behaviour in the physical environment, complaining that '*the Indians*', who don't come to meetings and can't speak English, also leave their rubbish in the corridors, and presumably their flats in a mess: '*Imagine what their houses must be like!*' Lana's disabled partner James lived next door to a violent, mentally-ill tenant who confronted him, gained entry to his flat and beat him up. She found it frightening to discover that, while the council's integrating policies in terms of providing accommodation and support for individuals on the margins of society were impressive, they seemed to evaporate when it came to dealing with deviant behaviour which threatened the very existence of a harmonious and integrated community. According to Kevin, the caretaker, there are people '*with binoculars and whatnot*' at the Brunswick, whose apparent social 'displacement' has led them to

indulge in inappropriate behaviour from behind net curtains, transgressing the boundaries of their own domains within the larger framework.

Kevin is fully in favour of the newly-introduced ASBO (Anti-Social Behaviour Order) system, which he believes has contributed to a significant improvement in what was a *'tough environment'*. It effectively enshrines a concept of the 'anti-social', summing up anyone who can be identified as failing to fit in, in the sense of maintaining an orderly, decent home life and visible, functional social relationships extending beyond it. Ultimately the different cliques and circles at the Brunswick are united in their common difference from the displaced persons and loners who come and go, but one of the characteristics of the Brunswick is that it can offer those people a certain anonymity. As Susan says, speaking of her personal inclination to embrace outsiders, specifically refugees, as part of the community she dreams of at the Brunswick: *'I really want them to know how welcome they are here, but you don't know how to meet them...you can't really tell who they are'*. This ambiguity in itself may account for a heightened concern about security, maintaining clear boundaries, and a preference for an empty atrium space.

4.2 Segmentation-integration and 'boundary-work'

The ambiguity that persists in identifying people as insiders or outsiders, due to the still accessible structure of the internal public spaces and the large number of flats, is mirrored in the ambiguity between inside and outside which is manifested in the interior of the housing blocks – in the common parts which lead to the 'inner sanctum' of each individual flat (cf description 1.4.2). The circulation areas were designed to have an external quality, to be an extension of the street below, and not domestic in character. But at the same time, the reduced scale of the front doorways to the flats, and the small and secretive appearance of the kitchen and bathroom windows which look onto the 'street' do not present a public face to the flats within. Significantly, Susan describes herself *'creeping around'* the access galleries which cling to the sides of the atrium, during her hunt for a flat to buy at the Brunswick, not the way one would describe walking down a conventional street.

The residents use different metaphors to describe this inside/outside space, but above all, it is 'unfinished'. As Stephanie says, *'the painting issue is a big one with people who have lived here a long time.'* She says it's not just the spalling, the disrepair of the concrete which is the problem, but the material itself, because it is

cold, and needs to be covered up. She implies there is a desire to internalise, or domesticate, the circulation spaces of the Brunswick through decoration, and she fully supports those people who have taken the initiative and painted their own sections of façade, even though it is against estate regulations, which are sometimes enforced. She finds it outrageous that a '*nasty bossy estate manager*' ordered one resident to remove some terracotta red paintwork around a front door because it was deemed to be the wrong colour.

But the front doors themselves are the domain of residents, at least those residents who have become leaseholders, and many of those have been proactive in replacing or repainting their front doors, and adding new door furniture. Some people have also attached a secondary metal gate, either for increased security, or to allow the front door to be left open for reasons of light and ventilation. These kind of measures personalise and give more presence to the mass-produced doors of the council housing scheme, and clearly mark the threshold between exterior and interior, public and private.

When the Chairman and Secretary of the TRA organised the painting of each ground floor entrance hall to be painted a different colour, it was to enhance residents' identification with their own particular street entrance, help break up the sense of homogenous, perspectival linearity to the block, and provide greater demarcation of interior from exterior (insiders from outsiders) at street level. The secretary explains that he put up a number of colour swabs on the wall in each entrance, but that only a few residents turned up to tick the colour they preferred. It seems apparent that collective decision-making processes in the 'personalisation' or domestication of the blocks have less impact on occupants' awareness of their surroundings and relationships with each other than individual cognition systems built around existing landmarks in the social zone of the street beyond, and smaller, personal details focussed immediately around the entrance to each dwelling.

For most residents, the painting of the hallways is an insignificant contribution to their sense of wellbeing inside the housing blocks, when what they really want is for the entire interior to be painted, as the exterior has been. While the street frontage of the Brunswick now looks smart and cared-for, the interior looks neglected and in a bad state of repair – a kind of non-space between the public realm and private, domestic space. Many residents place great emphasis on the importance of estate rules and regulations, as a means of regulating and controlling this slippery,

ambiguous, threatening space in the only other way possible. Bob, a retired man in his 70s, who has lived in his flat, as a council tenant turned leaseholder, with his sister and formerly his mother for some 20 years, thinks the council should be much more rigorous in setting out and enforcing restrictions properly. He has a friend who lives on an estate in Teddington where leaseholders are presented with a set of 12 clear rules on moving in, which they must abide by. The friend resents the constraints they represent, but Bob says it's exactly what the Brunswick needs: *'The trouble with Camden ... instead of jumping in straight away and saying look, you've been told you do not do that, they sit around... That is not to my way of thinking, not the way of doing things.'* Bob firmly believes that individuals should not be allowed to decorate their own bit of external façade however they want to, or put up lights, or hang out washing to dry where it is visible from the street. Those kind of freedoms represent, to Bob, processes of individual segmentation which eat away at already weakened community integration on the estate. As he says, it's *'a very mixed community, like everywhere else I suppose'*, with many flats sublet on a fairly short-term basis, contributing to a greater transience, and for that very reason there needs to be a clear code of behaviour to hold the place together.

Bob's concern for control and order in the management of the housing blocks is echoed by Lorraine, in her complaints about the behaviour of *'the Indians'*. She is anxious for residents to integrate and join in, and her sense of order and cohesion is threatened when they don't. Her standards of order, cleanliness and cooperation serve to reinforce local loyalties so intense that she classes the whole of O'Donnell Court (the 'other' block) as *'a bit grubby'*, and its inhabitants *'not as friendly'*. Gloria, who is in fact an O'Donnell Court resident with equally high standards of domestic management, also hates it when they are threatened by any kind of ambiguity – when things are not *'made concrete'*, when *'nothing's set in stone'*, as she puts it. This is the essence of the crime committed by the developer of the Brunswick, which fundamentally threatens its integrity. She is also irate at the expenditure of £15,000 on the Groundworks-sponsored 'terraces project', a scheme for new planting (*'old cabbage plants'*) in boxes on the terraces which effectively rode rough-shod over the principle supported by many Brunswick residents, that any occupation of the terrace space was a transgression of residents' privacy. She is morally offended by this project, denouncing it as *'a waste'*, *'disgusting'*, and *'wicked'*, in tones more commonly used to describe examples of the blatant social deviance (including

prostitutes with clients in the rubbish shutes, addicts shooting up in dark corners on the walkways) which has occurred at the Brunswick.

