

6.1 Introduction: 'outside' and 'inside'

The Brunswick Centre, as it was known until 2006, has been a focus of academic and professional interest since the first discussions about the design of the building took place in the early 1960s, but always, primarily, as a work of architecture: a formal production positioned within a history of architecture (1.1) and, to a lesser extent, town-planning, which expressed the particular perspective on that history of its architect, Patrick Hodgkinson, as interpreted by the public and the critics (Chps 2-3/ Melhuish 2006). This discourse has always overshadowed any discussion about the Brunswick's existence and significance as a social space, home to some 1000 inhabitants since 1973, within a particular inner London urban context.

Notwithstanding Camden Council's explicit socially-motivated agenda in acquiring the housing at the Brunswick as part of an initiative to reinstate family life in the Holborn area, and regardless of the estate's long-standing and well-documented problems in functioning properly as a viable mixed-use development (Chp 1.4.1, Chp 2.4.3), incorporating both public and private spaces, the experience of life inside the Brunswick has not really entered the public domain as the subject of discourse in its own right. As a 'place', perceived from within as a container of disparate people linked (or not) in space by many different threads, rather than observed from without as an external profile or aesthetic form, the Brunswick represents a multi-layered, multi-vocal social setting with its own internal dynamic which exists quite independently of the evaluation of the building both as a significant work of architecture within a particular European strand of architectural history, and as a landmark of national post-war cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, the architecture of the Brunswick does provide an expressive and inescapable environmental framework for the social life which subsists within it. It not only outlines but dramatically draws attention to, a particular territory, and gives some kind of definition to the lives and identities of the people who inhabit it – if only by contrast with neighbours who inhabit more traditional, or simply less eye-catching buildings. As they say themselves, it is 'stunning', 'very striking', a 'showpiece', a 'ziggurat' – or, less often, 'hideous', 'Alcatraz': not the sort of terms usually used to describe the remaining Georgian terraced housing in the area or the Victorian mansion blocks which succeeded it, let alone the other examples of fairly

standardised, nondescript 20th-century council housing (1.4.1). Residents of the Brunswick certainly have an enhanced awareness of the building they inhabit and furthermore, as a result of its more recent history - a succession of redevelopment proposals culminating in a major refurbishment project, coupled with the Listing of the building - many of them have been forced to engage consciously and emotionally (signing petitions, writing letters, attending meetings) with the architectural setting of their everyday lives in ways in which they perhaps never anticipated or would have wanted, given the choice.

When I approached my respondents for an account of their experience of living at the Brunswick, I asked them to tell me about 'Making a Home at the Brunswick'. I wanted to explore and potentially reconnect the experiences of private, domestic life 'inside' a building ('home'), the external social existence 'outside' that framework ('public life') which it mirrors, and the role of the material structure and visual form of the building itself as a significant interface between the two - particularly in a case such as this where that external envelope has been the subject of such extensive conversation in the public domain, amongst, and evaluated by, people with no personal experience of the view from 'inside looking out'¹. I wanted to compare the subjective experience of living in this setting (Chps 4-5), with an almost fetishistic view of the building as a highly objectified architectural icon, and explore the linkages between the two perspectives.

In his studies of material culture within the home, Daniel Miller has posited that, following on from the effective 'privatisation' of the household in industrialised societies, '*most of what matters to people is happening behind the closed doors of the private sphere*' (Miller 2001 p1) and that therefore anthropologists working 'at home', in western societies, need to get inside the private realm of people's homes as '*the site from which other people view their worlds*' (p15) - however intrusive that may seem. He argues that the material culture of domestic life represents the external world inside the home, and provides a vehicle for self-expression through the manner of its appropriation. However, his idea of '*closed doors*' suggests a very decisive distinction and differentiation between interior and exterior, and a clear boundary between those realms, while few homes are in reality completely autonomous and, particularly in dense urban residential communities, the boundaries between interior

¹ To use the title of the photographic exhibition by Clare Melhuish and Susannah Stone: 'Inside Looking Out: photographs of the Brunswick', Unit 38, Coram Arcade, The Brunswick. October 2006.

and exterior may be more truly experienced as layered and fuzzy. Where does home and private life begin and end, and how is the threshold, both physical and cognitive, between private and public life defined and managed?

Hand-in-hand with the rise in studies of mass consumption practices, understood in a post-Marxian sense as the central means of human self-objectification in industrialised society, has been that of a literature on the anthropology of the home which shines the spotlight on material objects inside the home, and on a concept of home defined primarily by the things within it, and the social relationships they may represent, and hardly at all by the nature of the physical structure which encloses it. Home is essentially defined by moveable and disposable arrangements of goods, fittings, furnishings, pets and people, along with the activities that take place inside it. It is treated as more or less independent of the less significant external, structural and material characteristics of the building in which 'home' is situated (Cieraad 1999, Reimer and Leslie 2004 etc) – largely because, in contrast to the 'simple' societies traditionally studied by anthropologists, the inhabitants generally have little or no input into the bigger structure: homes are acquired 'off-the-peg' in one way or another. However it is these buildings, viewed from the outside, and framing 'home' inside, which shape and reflect a society's image of itself on a daily basis, and therefore demand consideration by the anthropologist as much as the interiors they conceal. Miller implies a diminution of the significance of the public sphere in contemporary life, suggesting that modernity has brought about a collapse of meaning in the public realm, manifested in a built form that has become unintelligible. As he puts it, '*the major expression of modernity*' is the '*social disaster of the new built environment*' (Miller 1987, p 187).

6.1.2 Modern and traditional built form as social landscape

In his introduction to *Home Possessions*, Miller refers to Richard Sennett's earlier work on the subject of the '*dichotomy between the private and the public*' (Miller 2001, p 4), which coincidentally refers to the Brunswick itself as an explicit example of the way in which modernism has effectively eroded the public domain through its negative impact on the built environment (Sennett 1976). Sennett describes the Brunswick as '*dead public space*', consisting of '*two enormous apartment complexes*' facing each other across '*a few shops and vast areas of empty space... an area to pass through, not to use... isolated*'. The glazed stepped terraces of the two

blocks generate, he says, a '*permeation of the house and the outside*' which is '*curiously abstract... one has a nice view of the sky but the buildings are so angled that they have no relationship to, or view out on, the surrounding buildings of Bloomsbury*' (p 13).

Sennett identifies the Brunswick as an exemplar of a condition of formal abstraction which humans cannot relate to or see meaning in. It embodies the breakdown and absence of cultural meaning in the public realm which has come about through modernism and its architectural aesthetics, and he implies that this must also extend to the private realm, in the abstract nature of the relationship between the house and the outside. However, ethnographic research at the Brunswick shows that the reality is not quite so simple as his negative reading would suggest. Where Sennett speaks of 'dead public space', residents refer to their sense of connection with, say, the girls and management of the old supermarket as being '*like family*'. From the outside the Brunswick may have appeared (before its facelift) as little more than '*a concrete monstrosity*' to dissenters, even while English Heritage lauded the complex as a pre-eminent and forward-looking example of mixed-use, low-rise, high-density development in the post-war years, which radically challenged the sterile orthodoxy of zoning in current planning policy (2.3.1). But, as the architecture critic Reyner Banham suggested early on its history, the Brunswick also appeared to be one of the '*best-liked*' of Britain's 'megastructures' (Banham 1976, p 185), and, from the inside, the reality of living at the Brunswick cannot accurately be described as a '*social disaster*.' From the inside, the experience of living at the Brunswick is not determined solely by the form, particularly the external form, of the building itself, but by the social construction of individuals' lives. It is this social reality which generates a sense of identification with, or emplacement in, a particular location connected to other locations, as the physical embodiment of social ties. Douglas reminds us that the idea of reality as 'socially constructed' goes back to the writings of Hegel and Marx (Douglas 1973). She emphasises the need to construct time and space '*as dimensions of social relations*' (p 71), and the role of phenomenology as a philosophy, or tool, for interpreting (and ultimately transcending) '*the lived experience*' (p 71), as opposed to an understanding of human lives based on presupposition. So, while it may be tempting to presuppose a condition of alienation and loss among residents of a place like the Brunswick, on the basis of a negative aesthetic critique of its built form, such a view may not correspond at all with the

experience of time and space, as dimensions of social relations, which constitutes the reality of residents lives on the inside.