There is a strong desire for effective systems of managerial control and order to provide an integrating force at the Brunswick, and a corresponding fear that the inability or failure of some residents to maintain their own domestic space properly may threaten the integrity of the whole public realm – private disorder seeping out across the boundaries to contaminate the common spaces. Conversely, the order and integrity of the public domain may be supported by the maintenance of rigorous domestic standards by responsible residents. Gloria's flat (in 'grubby' O'Donnell Court) is a set-piece of traditional Edwardian décor and furnishing, in which she has invested a good deal of thought and effort. Her first thought on seeing the living-room was that *'you could certainly express yourself in a room this size, if you couldn't there's something wrong with you...'* She set out to turn the flat into an expression of her personal aesthetic (and moral) values, corresponding with her conviction that the Brunswick as a whole *'should have been a showpiece'* – if only it had been properly finished. Gloria's living-room, complete with grand floral displays from her own shop, effectively represents the ordered and polished showpiece, constructed within her own private space, that she would like the exterior of the Brunswick to be. She is distressed by its incomplete state, when you could do *'a million things'* with its exterior profile, fountains, lights and mirrors, in effect *'the instantaneous show'* that she creates on her own balcony with *'hanging baskets, the lot'*. Thus Gloria attempts to address and compensate for the incomplete and dilapidated state of the exterior by investing a good deal of effort where she is able to, in the orderly presentation of her own flat.

The same concern to assert values of order, respectability, and, particularly functionality, within the interior of their own flat is evidenced at Bob and Jean's address, in Foundling Court. Bob has done a lot of work on the flat focussed around technical issues – heating and ventilation, plumbing, adapting the flat to meet Joan's needs now that she has become much less mobile. He knows exactly how everything works, and he thinks the council should provide a proper induction for people moving in so that everyone understands the heating, plumbing, and wiring as he does. As it is he provides help and advice in an informal capacity to residents struggling with these aspects of their flats, and he is formally involved in discussions with the council around the proposed replacement of the heating system, as well as being chairman of

a newly-formed Leaseholders' Association on the estate. However, the flat he shares with Jean is not only well-maintained and efficient in a technical sense, but also reveals a level of careful aesthetic control. This, says Bob, is Jean's domain: *'I'm just the labourer. The colour scheme, I leave that to her, I just do what she wants.'* But it is not quite true. It was Bob's decision to make an archway over the opening to the kitchen - *'I said to [the carpenter], I want something to shape this....'* - and it was he who was so determined to install an ornamental gas fireplace, against Jean's wishes, that he had it done while she was in hospital recovering from an operation. As he says, *'I'm old-fashioned and I think fireplaces make the central, make the room'*: a fireplace is the proper thing to have.

Bob and Jean's flat has an old-fashioned formality and 'properness' to it, where good quality, rather than economy, is a value to be upheld. The wallpaper was *'very, very expensive. Italian paper [from Selfridges]. I thought it would probably last a long time, and it has.'* It is a priority for them to do things properly, and not cut corners, just as it should be, but isn't, in the management and maintenance of the Brunswick as a whole. But maintaining an image of order and carefully controlled boundaries within their own space enables Bob and Jean to feel more in control of their existence within the larger framework.

By contrast, Ruth's flat is an example of pervasive disorder – at least to the outsider, who does not understand the filing system represented by the piles of paper around her all-purpose living-room. Parked outside her front door is a displaced supermarket trolley, and the living-room, which serves as office and bedroom as well, is full of furniture and objects and piles of paper, which embody different aspects of her life. While she herself understands the basic structure, she is concerned that the situation is getting out of control: *'It's something that has really got on top of me and I find it very hard to do the job of clearing up'* Various artefacts on a high shelf are *'so covered in dust'* that she can hardly recognise them, and she was thrilled when her daughter and her partner recently came to clear and clean the flat for her: *'Terrific job.'* But unlike Bob and Jean, order and cleanliness do not represent absolute values in themselves, and she is happy to accept a level of apparent disorder if it allows her to accommodate all the different aspects of her social identity within her domestic space: *'I was just looking everywhere where I could put storage space'*, she says of her decision to fill the WC with her father's old books. But at the same time she maintains a concern for respecting certain fundamental hygienic boundaries: for

instance, she hates the location of the washing-machine in the kitchen, because she thinks it is wrong to mix dirty washing with food and food preparation.

Ruth's attitude towards her own flat is paralleled by an apparent lack of concern about the superficial look of the external areas beyond her front door. She never refers to the physical context of the Brunswick per se; her interest in it is, she says, more about how it works in a '*social sense. Having the warden system.... The good heating system*'. However, her concern about the observation of fundamental boundaries is reflected in the anxieties she expresses over the unregulated, antisocial behaviour she has witnessed in the underground residents' carpark, which led her to stop keeping her car there and use street parking instead: '*really it was quite frightening*'.

Like Ruth, June is concerned about her increasing inability to control paperwork in her flat, but admits to fairly relaxed values regarding cleaning. '*Depends what your standards are doesn't it? I mean I aim and this isn't what I always do, but I aim to do the flat reasonably thoroughly once a month... that's OK for me. But other people might have different standards*'. But her flat is much more orderly and organised than Ruth's, and she is quite fastidious, both about shedding possessions she no longer needs or wants, and about maintaining a hierarchy of distinct spaces, whereby her paperwork and computer are not allowed to encroach on the living-room, and things that she doesn't want on public display are relegated to the bedroom. She is also quite scrupulous about maintaining boundaries between herself and her lodger – for instance, she has installed a fridge in the lodger's room, to ensure their provisions, like their lives, remain clearly 'segmented'. But, conversely, the boundaries between herself and her cat have become quite ambiguous, with the cat sleeping on her bed as a matter of course, and even being fed in her bedroom: in contrast to the lodger, the cat is integrated into June's highly-controlled sphere of intimacy.

June's relationship with the larger framework of the Brunswick, and what goes on there, reflects her desire to establish clear boundaries. Although she has been involved in the campaigns against redevelopment, she seems to have withdrawn from those activities. She admits that when she moved in she thought it was an '*interesting*' building, but insists that now '*it's not living in the Brunswick, it's living in central London*' which is meaningful to her. She maintains a detached attitude to the building beyond her flat, and also to her fellow inhabitants. While she thinks

'they see me as someone who's quite helpful and positive', she has very little to say about anybody else: *'they're all very pleasant people... harmless and pleasant'*, except for one who *'annoys me a bit'*. Significantly, she says she would never have net curtains, because she hates the idea that people might imagine her to be peeping out from behind them. Her attitude seems to express a perception of the window less as an interface between people, but rather as a neutral but clear boundary instead. Similarly, she defines her home not in terms of neighbourly relations, but rather as the place *'where your familiar objects are, your lares and penates'*, and once she steps out of her front door the common parts of the Brunswick seem to blur into the public spaces of the city beyond with little distinction. She seems scarcely to notice the people who live around her, and entertains little anxiety about the security of the common parts. In fact her only fears in that respect concerned a member of her own family who had been going through a difficult period, and who she felt might try to break in to her flat at some point. It was to protect herself from that possibility, and also to allay the fears of a nervous lodger, that she had bars installed on her kitchen and bathroom windows.

If Ruth and June seem relaxed about order and cleanliness within the home, and correspondingly so about order in the public domain of the Brunswick, at least to a certain point, others, such as Kevin and Giulia, seem to employ rigorous cleaning routines as a means of asserting a clear zone of autonomy and control within their flats, and a sense of segmentation between their lives 'inside' and 'outside'. Kevin, whose role as caretaker obliges him to engage with the Brunswick beyond his front door, is adamant that the threshold to his flat is not to be crossed by anybody seeking him out in relation to 'work' issues. When he is in his kitchen on his lunch break, he keeps the light off so that nobody will realise he is at home, and he has a screen against his kitchen window to prevent anybody looking in. When people do knock at the front door, he will only invite them in if they are friends, and he is very aware of them peering over his shoulder to see what they can of his entrance hall – for which reason he keeps his wine out of sight under his bed. Even when he sits out on his balcony, people will sometimes shout up to him from the precinct, so he screens himself from view with his plants. *'It's not that I want to hide all the time, it's just that people do get nosy.... There are boundaries'*, he explains. *'People come to door, tenants, and they're just trying to come in. They're not my friends...'* When friends

on the estate come round, *'they come in. That's not a problem.'* But, *'if they talk about work I say... I'm putting you out.'*

Kevin's adamant stance regarding the sanctity of his threshold is paralleled by his thorough and professional attitude towards cleaning and maintaining the flat. He spent a lot of time cleaning it out and decorating before he moved in, and since then he has got into a routine of redecorating every 3 years. He'll take *'a week off work to paint this room, wash and rub down and move everything around'*, even though he finds it 'grindingly boring'. He cleans and paints his windows regularly, and when the outsides get done by Camden's contractors he insists they change the water when they get to his flat. He hates the untidiness of his teenage son's bedroom, so he'll regularly tidy it himself. He has also just invested £50 in new plants for the balcony, and would also like to install lights and a stand-up heater out there.

In a similar way, Giulia, who is now 82 years old and suffered a heart attack a few years ago, still insists on cleaning her own flat from top to bottom. One of her main points about her *'beautiful'* flat is that, because it is quite large, *'there is plenty for me to clean.'* She washes and polishes the floor regularly herself, and still manages to turn the mattress on her bed every week. Her flat has the clean, hygienic, and slightly spartan appearance of the hospitals where she used to work, and cleaning is clearly part of her *raison d'être*, and a means of appropriating and possessing the space she has lived in since her retirement as her own, even though it is actually owned by the council.

Giulia has various social relationships within the building, and throughout her life has been outgoing and interested in other people, but she has become nervous and fearful of intruders since many of the elderly people she knows at the Brunswick have been robbed – 'all elderly', and including four people on this floor alone. As a result she no longer leaves her kitchen window open, and she is quite happy that the entryphone system is not working, since it makes it harder for people to enter through the street door. She used to let in the Jehovah's Witnesses, and engage in conversation with them, but she no longer welcomes their visits. The District Nurse no longer visits, and she won't accept a meals service, preferring to make herself a sandwich, so that her flat has become increasingly impermeable to the outside world. This sense of segmentation is eloquently expressed in the way that her easy chair is turned with its back towards the window, facing the TV which, by contrast, faces outwards: it seems as though the TV is in communication with the outside world,

while she has turned away from it to dwell on her own things. Hanging on the back of the front door is her coat and bag: her outside self, as it were, framed within the interior of the flat as an alter ego, a persona to be assumed when she goes outdoors, and left at the threshold when she comes in, not integrated into her home life.

Giulia seems to have drawn the boundaries around her flat ever more closely since the refurbishment programme at the Brunswick started, and she is very unhappy about what is happening outside. She feels the Brunswick is being changed for ever in ways she strongly dislikes, and by the time of my third visit to her she had taken to keeping the curtains closed across her windows, to block out the view of the changes she hates. Although she was still venturing out onto her balcony to talk to her bizzylizzies, she seemed to have become increasingly absorbed in her own world, and distressed by the fact that, although she could block out views of the exterior, she could not keep out the noise of the building work. *'If it's noisy you can only communicate with the devil'*, she said, making it clear that her former delight in living at the Brunswick had been utterly destroyed. When I visited her for the last time, to take her a copy of my book, she simply closed her front door on me, saying that she did not care about the Brunswick any more, and did not want the book. It seemed that her retreat into her private domain had become irreversible, a sad development for someone who used to enjoy sitting out in the precinct chatting with friends.

The capacity of the Brunswick flats to provide residents with a zone of complete autonomy within the overall framework, is one of the aspects of Brunswick living which Lana celebrates. She tells me that the neutrality of their design, combined with perfect proportions, and good acoustic privacy, allow their inhabitants to turn them into completely distinct, independent worlds shaped by their own desires and without any reference to the larger context. This may be interpreted less as a process of appropriation, or sublation, of an alien living environment (see 1.1.2), but as a response to the inherent potential of the design – a built-in freedom which it offers individuals to create their own, segmented, worlds within its framework. According to Lana, it didn't matter that outside, in the so-called *'internal streets in the air'* of a *'crumbling building, stained and cracked'*, people were *'spitting and lying around and making rubbish'*. She says that *'what interested me was that everyone who came into these places with exactly the same proportions, could have set up a dream space'*. She says that for many people, including herself, *'their flat is their internal life'*, intended not so much to project a statement about how they want to be

seen into the public domain, but rather, as in her case, *'to make a statement about how I use it'* within a private and exclusive sphere of existence. Lana *'wouldn't want anybody to look into my space'*: rather, she maintains a clear threshold which is not to be casually crossed or opened up to the public gaze.

But intriguingly, Lana has turned her dark entrance hall into a kind of museum of 'found objects' salvaged from the public spaces of the Brunswick, which she has painted in a uniform coat of terracotta paint and placed on display alongside her piano: *'People turf them out... So they become part of the hall'*. Notwithstanding her expressed concern for privacy, this activity, which reflects her artist's reflective sensibility, embodies an integrating impulse, and creates an explicitly liminal zone between the public access gallery and the most private areas of the flat where objects originating in other people's spaces are recontextualised in Lana's flat, after a short sojourn in the public domain.

Few residents are so self-aware as this in their negotiation of the boundaries between exterior and interior, but Rob, who is an engineer by profession, and Chairman of the TRA for the last 5 years, also has a heightened self-awareness of his desire to 'control' the interior of his own flat. When I first met Rob and his girlfriend, Françoise, she in particular was quite critical of their neighbours at the Brunswick as being people who were *'unable to take control and make decisions for themselves.'* Their attitude to their flat seemed a conscious initiative to demonstrate their own distinctness from their neighbours in this (and other) respects. Both Rob and Françoise deliberately made themselves visible as newcomers at the Brunswick by getting involved in the TRA committee and various projects to enhance the public profile of the building and generate improvements, but although they have become quite well-known to other residents, they have not exactly integrated, and their flat reflects this desire to establish 'segmentation'. I understand it to be one of the two flats Gloria describes as looking like *'glorified offices... there's no semblance of a home'*, implying an inappropriate functionality and a lack of domestic 'warmth'. Rob admits that he likes to feel in control - *'I sort of miss being challenged [on visits to Paris] by having to not be in control of things, it's a bit too ordered perhaps'* - and that the flat he shared with Françoise reflected that need: comfortable, but *'deliberately flat... pretty functional... very calming... relaxing... peaceful... not sort of cosy like some flats are.'* It was mostly painted white, and they both liked the *'idea*

of just keeping the walls clear... we were both happy to have it as a blank canvas. A blank surface.'