Douglas cites Bourdieu's study of the Berber (Kabyle) house (Bourdieu 1970) to illustrate her argument. She draws attention to the '*almost incredible complexity and richness of meaning [which] is achieved in the rules which organise the space in and around the Berber house*', and stresses that '*If [Bourdieu] had limited himself to one system of signs, say furniture, or the house without the outside, or the whole material culture without the supporting rites and proverbs which he cites, he would have missed these meanings*' (Douglas 1973 p 13). Bourdieu describes the house holistically in terms of a series of binary oppositions, which constitute a reversal, or mirror, of social relations, particularly concerning male-female roles outside the house in the public realm. Miller describes the study as the catalyst for the new anthropological interest in the material culture of the home (Miller 2001), from the point of view that it posits 'habitat' as being central to 'habitus', the subject of Bourdieu's expansive later work (Bourdieu 1984), in which he investigated the cognitive structure, signposted largely by consumption practices, of the social realm in the industrialised world – a very different arena of sociological study from that of the Kabyle house. The Kabyle house study was significant, because it took up Lévi-Strauss's concept of the house as a form of social organisation, and developed it as a 'material culture' study, where Lévi-Strauss's work was notable for its lack of '*any detailed attention to the most obvious feature of houses: their physical characteristics*' (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, p 12, also cited Melhuish 1996, 2000). But on the other hand, Bourdieu's study contrasts with more contemporary anthropological studies of the home 'behind closed doors' precisely because of the emphasis it places on the connection of inside and outside mediated by physical boundaries and the thresholds which punctuate them.

It would hardly be possible to undertake a study of the Brunswick approached in the same way as the Berber house study and others like it, which focus on the significance of the self-contained house as a form of material culture and formal manifestation of social organisation in small-scale non-urban societies (eg Tambiah 1969; Preston-Blier 1987; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, including Bloch; Waterson 1991, et al). In the first place, Brunswick homes are not self-contained houses with their own external walls. Although they might, inspired by some residents' comments on the housing of family members in the same building, be conceptualised as part of a

larger ‘big house’, along the lines of the Caduveo family ‘long house’ described by Levi-Strauss (Levi-Strauss 1955), that analogy falls short due to the remote mode of the building’s design and production, independent of its subsequent occupants, although in conjunction with a client body acting indirectly on their behalf. Neither does the Brunswick represent through its built form a cohesive social structure in the vernacular sense. On the contrary, it forms a component of a radically different social landscape, in which the very idea of the cohesive community sharing the same ‘rules and meanings’ is a tenuous one. Brunswick homes are contained within a purpose-built, urban, multi-occupancy building type which, as Marcus recounts, has been considered with suspicion in London since its first appearance in the 19th century, precisely because it seemed to undermine the desirable physical and moral boundaries between private and public life, and invite amoral ‘seepage’ between the two domains (Marcus 1999, cited Melhuish 2005, p22). Nevertheless, studies of vernacular architecture, as a model for interpreting the relationship between people and their houses, remain a worthwhile starting-point for conceptualising the interaction of built form and social reality at such a site.

6.2. Social realms and boundaries

6.2.1 Boundaries of ‘home’

For residents of the Brunswick and anywhere else, the experience of home, of what it means to be ‘at home’, is inseparable from the experience of life in the block as a whole, on the estate, and beyond that, the life of the street, and personal social networks within and transcending the local neighbourhood. The extent and range of those different networks, and the way in which they are managed by different individuals as overlapping but separate ‘communities’ to which they simultaneously belong, may vary considerably, giving residents different degrees and forms of a sense of belonging (both by themselves and by others) in relation to the Brunswick. This might also be described as a sense of psychological and geographical ‘emplacement’. In each individual case it has a direct impact on what people bring to, and how they perceive their homes, as revealed by the ethnographic data, but in addition to these personal networks, Brunswick residents are uniquely caught up in a larger local government and national dialogue about their place of residence which has also impinged on their perception of home. The controversial discussions and appraisals of the Brunswick over the years from the point of view of its maintenance

programme, and its architectural evaluation as a building of national significance, have framed an idea and images of the building within a particular perspective which has had an impact on everyone who lives there, and brought them into social contact with people and values which many residents would never otherwise have encountered. Some speak of their feelings of alienation as a result of this experience, others have perhaps been 'empowered' by it through a process of confrontational engagement, while for others again, the effect has been to engender a stronger sense of attachment to the idea of 'home' at the Brunswick. The relationship between people and their homes may be focussed on the individual flat, and manifested in the material culture which occupants generate within their own private spaces, but it is not confined to that discrete area, seeping out through their own party walls into the larger environment beyond.

Douglas (1991) argues that a home is more conceptual than physical in nature, *'a kind of space...localisable... but not necessarily fixed'* (p288-9), inviting a consideration of the individual Brunswick flat as a relatively fluid entity which, in conceptual terms, may take in more or less of the surrounding environs, depending on an occupier's 'emplacement' there. A home *'brings some space under control'* (p289) and it *'has some structure in time... aesthetic and moral dimensions'* (p 289), but it is less about the solidity and impenetrability of its four walls, than about the *'directions of existence'* (p 290) which it indicates, the concept of a cognitive boundary differentiating between, or classifying in relation to each other, the life of the household and the world outside. Douglas also suggests that, in view of the 'tyranny' asserted by the home over its occupants, it is surprising that anyone would willingly submit to it. However, it is sustained by the social commitment to a concept of 'solidarity' embodied by the household unit dedicated to the service of its own needs, in contrast to those of non-members, rather than 'solidity' per se. Douglas points out that the most minimal home, say amongst the !Kung in Africa, does not even have a physical inside-outside boundary as such, let alone providing a complete sheltering structure, but is identifiable only by sticks marking its orientation. The crucial factor in the constitution of the home 'space' is the designation of some kind of marking system which differentiates between, yet also connects, the inside and outside zones of experience. Thus, in the case of the Brunswick flats, some residents may identify with a larger physical space as 'home', depending on the nature of the household contained by the flat's four walls and on their social relationships beyond

the four walls of the flat, and their cognitive ‘marking system’, in terms of differentiating between ‘home’ and ‘other’ space may not correspond directly with the physical boundaries of the dwelling unit itself.

If we accept that the boundaries surrounding a home and its contents may be conceptually and materially more flexible than some of the literature focussed on the interior of the home as a discrete entity may present, and that the distinction between inside and outside may be more ambiguous than might be assumed, then this, paradoxically perhaps, provides an opportunity to consider how far the physical external structure and outside edges of the home may impinge on an individual’s sense of being ‘at home’, or ‘making a home’ in a particular place. My ethnography at the Brunswick shows that although one of the features of the Brunswick which residents often comment on and enjoy is the relative ‘privacy’ of the individual flats, most people’s conceptualisation of, and relationship with their homes is also mediated through their experience of the larger building which forms a sort of ‘thick edge’ between their own private domains and the street, and through the social relations which are also filtered through that structure – kept at a distance, or drawn in by it. Different individuals define and negotiate the boundaries between their private lives inside their homes, and the public world outside in different ways.

Conal’s appreciation of the emptiness of the internal atrium may be interpreted as a desire to establish a kind of ‘liminal’, or in-between zone, separating public and private spaces, and forming an effective extension to his home space. He can walk his dog in peace here without seeing anybody, while reserving his social interactions for the street outside the security doors (4.1.1.). But Susan, another ‘newcomer’ (1.4.3), enjoys sustaining neighbourly relations on her stretch of the walkway on the seventh floor, which she perceives as a ‘close community’. She is happy to visit her neighbours, whom she will describe in family terms as ‘like a granny’, even though it is not always convenient for her, because she wants to sustain a perception of her own home which also extends beyond its immediate walls. While for Stephanie, the common parts represent a profoundly ‘anti-social’ space where you cannot have a conversation outside your front door because it will be heard by everyone. It is a space to avoid, and from which to retreat behind the closed doors of the flat.

Physical boundary-marking also operates in different ways. Susan, for example, has been active in replanting the flower boxes at the main entrance doors on the street, making that first point of entry her own, and embracing the larger building

as her own domain. But others focus on the area immediately around their own front door, painting and decorating it in various ways, forming more intimate bridges between the inside of their homes and the larger structure of the block. In general, however, there has been a powerful sense of disappointment and disillusion that the redevelopment of the Brunswick has not extended to the repainting of the internal structure, along with the outside, because the lack of finish in this area undermines a viable notion of the domestic extending beyond the front doors to the flats, and impinges on resident's sense of 'homeliness' in their own homes, underlining a notion of the common parts as an essentially liminal space between interior and exterior.