In fact, Rob had an interest at one point in hanging some photographs he had taken of wild flowers blooming in the wilderness of the terraces prior to refurbishment, but Francoise apparently vetoed this, adamant that she did not want images of the exterior of the building invading their closely guarded interior space: a blurring of boundaries between their smart interior and the shabby exterior, between themselves and 'the others', which threatened an undesirable 'integration'. Even though the Brunswick, as an architectural 'icon', was very much a shared passion which had been central to their relationship since moving there, *'She didn't want them on the wall, because she said you can look outside and see.'*

Having split with Francoise, Rob has a new girlfriend, with significant implications for the flat. Amanda, who is Hong Kong Chinese, is oblivious to the virtues of the Brunswick as an architectural icon, and sees it as just another council estate, not that dissimilar from the one she is living on with her aunt. Like Gloria, she has criticised the flat because *'it looks so much like an office... normally in a home you'd have curtains.'* Rob still maintains *'I quite like the clean lines'*, but, in welcoming a new partner into the flat, he has also taken a deliberate decision to try and relax his controlling impulses a little, and that means opening up to new influences from outside. He is partly embarrassed by the penetration of his space by novel items such as the teddy bears appearing on his sofa, which represent an erosion of formerly rigid boundaries between interior and exterior, control and lack of control, and a complete contrast with the prevailing 'ethos' of the environment, in terms of its architectural aesthetics. But he also seems intrigued to see where this new fluidity might lead him in his own life: *'I quite like the unpredictability.... although it's quite ordered I'm surprised by the sort of spontaneity of things'*.

Lynn is another resident who has closely guarded the integrity of her space from unwanted external influences: a single mother, who has brought up her son there from the age of four, she says, *'this is my home. That I come to for my peace and my getting away from things. Doing my homework, my political stuff.'* Although she enjoys the view down into the precinct and the sound of conversations wafting up, she is very sensitive to another kinds of noise, such as the sound of people being drunk and rowdy, which she describes as *'invasive'* - a specifically loaded term compared to the blunt *'awful'* used by June to describe the sound of singing from the African

church in the TA room on a Sunday. Her distress at the acoustic penetration of her spatial boundaries has been compounded by the sudden emergence of the new supermarket roof, clearly visible from her windows, which constitutes a visual encroachment. She describes *'the shock of waking up one day... I said, 'Oh my God what is it?' ... it was such a shock'*. Since then, she has kept the blinds closed over part of her windows to reinforce the external boundary to her flat and keep the assault on her senses, at bay.

But not all residents are so concerned with issues of privacy and enclosure, or segmentation, in the same way. For instance, Susan, who has been intent on forging relationships with neighbours and putting down 'roots' at the Brunswick, has never been bothered by the sound of her neighbour talking on the balcony adjacent to theirs, or laughing at the television in the evening; nor had she ever closed the curtains across her windows, except sometimes on a Saturday evening, only because she didn't want a male resident whom she knew on the other side of the precinct to see her *'sitting here sadly'* on her own. It was not until she gave birth to her baby that she and her husband finally installed Venetian blinds to the windows, suggesting that the change in their circumstances, a new awareness of being a family unit and a kind of protective, inward focus associated with that, had prompted a shift in their attitude to the issue of privacy.

Annie and Anthony, who have two young daughters, and a new baby on the way, have a similarly open attitude to their neighbours – all very *'interesting'* people, as they put it – and a fairly relaxed attitude to the integrity of the threshold between inside and outside life. Although they admit to a certain self-consciousness about the state of the common parts when their 'snobbier' friends or Anthony's parents come round, they will willingly go out there and wash down the lift themselves. They are prepared to get their own hands dirty, if necessary, rather than wait for the caretakers, and have less of a concern about maintaining rigid segmentation between their lives inside the flat and the potential for disorder in the external areas. But Annie and Anthony, like Rob and Francoise, are only at the Brunswick as a result of their engagement with the place as 'outsiders' having a specific architectural appreciation of the building generated from the outside in. The public profile of the Brunswick is very much their 'business', integrating their home life with their professional lives as a design journalist (whose father also worked on the Brunswick project thirty years ago) and an architect. Along with Rob and Francoise, they have become involved

with the TRA and with other projects (specifically the terraces project, and the Architecture Forum at the Bloomsbury Festival 2006) concerned with promoting the public image of the Brunswick, and an awareness of its history.

In the same way, the interior of the flat performs the function of a home combined with something of a showcase for the design values around which their work is based – a showcase which has been photographed and displayed on more than one occasion in magazine articles about the Brunswick. In contrast to other residents, Annie and Anthony are very relaxed about having their home and their family photographed, scarcely bothering to check where the photographs are likely to be published, since the boundaries between their private and public lives are relatively permeable and flexible. To an extent, they live out a public agenda within the context of their intimate lives. Within the flat, the alterations they have made and the furnishings and fittings they have chosen make explicit reference to the history and ideology of the original Brunswick concept, and represent contemporary interpretations of the ‘modernist’ design approach which they champion. For instance, the Best and Lloyd light fittings have been chosen because *‘we just thought they had a kind of feel of modernism’*.

While Susan, also an architect, has reproduced some of the values of her professional life inside her flat in the same way as Annie and Anthony, her references to the Brunswick itself as an exemplar of modernist architectural form-making are less explicit. Rather than pursuing a fusion of exterior and interior identity in that way, she has sustained a level of permeability between her own existence in the flat and that of her predecessors there, an elderly couple who had lived there since the beginning, and very much represent to her an idea of an ‘original’ community at the Brunswick. In the process of buying the flat from them, Susan forged quite an intimate relationship with them, and when they moved out they left numerous items in the flat for Susan, *‘just to get you started’*. In preserving and hanging on to some of these items as mementoes and emblems of the previous occupants, Susan seems to underline her interest in forging a connection between herself and the long-standing *‘very close community’* on the top floors, de-emphasising the boundary-lines between her own interior life within the flat, and the life of the community she perceives beyond her front door, in a desire to bring them together in some way.

But in reality, inbuilt prejudices reflecting contrasting values across boundaries of class and education, have to be constantly renegotiated. Even Susan

acknowledges the anxiety she felt initially when her boyfriend wanted to install a substantial new flat-screen television, worrying that *'it was a bit lower class, a great big telly*. [But] *it's amazing how quickly you get used to it!*'. The TV doubles up as a computer, and *'it's actually brilliant'*. By contrast, Annie and Anthony have an extremely compact television which is accommodated on a low trolley so that it can be pushed back against the wall, out of sight, when not in use. They admit that its diminutive size is significant in establishing a particular, segmented, identity in relation to many of their neighbours: *'we read a really funny piece in the FT a few weeks ago, which said you can tell what kind of a person someone is by the TV they have ... they got us quite right.... We don't want it to be the centre of attention.'* Their home computer is a laptop which can also be moved discreetly around the flat, rather than explicitly displayed and celebrated as an emblem of consumer buying-power.

Media and communications technology serves to codify distinctions among neighbours in one way, symbolising the contrasting tastes and values rooted in class and education, and the boundaries between one 'lifeworld' and another. But it also embodies contrasting levels of integration and segmentation between interior and exterior worlds. Giulia sits with her back to the window, facing the TV which in its turn communes with the outside world, as if filtering her own contact with public life through the medium of TV. Stephanie, by contrast, loves her view outwards from the 'outside' of the building, as she puts it, and is frustrated by the windows themselves because she feels they are not big enough. But she actually spends most of her time indoors, using email as a way of expressing herself and keeping in touch with others at a safe distance. Significantly, she has set her desk and computer well back in the room, away from the windows in a relatively dark corner, as if to emphasise a deliberate segmentation between the vitality of the street outside, and the virtual world which she addresses via her computer. She seems to have made a self-conscious retreat away from the light, and, unlike other residents who praise the flats for their good levels of daylight, insists the flat is *'not bright!'*.