6.2.2. Social perceptions of territory and role of symbols

Even when considering a number of people living in the same place, in what might be considered a fairly homogenous modern urban society, it can be a challenge to understand the great differences in the way they see and relate to that place, and therefore to make any assumptions about what it means to a group of people: *"the distance between one [socio-cultural] milieu and another is a very small step in comparison to the huge metaphysical gap we must leap to understand the perspective of another person in any time and place"* (Rapport and Dawson 1998 [citing E.D.Hirsch], p 11). However, attempts have been made to produce an equation between spatial form, perceptions of place and human behaviour, whereby one can be reliably read from the other. For example, Hanson and Hillier have based their work in the social analysis of space on the principle of a dualism between territory and kinship as the *'two polar bases of society'* (Hanson and Hillier 1984 p 201). While anthropologists have historically focussed on the latter as the organising principle of society, Hillier and Hanson posit space itself as powerful form of 'social logic': a conglomeration of *'morphological constraints of pattern formation within which human purposes must work themselves out'* (p 54). I would argue that this approach is over-deterministic, and cannot effectively be applied to generate a cultural interpretation of a place like the Brunswick, because perceptions of territory, and the ways in which cognitive boundaries are delineated within it, will vary considerably from one person to another in the case of social settings which are not actually socially cohesive through ties of kinship and culture.

For example, Stephanie describes longer-term Brunswick residents as 'ordinary people' who feel 'repressed by the building', but Lorraine, who is pretty

much representative of that group of tenants, says she feels alienated by the influx of newcomers buying flats in the Brunswick, and the deaths of many of the older people whom she knew when she moved in, which make her feel 'not at home' there any more. She has made herself at home at the Brunswick during the years she has lived there, but now it is the change in the social complexion of the place, not the 'improved' building itself, which is prompting her to consider moving away. Residents such as Lorraine evoke Strathern's findings at the village of Elmdon that *'it's not the geographical entity which is being evoked in notions of belonging... Nor is it just way of life or length of association'* (Strathern 1981, p 17), but rather, perhaps, a sense of social emplacement. But on the other hand, newcomers such as Susan and Conal and others, who do not have that social emplacement to the same extent, but do have a professional involvement in architecture, design or construction beyond their lives at the Brunswick, may look to the Brunswick itself as a larger physical framework for their own lives beyond the walls of their own flats, to provide a similar sense of belonging. Independently of their relations with other people who live in it, they are able to relate to its architectural form and presence as a powerful symbol of identification and belonging which may also concretise the connection between their private lives 'at home' and their public and professional lives in the outside world.

I would suggest that although the Brunswick as a work of architecture and a spatial formula does not determine residents' lives within it, it does have the capacity to operate as a symbol which transcends differences between social groups within it, and enables interconnection between them. In Turner's study of the role of ritual in society, society itself is defined in terms of a 'structure of statuses' (Turner 1969), or a hierarchy of planes of classification, determined by a close connection with property in one form or another. These planes may be transcended or linked by particular symbols, and are thrown into contrast by liminal states of 'statuslessness' (p97) which are vital to the continuing functioning of society by periodically drawing people outside the system into a plane of undifferentiated 'comradeship' or 'communitas', as Turner prefers to call it (p96). He describes these individuals as those who fall in *'the interstices of social structure'* (p128) who are on its margins, or its lowest rungs, but by virtue of their very presence there highlight the determinacy and power of the structure itself. There is a powerful spatial dimension to the identification of such individuals or groups, which in western societies may take the form (historically) of

millenarian groups, or, more recently, hippy communes (occupying 'marginal' spaces in nontraditional spatial settings). In African societies such as the ones Turner refers to, this dichotomy between status and lack of status is very clearly played out in specific ritual events embodied in both temporal and spatial forms. Drawing on the definitions set out by van Gennep (1909), Turner describes three phases of passage between one state or status in terms of: separation, margin, and reaggregation (ritual/temporal), and preliminal, liminal, and postliminal (spatial). During the passage through these phases, certain symbols will however be explicitly used to bridge and connect between the states or planes of social, ritual and spatial classification.

Although it might seem simplistic or over functionalist, Turner's concept of social order versus marginality, the ritual and spatial expression of those values, and the role of symbols in bridging between them seem worth considering for the insights they may offer into the relationships between social and physical structure and the role of symbolism at the Brunswick. As I have suggested, different people relate to the Brunswick in different ways, effectively identifying themselves with contrasting social categories which also have spatial dimensions within the Brunswick in terms of the ways in which people negotiate the boundaries between their homes and the larger building framework. Although these categories may elude the clear and simple definition which Turner evokes, they clearly exist, but may also be transcended by the Brunswick itself, both as a common point of reference at the level of daily life and as a powerful symbol of unity against external forces, particularly during the redevelopment period.