Email has provided another level of communication which is readily available to anyone with a computer, but there are a number of residents who have not embraced it as a means of connecting with the outside world from within their homes. Ruth has finally decided that she must replace her outdated computer in order to have email at home, because she uses it extensively but must go down to the Neighbourhood Centre to do so on the computers there. But Bob, who is also highly

involved in local affairs and many committees, still resists email, even though it is maddening to his fellow committee members, who cannot include him on the circulars detailing meetings, minutes etc. By contrast, he has a radio in each room of the flat, and listens to it almost constantly, as a means of keeping in touch with public life without any obligation to respond. TV takes second place to the radio for him, although his sister watches it every evening, and he is about to relegate a small portable TV in his room to the store-cupboard downstairs. The phone, however, is not portable, but fixed in a very traditional manner on a small table behind the front door, above which hangs a calendar on which to write down social engagements. This arrangement, which now looks distinctly old-fashioned, seems to embody the desire for orderly control which governs Bob and Jean's life, maintaining clear boundaries within the flat to regulate incoming communications.

For Kevin, email is for work, and he uses it mainly at the office, although they have a computer and email at home; but '*mates call us*'. The distinction is integral to his rigid filtering of unwanted, work-related interference from the genuine social interactions which he opens his doors to, and has provided for with a sofa-bed for visitors (possibly from Ireland) to crash on. Unlike Stephanie, tapping out her thoughts on her computer, Kevin and his friends will sit up late at night, drinking and discussing the affairs of the world with some vigour: '*we were sitting in the early hours the other day arguing about this*' he says, of the Labour party's continuing commitment to the sale of council properties.

The flats were originally fitted with clockwork doorbells that have to be wound up periodically in order for them to work. Although with the installation of the electronic entry system they have become partially redundant, it still seemed interesting that in at least two cases they were not working, because the occupant of the flat had forgotten to wind them up, whether deliberately to screen unexpected visitors or inadvertently. The entryphone system also provides a 'privacy' function, allowing residents to block visitors at street level. These gadgets also, then, provide a means of surveying the threshold between exterior and interior, controlling one's visibility in social relations, with minimum effort. But technology in general serves a dual function – both to reinforce and survey boundaries and guard carefully segmented identities, and to generate integration across boundaries when desired, with the particular power to transcend the limits of physical context and facilitate the

construction of more expansive narratives of self-identity than would otherwise be possible.

4.3. The council estate in the city

The physical environment constitutes a medium through which Brunswick residents continuously assert and negotiate their relationships with the building, with each other, and with the world beyond, establishing and developing specific narratives of self-identity. That process, conflated with a sense of continuous movement and rearrangement, may be understood as a kind of dissolution of the fixed, static nature of the Brunswick as a unified architectural and spatial concept – be it megastructure or town-room - into a mass of differentiated spaces, planes and social identities.

While on the one hand the Brunswick as architectural icon retains a certain transcendent and ‘fetishistic’ power to pull these differentiated entities back together into some form of unified concept, the Brunswick as ‘council estate’ represents another form of overarching identity which is less discussed but also significant as a concept for framing this setting as a ‘unified’ social space.

The term ‘estate’ is redolent with social implications grafted onto a specific type of physical environment recognisable as distinct and segmented from the rest of the city – frequently inspired by modernist principles of planned housing, and often rundown. Hodgkinson’s term ‘town-room’ embodies a similar idea, as a physical and social space within the city which is clearly bounded, but nonetheless understood and experienced as a component of a larger whole. But the specific conditions under which the social and physical characteristics of the council estate have evolved differentiate it from other parts of the urban fabric, and constitute a force against integration which may become increasingly powerful over time – even as council flats are sold off to private owners, and the social mix, in theory, becomes more varied.

The Brunswick was historically known as the Brunswick Centre, focussing attention on the public space and shops between the two housing blocks, rather than an explicit identity as an estate identified by housing provision. In that sense, there was always a clear sense of distance between it and surrounding council estates, and the term itself is used by relatively few residents in referring to the Brunswick, even those who are still or were originally council tenants. Furthermore, the sheer look of ‘*the place*’ as it is called more often, does not equate with the typical council estate. As Kevin puts it, ‘*it doesn’t shoot up into the air*’, and this makes it seem smaller,

more compact than it really is. In fact, with 400-odd flats, it is quite big compared to others in the locality. And, with its distinctive profile, it gets described in other ways that set it apart – the ‘ziggurat’, the ‘greenhouses’, and ‘cruise ship’ being fairly typical: *‘some people think it’s like a cruise ship that sort of lights up. It’s very distinctive.’*

In contrast to this local terminology, which also entered the public sphere through residents’ campaigns against redevelopment, the council estate as a generic concept is often conflated in the public consciousness with that of ghetto, especially since council housing has become so scarce, and allocation cut back to serve only those in the most extreme need. Hanley’s term *‘walls in the head’* (Hanley 2007) describes, from the inside, the mentality engendered by the experience of living on a council estate, and documents the ways in which post-war council estates typically become cut off from the rest of the city, both socially (the majority of people will be unemployed and confronted by a dearth of opportunity in their lives), and physically, often disconnected from urban centres as a result of poor location and transport links, and deprived of good quality shopping, educational and social resources.

Four times in the course of one interview, my respondent Lorraine uses the term *‘prison’* to describe aspects of life at the Brunswick, even as a former council tenant who expresses considerable pride in the fact that this is *‘a council place’*, and she *‘a council tenant’*, even though her status has technically changed to that of *‘house owner’*: *‘I say to myself don’t forget, I lived here, I’m a council tenant. Because I bought my flat it hasn’t changed me...’*. When they first arrived, in 1971, *‘it was like living in prison. It was all grey... everyone had red doors and once you got in you never saw a soul, unless the neighbours next to you.’* She later says, twice, that the attitude of the older residents towards the children who lived there led her sons to complain that it was like *‘living in prison’* at the Brunswick. Finally, she says she doesn’t like the suggestion that gates might be installed at the entrances to the Brunswick precinct, and locked at night for security reasons, because it’s *‘like being in prison, isn’t it?’*

Lorraine’s metaphor vividly evokes the idea of *‘walls in the head’*, but in fact the Brunswick was never cut off physically or socially from the rest of the city; in fact, quite the contrary. Its central London location is inherent to people’s perception of living there – *‘on top of everything’*, to cite Lorraine again – and the design was explicitly conceived by the architect (before Camden Council bought into the

development) to function as ‘a town room’, with open ends, forming an integral part of a larger axis through the city; while it was anticipated, even after the flats had been acquired by the council specifically to promote family life in the area, that the residents would be what the architect called ‘urbanites’, using their flats as base camps for a more expansive life outside, enjoying the metropolis.

Kevin, who previously lived on ‘*a really rough [council] estate*’ in Hackney, gets annoyed by residents who make out they live ‘*in the slums you know*’, and says that most of his friends would love to live at the Brunswick, because it’s so accessible: ‘*it’s generally the location, it’s just so central, near the west end. I feel I can get to places....*’. His teenage son can walk home quite easily after a late night out, and he doesn’t have to worry on that front. Residents clearly do take advantage of the Brunswick as a base for enjoying the attractions of central London as a normal dimension of their lives, rather than an occasional treat: June and the theatres, Giulia and the galleries, especially the National Gallery, Jean and the ballet at the Royal Opera House. In Lana’s mind, Bloomsbury was always ‘*the most sophisticated place in the world.*’ Annie and Anthony, whose bedroom is decorated with a piece of fabric from a David Hockney production at the Royal Opera House, emphasise how important it is for them to be part of the cultural life of the city, and specifically to give that advantage to their children as they grow up, rather than move out to the suburbs or the countryside.

From Annie and Anthony’s point of view, ‘*the only way of being central was to buy a council flat*’, due to the escalating cost of property in central London. For people like them, inner city council estates, far from being isolated ghettos, have become a means of accessing the cultural life of the capital, of becoming true ‘urbanites’, for whom the home life around the metaphorical hearth (an ornamental gas fire in Bob’s case, smelly ‘blow-out’ heating for most) is less important than the trajectories they trace from their home into the city and back. But there is one key condition for them and their peers, and that is that the building should be architecturally interesting. The Brunswick was ideal in that sense: ‘*we were always really mad about this building*’, but they also went some way down the route of buying a flat in Lillington Gardens, Pimlico (architects Darbourne and Darke, listed), and had previously lived in a 1970s council block called The Triangle in Clerkenwell, which they describe as ‘*one of the more interesting ones*’.

Annie and Anthony, who come from middle-class backgrounds, and are not local (though Annie was brought up in Camden Town, not too far away), are not over-concerned about the public image of the council estate per se, nor by the realities of living in what they prefer to think of '*as being a mixed community that ... has interesting people*' – although they admit that '*leaseholders and tenants have a different set of interests and you can't help that*', while '*quite a lot of leaseholders that are former tenants are not well off.*' Furthermore, they are part of a wider social network of like-minded friends and acquaintances who have done the same thing. Annie's sister lives in an interesting, though '*not famous*' (unlike the Brunswick) council block in Somers Town, just north of the Euston Road, and they also have friends living on the Maiden Lane estate (architects Benson and Forsyth, under consideration for listing) north of Kings Cross. In fact they see themselves as, in some sense, pioneers: '*I mean when we bought the council flat no-one was doing it then, you know.... If you look at people like X and Y and a whole crowd who've bought council flats, they've had mortgage advice from a woman... she was recommended to me because she helped them get a mortgage on a council flat...*' In effect, people like Annie and Anthony, with the advantage of university education, extensive social networks and good family contacts, have been able to push forward something of a revolution in urban living, through their access to specialised sources of knowledge and expertise, combined with the re-casting of council housing as a commodity on the open market.

According to them, there is no discernible resentment towards them on the part of council tenants and former tenants turned leaseholder, but there is certainly an awareness of the changing character of the Brunswick from what was '*a council place*' to something else. According to Francoise, it takes the form of a studied lack of interest in newcomers – '*people are not curious*' – while Rob thinks there was a discernible distrust of them personally as '*outsiders*', taking control of things, '*who were just interested in the reputation of the building and not in the people who lived there.*' But the change is two-pronged, because of the influx of 'problem' people (asylum seekers, offenders and the like) on the one hand, and of affluent, university-educated newcomers on the other. Amongst those, the ones who have lived at the Brunswick for more than five years will distinguish themselves again from the most recent influx of property owners who are perceived as out-and-out 'yuppies', but to

long-term residents they are all the same, people who *'will do what they want anyway'* at meetings, as Giulia puts it, explaining her reluctance to attend any more.

For people like Lorraine, the original virtue of the Brunswick as a council place was essentially its local character, with local shops where you could buy things like needles and wool, people who knew each other from before, and a landlord which was the local council. There was some sense of social cohesion based in local interaction and geographical identity, even though *'people were lonely'* at first. *'We got the tenants room, started a little play thing for the children... that's how we made friends... that's how it started'*. As a young woman, her social life was focussed around the children and her fellow mothers; later in life she became a home carer, working for the council, providing home visits to the elderly in flats at the Brunswick, and shopping in the old Safeways in the precinct for them. Now, having retired from that job, she has resumed work part-time as a dinner lady in a 'local' school – Macklin Street in Covent Garden – attended by numbers of Brunswick children in the past. In other words, the spatial extent of her life has been intensely local, totally focussed around the Brunswick as a social setting, and as a council estate.

She notes the influx of what she calls the *'la-di-da'* people, and although she maintains *'we all get on'*, and is careful not to criticise them, she expresses a sense of increasing personal alienation in the environment in which she has felt at home for 30 years. *'It's not the same, everything's gone, you know. It's all new, new people moving in.... there's only about four of the people original, the rest have passed away... a lot of them have died, a lot of my friends moved out because they had boys and three children, it's only two bedrooms. We feel like we're part of the survivors.'* She says, *'I keep saying to my husband I'd like to move, because to me now it's not the same. I've lived round here all my life, and I don't know if I could move, but I would like to.'*

For Lorraine, one of the symptoms of the social change which she finds most puzzling is the way that the newcomers will go to such lengths to reinstate the flats they have bought as *'council flats'*. When her friend eventually bought her council flat at the generous council discount, she spend some of *'the thousands'* she had saved on the purchase on doing it up – closing off the kitchen, laying fitted carpets, installing new bathroom and bedroom suites, and furniture from Maples. But when she sold up in her turn, the new occupant *'put it back as a council flat, painted it all white'*. When Lorraine got a glimpse of it, selling raffle tickets door-to-door, she was

shocked, telling the owner: *'if my friend could see what you've done to her place.... You could have bought my flat and I would have moved down there!'*

She herself has left her flat more or less untouched, mainly because she hasn't had the money to do otherwise. A fact which would be welcomed by buyers like Annie and Anthony, whose own flat had been 'done up' by a Thai family, in what they call a *'soft Georgian'* style. They were *'keen on salvaging anything that was left [of the original flat]'*, and relieved to find that the former occupants had not removed the original door handles: *'they're Danish, the same as Vulcan, they're stainless steel, they're really good.... One of the really good quality things that were salvaged from the original design'*. Indeed, for Annie and Anthony, one of the joys of living in ex-council flats is the fact that *'you do get items of quality'*, in terms of the fitting out. On their Clerkenwell council estate, for example, they had *'very good quality aluminium sliding windows. A really nice design. You do get those details coming in.'*

Their appreciation of the material hallmarks of good council housing design is lost on residents such as Lorraine, who, whatever their pride in being council tenants, see them only as symbols of their tenancy agreements, to be replaced as quickly as possible after purchase. Annie and Anthony do not have to make those tangible changes to prove their status, and in case, there is a cultural chasm in terms of their aesthetic presuppositions. But, from Annie and Anthony's perspective, a more recent incomer has gone over the top in ripping out the interior of her flat and commissioning an interior design consultant to reposition it firmly as a London pied-a-terre, in a sought-after, upmarket development. This woman, who has reputedly spent £50,000 on doing up her flat, and had it featured in a magazine, lives in O'Donnell Court, below June. June, who has seen the flat, is quite simply astonished that anyone would put so much effort into their home: *'When I saw this flat, everything done to the nth degree, I just couldn't imagine. She's so proud of it! I just can't conceive of living in, doing that to a place.... I thought this was lovely for her, but it wouldn't be me at all.'*

June believes that people who have bought their flats at the Brunswick, *'as a proper purchase'*, made a very different choice from people like her (who eventually bought her flat, against her social principles, because it would have been stupid not to), and that impinges on the way they see the space, and their concept of making a home out of it. Clearly this is not quite true, because other former tenants like

Lorraine's friend, or like Gloria, have also gone to great lengths to achieve, in Gloria's words, a level of 'self-expression.' Whereas June is determined to set herself apart from the newcomers, others in her position have set out to remake themselves as 'newcomers' in a different sense – newcomers to a world of property ownership which would have been unknown to their parents and grandparents.