Turner and van Gennep's concepts of structure and state assume a perhaps more obviously relevant form in Stuart Hall's evocation of a concept of 'identity' in the modern era which is based in a system of classification structured by difference between categories (Hall 1996). Hall proposes that each category, each identity, must necessarily have a 'margin', much in the terms of Turner's concept of liminal or transitional states, and again pointing to the potential for spatial inference. While the concept of 'identity' should not be automatically correlated with that of 'status', it is similarly based on a recognition of what is included and excluded, with a margin of liminality around each, and the potential for movement between categories of classification, aided by specific symbols of interconnection. And if identity is intrinsically associated with notions of belonging, then concepts of community and

territory, as the spatial manifestation of identity, along with the marginal or liminal spaces that differentiate between territories, become significant in that sense as well.

Evidently, there are identifiable structural patterns governing the way that different elements of the Brunswick's population relate to the environment, associated with education, work, income, cultural background, and household configuration. As one resident says, the key to having an appreciation of the architectural aesthetics of the building is a university education. But at the same time, a detailed ethnography reveals that the delineation of boundaries at the Brunswick, and the classificatory systems which they point to, is not fixed according to predetermined structural patterns, but varies from person to person at a micro level, according to specific individual temperament, experience and social relationships extending from and connect the home outward into the block, the street, the city and beyond. Stephanie says she is lucky to live on the 'outside' of the building, because it gives her a direct visual connection from her flat to the street and the pub outside which she loves, while she regards the block on the 'inside' as anti-social and repressive. Conal on the other hand loves the empty space of the atrium where he can walk his dog and meet nobody, while he has become resentful of the noise in the precinct which penetrates his flat through the all-too permeable boundary represented by his living-room window and balcony. Lynn too is protective of the boundary between her flat and the precinct, shielding herself from the view of the shopping centre with closed blinds, but she willingly confronts the gruesome realities of life in Palestine every day, within the protected domain of her flat, in the form of objects such as her hubble-bubble pipe and Arabic books. Yet another contrast is constituted in Gloria's fulsome embrace of the boundary between her own space and the public domain at the Brunswick, constituted by the balcony as a place for decoration and display, the 'instantaneous show', where she is happy to draw attention to her own presence and participate in the life of the building as a whole through her material interactions with the public façade.

6.2.3 Material markers of identity

However, the ways in which boundaries are delineated between public and private life, constituted in the mind and expressed in material form, are not wholly self-determined, but also imposed by other people's processes and methods for differentiating between categories of 'them' and 'us'. For Gloria, a florist born and

brought up in the area, the incoming professionals represent a group of people with superior expertise and know-how in certain areas, while she may not have that but, on the other hand, has long-standing 'roots' in the area and a readiness to speak her mind and not be cowed by 'authority'. The difference between them is represented to Gloria in the fact that 'their' homes look like glorified offices, while for the incoming professionals it is embodied in the proliferation of consumer goods that fills the homes of their geographical neighbours. Similarly, while for Conal the atrium may be an enjoyable 'liminal' zone, Gloria resents its empty and neglected feel, desperate for it to be painted and decorated in a way that befits the rest of a building she regards as a 'showpiece'. She is keen to get out into the street where she will be recognised and acknowledged for who she is in the local area. By contrast, a resident like June resists defining herself in relation to other Brunswick residents. She deliberately plays down the significance of the Brunswick as a building or a social framework, moving directly between her flat, as the place she 'comes back to' from her travels far afield, and 'central London' as the arena of her everyday public and personal life. The whole of the Brunswick outside her flat is, to an extent, a 'liminal' space, occupied by a liminal group of people whom she does not recognise as friends, which she passes through as quickly as possible to get from one significant, clearly defined, spatial and social setting to another. As she says, she doesn't particularly think of her 'home' as being located 'at the Brunswick' at all, but rather as a collection of personal possessions around herself as a person located, through her friendships and cultural interests, in central London.