According to Kevin, who has not bought his flat, but sometimes regrets it, a lot of people at the Brunswick have done '*wonderful and imaginative things*' with their flats, but that is not for him. If he could change anything, it would be to enlarge the kitchen so that two people could work in it comfortably. But he dismisses the idea: '*you'd have to ask permission from them [the council] and you wouldn't get it.*' His attitude is completely the opposite of newcomer Rob, who as a flat-owner has a fairly laissez-faire attitude towards the council. He has removed the wall between the WC and the bathroom, without applying for permission. He and his girlfriend also removed the partition between the kitchen and the living-room to create one open-plan space, because his girlfriend it felt too much '*like a council flat*' as it was.

Kevin's adherence to the rules reflects his own concern for his job, which ties him to the council in another way, as local employer, but may also be seen a symptom of his concern for control of the relationship between inside and outside at the Brunswick. As caretaker he is very much 'on the front line' in terms of dealing with anti-social behaviour in the public areas, and he is worried by the 'de-regulation' as it were of council estates in general. He laments the sale and loss of council property to the open market, because, although '*the majority of the people who've bought in the Brunswick have made a contribution. Some have been really positive*', it has led to a chronic shortage of irreplaceable council housing, and this in turn prompted changes in Camden's housing allocation policy which have had adverse effects. The original character of the council estate has altered, and social cohesion is not what it was.

As Gloria explains, the council had had the sense to re-house existing neighbours and family members together at the Brunswick, literally street by street, when it first opened, which helped to sustain social and family networks amongst people who had, like her, 'roots' in the area, and an intense loyalty to it: '*it was always a little bit upmarket*'. At the beginning, sons and daughters had an automatic right to council housing when they reached independence, but, in order to address the shortage of housing, and give priority to those in extreme need, this right was taken away, leading to considerable resentment among local white families. Although

residents like Susan express exasperation at the complaints voiced by these families – ‘you get some people, “it’s all foreigners and drug addicts and my son’s been living here since.. and he can’t get a flat...”’ - Kevin is sympathetic to their case. ‘When I came on the estate first there were quite a lot of extended families. Lots of them... white extended families... If you brought your kids up on the estate and they’re getting married you’d go down to the local housing office, and get a flat... I think it’s gone to the other extreme, families are completely broken up, and moving out of London.’ In their place are either the newcomers who have bought their flats from them, or the more transient population of people who have a statutory right to be rehoused. ‘The only people who are getting flats are people who have been in prison, alcohol problems, homeless... I have blocks that have changed enormously, people have gone from their own people living there... and suddenly it just changes because of four or five young guys, all come with their problems.’

Kevin’s account evokes a perception of de-regulation and breakdown in the original social order of the council estate, which has in his experience been alleviated by the introduction of ASBOs, but can never be reinstated. Although he thinks that the influx of affluent newcomers can ‘drive the standards up rather than down’, if they pull their weight, he feels that what is important is a ‘good mix’, and that the only reason why that has been maintained at the Brunswick is the fact that 30% of the flats are still sheltered ‘for relatively vulnerable people’, and will not therefore enter the open market, whatever the ‘conspiracy theories’ that circulate.

But the thriving state of ‘conspiracy theories’ and the ‘rumour mill’ at the Brunswick (otherwise known as the BBC, Brunswick Broadcasting Community), seem to substantiate the criticisms of estate culture voiced by residents such as Bob. He evokes a picture of an inward-looking, council-dependent community which will not take responsibility for its own actions. ‘Everyone moans about nothing being done, then they are moaning because things are being done... They’ll moan to me and my next-door neighbour. They seem frightened to go to the authorities. They don’t seem to want to rock the boat... with the council.’ Francoise is more extreme in her characterisation of first-generation residents as being like school children who never grow up: ‘they need to have their parents to tell them what to do, what to think... or teachers, they criticise them behind their back, waiting for one citizen to do the dirty job.’ For them, the council is both ‘enemy and provider’, and their relationship with it, embodied by the physical setting of the estate itself, seems imprisoning.

According to Stephanie, there is a pervasive attitude that *'you've got your council flat you've got your coffin'* – security provided by the council till death. But the effect of this can also be a level of apathy and lack of initiative. The pervasive circulation of unsubstantiated stories and rumours seems to manifest a certain sense of helplessness on the part of residents, of not being completely in control of their own lives. They nurture anxiety and resentment, a sense of *'them against us'*, but provide no incentive or framework for action. There are rumours that Allied London, the developer, is trying to break Camden's lease on the housing, and decant all the council tenants somewhere else, that the council is progressively de-sheltering flats so as to sell them on the open market, and that certain residents are being blocked from right-to-buy. But above all, the Brunswick's inhabitants feel a strong resentment at the perceived neglect of the building by the council since its completion, and by the freeholder in its proposals for refurbishment: *'people feel they've been badly let down by the building owners and by Camden'*, says Rob. Although tenants' meetings tend to be noisy, even *'bawdy'* affairs, according to one resident, they seem to provide an opportunity for exchanging the latest gossip, voicing complaints as loudly as possible, and haranguing the committee and any guest speakers – eg the estate manager, English Heritage's representative, and Allied London's liaison officer - rather than positively engaging in efforts to give the residential community a voice as a cohesive entity.

Kevin is dismissive of the rumours – *'I've heard them for 20 years.'* But, even though there are tenants such as Giulia who have not only benefited from, but are full of admiration for a welfare system which simply doesn't exist in her home country of Italy, they embody a community's sense of dependency combined with distrust and helplessness in relation both to the council and the freeholder, which is voiced even by newcomers who have never been council tenants themselves. New leaseholders feel very vulnerable to disproportionately high service charges being levied on their flats in order to subsidise the council's rental properties. Of the current plans to install a new heating system, Conal says *'Well, they're threatening to start in... we feel besieged.'* And again, *'we're under threat for all these extra works.'* The council is characterised as an ominous, encroaching presence, and the residents as being trapped inside their homes, unable to escape. Lana gives the situation a political slant, with her reference to a *'militant left'* in the council, which deliberately obstructed her partner's efforts to buy his council flat years ago, and failed to protect

him from his aggressive and violent neighbour more recently: political orthodoxies encroaching on home life. She is not the only one who also hints at endemic corruption within the council, since other residents openly suggest that the approval of the supermarket roof design must have involved '*money changing hands.*' Indeed, the supermarket roof issue provided a potent focus for anger not only against the council, but also the freeholder and architect, who were accused of behaving disrespectfully towards council tenants perceived as a particular social group. Lynn says: '*I was so angry about what's happened... [the architect] just didn't tell the truth, and people here are furious. I think people are feeling helpless, at all that's happened...*' She further suggests that railings have been installed around the edge of the roof '*so we wouldn't destroy it. They [the owners] need to protect themselves from us. It was very insulting.*' Gloria also voices her indignation at the fact that the building owner has not shown the residents sufficient respect, and her determination to stand up to them: '*I don't think you should ever allow yourself to be frightened by them [big companies].*'

Residents' perception of themselves as a social group defined by a relationship with the council, and embodied in the decaying fabric of the building, has contributed to a strong sense of living in a David and Goliath situation at the Brunswick going back thirty years. It sets the Brunswick apart, forming an invisible boundary between the estate and the city beyond its edges, which is reinforced by the sense of being observed, as a discrete object of enquiry, from the outside – both by experts in the architecture and heritage industries, and by casual onlookers who are always ready to express an opinion on the Brunswick. Thus, although the Brunswick is not a typical council estate in terms of its physical and social fabric, and could never be described as a 'ghetto' in the normal sense of the word, it has paradoxically been subjected to another kind of 'ghetto-isation', or setting-apart, over the years on account of its architectural interest.

The obsessive focus on the building itself, both in terms of its external architectural profile, and its internal structural problems, is one which has permeated residents' consciousness, through their everyday relationship with their living environment, to the point where the Brunswick has taken on the persona of a diseased body under attack from external forces. On the one hand this has created a sense of palpable frustration and helplessness, but conversely it has aroused strong feelings of loyalty and brought residents together as a 'community' poised against the outside

world of shameless speculators and people who want to ‘*do well*’ out of, or exploit the Brunswick, as Lana puts it. For Lana, as for many others, the Brunswick may have been a ‘*shabby dump*’, but it was also ‘*our own little bit of paradise*’, and she is not happy with the way it has been reintegrated into mainstream, consumer-driven society. As a council estate, the Brunswick stood outside the normal economic forces and effects of capitalist society, as a sort of ‘marginal’ space which offered the potential of sanctuary to those who wanted or needed it. But from the early 1990s, residents found themselves fighting on various different fronts to protect the Brunswick from redevelopment plans which they considered architecturally inappropriate, and brazenly driven by the desire to profit from its enviable location and turn a council estate into yuppie flats. Even Kevin, who admits he finds the building ‘hideous’, helped to take round a petition against redevelopment, on the grounds it was ‘not in keeping’ with the existing architecture. For Lynn, the ‘*fight-back with the developers was one of the most wonderful things in my life – the way that local people really got together and stood their ground.*’ Although she describes herself as having been ‘very detached’ from the building when she first moved in, the campaigns against redevelopment led her to start meeting people and getting involved. Thus the threat posed to the Brunswick by global capital served as the catalyst for a powerful expression of united resistance that was underpinned, on the one hand, by the perception of the building as an untouchable architectural icon, but on the other, by a fundamental loyalty and commitment to a social concept of the place as a council estate and embodiment of local community and interests.

When Allied London finally bought the building, amid much talk of consultation, a lot of people found it ‘*very exciting*’ (Lana); but in the process which followed, including the listing of the Brunswick, and what was perceived as a gradual sidelining of residents’ interests, much of the original fire was lost, and further conspiracy theories gathered steam – residents warned each other that Allied London would ultimately do nothing, leave the building to rot, to the point where they could legitimately pull it down. Leaseholders’ mortgages would become valueless. After the removal of the grand external staircase, and then the footbridges connecting the two blocks, supposedly for security reasons, there was a real sense that the integrity of the Brunswick, not just as an architectural landmark, but also as ‘a united estate’, had been destroyed. As June, in O’Donnell Court, says, ‘*all we’ve got are two blocks...facing one another, with no link at all... We’re not a united estate any more.*

To get to the Tenants Room for meetings we have to go down, outside and round and ring the bell, which is insulting I think.'

It was strongly felt that the developer made it difficult for the residents to have a genuine voice in the changes being made, and the effect of the refurbishment of the shopping precinct is clearly perceived as a way of drawing a tighter physical and social boundary between the residents and the street level of the development in a way that decisively changes the original development concept and the history of the place to date. Not only are the shops perceived as too expensive and upmarket for council tenants' pockets, not to say irrelevant to their everyday needs, but also, as Anthony explains, *'in order to attract the shops the developer has had to make a clearer separation between the residential and the commercial. It's almost happened literally in the fabric of the architecture in the sense that ... they are building out the line of the column of the shops and then there's a canopy, so actually when you're in that space you'll be less aware that you're part of a big development.'*

In other words, the council estate above the shopping precinct has been more clearly segregated from ground level and from public use, the boundaries between the explicitly public and the domestic more closely drawn. Furthermore, the construction of the supermarket roof has cut off the view from flats at the north end, so that residents can no longer see the surrounding buildings, and, from O'Donnell Court, the sun setting in the evening. These views have been very important, connecting life inside the estate to the neighbourhood beyond, and the loss seems to confine residents to their 'own' territory more tightly. There is a perception that the developer has deliberately set limits on residents' sense of 'ownership' within the Brunswick, and there is speculation and rumour about Allied London's long-term intentions in terms of taking over the estate entirely and turning it into a privately-owned upmarket development to accommodate affluent professionals in London pieds-a-terres.

For residents like Giulia, the effects of the changes are already too distressing. As an Italian with communist sympathies, and a huge admirer of the British welfare state, she is outraged that *'working-class flats'* were ever sold off in the first place, for profit, and she is very worried about the new people – *'what kind of people?'* – who will move in when the Brunswick is refurbished. She not only identifies with, but also values the Brunswick as a council estate. But others, like Rob's new girlfriend Amanda, are disparaging about the place precisely because of its council estate

credentials: *'As soon as I walk in I feel that council housing feel... There's something about it that automatically, you know it's council.'*

For some newcomers, the social and physical identity of the Brunswick as a council estate is something they cannot romanticise, but need to distance themselves from, and the architectural status of the building provides the framework for another kind of identification with the place. Rob's previous girlfriend, Francoise, felt a similar antipathy to the idea of living in a council flat, while at the same time she was strongly attracted, and could relate to the Brunswick as a very '*striking*' building. In a sense, she lived at one remove from the social realities of the building, through her imagination of what it might be, prompted by its particular formal and material qualities. While she describes her own 'reality' there as 'shapeless', something that she cannot easily make sense of from the inside, she is quick to re-construct other people's lives there as stories framed by the theatrical setting of the Brunswick. She is particularly interested by one resident who is wheeled around in his wheelchair by identical twin daughters: *'the door of the lift opens, and you see that! It is like David Cronenberg... OK, here it is for you. It's a ménage-a-trois story .. probably a you-don-t-want-to-know kind of story. But actually I would like to know! It is captivating! R: J.G.Ballard. F: It's a film, a novel. Just with the picture of this guy in his wheelchair and the two girls.. a sort of Diane Arbus.. or Almodovar.'* Likewise, she is fascinated by a woman and her daughter who live in O'Donnell Court: *'they've got an incredible story to tell... This story is... R: It's gonna go on for ages! F: no, I'll try to be short.'*

It is Francoise who was the driving force behind the Brunswick Art Exhibition, in which artists were invited to re-present the Brunswick as an artistic and dramatic setting, as a world apart from the humdrum existence of everyday life on a council estate, and Francoise who complains about the negative reaction of residents who are happy to engage with the Brunswick at that everyday level. Rob is generally more conciliatory towards the community he sees around him, but he too has a tendency to view his life there through the perspective of a camera lens. He has photographed the architectural vista through the A-frame (which makes Francoise feel self-conscious and uncomfortable when she's walking to her front door) to make a postcard for their personal use, as well as the abstract images of wild plants growing among the paving slabs of the terraces which he hopes one day to hang on the walls of his flat.

If from the outside the Brunswick is perceived as an architectural icon, and a fascinating, if sometimes repellent, 'other' - a 'location' which has inspired numerous film and TV producers throughout its life-span - it is nevertheless experienced and understood from the inside, in varying ways, very strongly as a council estate, being a part of, but simultaneously distinct from the rest of the city in particular ways. Caught up in some sort of transformative process, there is a sense of ambiguity about the relationship between interior and exterior, which residents frame in different ways according to their own backgrounds, aspirations, and social contexts, and reproduce through the material worlds of their own homes.