Thus boundaries between inside and outside, home and 'the Brunswick' and the city beyond, between 'them' and 'us', describe different categories of recognition and identity as they are defined from within and outside the subject, which may also be transcended by a concept of the Brunswick itself as an overarching symbol of identity. The processes by which those boundaries are drawn up may be partly defined by structural patterns, but are also subject to detailed, personal variation which reflects the multiple nature of identity formation in modern urban societies, or what Rapport and Dawson describe as the modern 'world of movement'. They describe this as a process of self-narrativisation, weaving together an individual's sense of multiple identities in various compartments of existence, which has significant implications for the concept of what constitutes 'home' in modern society. Since *'global travel and communications made distinctive identities set up purely in*

terms of place and geographical difference... less viable and attractive' (Rapport and Dawson 1998, p1) (just as the early modernist architects dreamt of and celebrated in the flowering of 'international' style architecture, see Intro), the necessary objectification of the 'narrativised' self has become associated with a concept of home which provides a medium for expressing an idea of self through material form, but is released from restrictive geographical and territorial attributes, and redefined simply as the place '*where one best knows oneself*' (p 9).

If, as Dawson and Rapport and others maintain, categories of identity in the modern world have become more detailed, variable and fluid, in contrast to traditional ideas of 'status' and class structure; and the idea of 'home' itself, as the material location, or constitution, of identity, has become correspondingly more variable and ephemeral, in terms of its defining characteristics, the process of classification and categorisation nevertheless remains fundamental to the definition and perpetuation of social identities. The concept of boundaries between private and public, inside and outside, self and others, shores up a perception of social structure and dynamics, and is manifested in expressive material and performative forms – from personal accessories, to ritual actions, and territorial marking. However, the ways in which these trajectories are managed and materialised are expressive of the different relationships that individuals maintain between categories of experience. Nippert-Eng (1996) has defined these processes of 'integration-segmentation' as fundamental to the constitution and experience of modern social life, and this understanding provides a useful tool for an understanding of life inside the Brunswick.

6.2.4 Classification of material realms

Giulia comes down to the street door of Foundling Court to meet me on my first visit in her slippers, extending the threshold of her private home down five floors through the atrium space to the edge of the street. But subsequently, I was struck by the sight of her coat and shopping bag hanging on the back of her front door inside her flat, like a framed image of her 'external', public self, the Giulia who goes out shopping and used to enjoy sitting around in the precinct for a chat, but who comes no farther into her private domain than the threshold. Giulia says she feels alienated from the Brunswick now, and keeps her curtains drawn to obscure the sight of the building she inhabits, clearly segmenting the internal and external realms of her life, although she used to love the place.

Annie and Anthony also love the Brunswick, which, as a bigger framework around the physical space of their home, provides the real meaning to their idea of home there. Like Giulia, and unlike June, their experience of 'home' at the Brunswick comprises a fusion of the flat itself and the bigger building. They are correspondingly happy to engage with the building at a direct and physical level by cleaning out the lifts themselves if they find someone has urinated in them just when they are expecting a visit from Anthony's parents. Their home does not simply stop at their front door, but is extendible, their boundaries flexible and negotiable, as they engage in practices of integration.

Annie and Anthony's cleaning activities in the common parts bring to mind, in a rather visceral way, Douglas's exploration of the concepts of pollution taboo in different societies, also cited by Nippert Eng as an illustration of boundary-making and differentiation between contrasting realms of existence, or status: '*The action of sweeping one's floors becomes a physical, visible attempt to maintain a mental, categorical purity and order*' (Douglas 1966, cited Nippert-Eng 1996, p99). And indeed, the discourse of dirt, cleaning, and what might be called 'household maintenance' at the Brunswick is a powerful one which has flourished throughout its life. There is a great anxiety about rubbish and other human debris making its way into the public areas of the Brunswick, where, out of place, it becomes a garish embodiment of invasive anti-social behaviour and an extension of the general dilapidated state of the building as a whole, like a body succumbing to disease. As Lana says, it is hard to know which comes first, the dilapidation of the building or the transgressive behaviour of the people. Both present a transgression of implicit rules of integration/ segmentation, because the presence of rubbish in the wrong places threatens the integrity of private space as much as public. The situation has only improved because of the strong 'leadership' of the caretakers, who have succeeded in imposing a regime of control over the processes of contamination that constantly threaten the social order. For dirt and rubbish is closely associated with undesirable people, or people who do not quite fit in to the recognised categories: people who have a liminal status themselves which can be tolerated only when the physical signs of their presence are eliminated. When the evidence is left in the public domain, it opens up the fear of what that means for the state of their own private domains, as expressed by Lorraine, and the idea of a canker eating into the most private areas of the building structure. Kevin, the caretaker, rigorously cleans inside his own flat, and

zealously guards its threshold from undesirable visitors in the form of other residents with problems to discuss, as if the health of the whole is connected in some way to the sustainability of his own personal practices of cleanliness and order within his own private space. But unfortunately there is also the evidence of unsavoury practices that cannot so easily be removed from the public consciousness, because it transgresses the physical boundaries between inside and outside, but does not actually fall into the public domain – such as dirty curtains, the washing hanging out to dry on balconies which Bob takes issue with, or even aberrations of ‘taste’, such as the terracotta paintwork applied to the external façade of one flat, which eventually the Estate Manager ordered to be removed. While for one resident this individual marking of his private territory embodied a personal experience of connectivity between internal and external worlds, an animated threshold no less, it was interpreted by the authorities as a threatening transgression of the boundary between private and public space and activity.

Nippert-Eng (1996) argues that ‘*the “myth of separate spheres” permeates our culture*’ (p18, citing Kanter 1977), with specific reference to the worlds of work and home; but the same might perhaps be said of the ways our home-lives, surrounded by material goods, are conceptualised in relation to the larger built environment which we inhabit. Certainly, at the Brunswick, there are residents who allow a greater integration, and others who impose more segmentation on the relationship between their flats and the liminal zones beyond which lead to the street and the city. Lana’s flat is a very private space, a ‘workshop’ for her own internal life which she has no intention of opening up to the public eye, and she laments the refurbishment of the Brunswick, because this is exactly what it has done to the building as a whole, subjecting it to a commercial imperative which has commodified it as an object, making it visible and accessible to people who want to ‘do well out of it’, and turning it into a fully-functioning public space at the same time, which threatens the integrity of residents’ private lives on the site. Bob imposes a degree of careful control over the boundaries of his private world inside the flat, maintaining regular hours for being ‘out’ and ‘in’, using his dog as what Nippert-Eng might interpret as a ritualised device to negotiate the transition between realms when he takes it out for walks in the local squares that also represent times of social interaction with other dog walkers. His sister, by contrast, only walks the dog within the atrium spaces of the Brunswick itself, but this activity also provided the opportunity to pop in

on friends in their flats within the block. Now they have few friends there, and do not entertain at home, their formal dining-table firmly folded up against the wall under the window, and even pictures of friends, points of contact with the outside world, are banished from the internal décor of the space, as if they have deliberately closed down the borders as their lives wind down.

But other residents, with their ‘plush three-piece suites’ and their large televisions are ready for public scrutiny at any time: the whole agenda for the arrangement and décor of their homes is based on the idea that they would withstand the public gaze with decency, revealing the occupants themselves as worthy citizens with the wherewithal to sustain a respectable standard of living. These are the people who would readily acknowledge their desire to project an image of themselves, through the material culture of their homes, into the public domain beyond their front doors, as described in Clarke’s study (Clarke 2001). For while residents like Lana might be doing precisely the same thing, they do not acknowledge it in the same way.

6.2.4 Performance of identity and belonging

It might be argued that a tendency towards greater ‘integration’ in managing the boundary between home and public life could represent a strategy designed to engender a more powerful sense of belonging within a particular territory beyond the immediate confines of the private home-space. Fortier has demonstrated that the experience of ‘belonging’, in the sense of identifying with a particular place, is enacted through a combination of material culture, or possessions, and practices, or ‘performativity’ (Fortier 1991). It is not simply, as Strathern found, associated with birthright or longevity of residence, but by the deliberate strategies that people put in place and maintain in order to construct a sustainable sense of belonging for themselves. As Vikki Bell puts it, cultural identity, even gender or race identity is ‘*an “effect” performatively produced*’ (Bell 1991, p 3), not an innate state of being. And so, at the Brunswick, there are those who organise their home space so that it is ready for projection onto the public realm, implying a greater permeability in the boundary between inside and outside. Some of these residents will also be those who have lived there ‘since the beginning’, who knew many of their neighbours when they moved in because they had been part of the same local community before the Brunswick was built, and so might be thought to have nothing to prove in terms of their ownership of the territory. But some of these will also reveal a sense of tension between themselves

and newcomers to the Brunswick, through other types of displays perhaps intended to communicate a superior sense of belonging. These may range from a deliberately orchestrated lack of curiosity about newcomers to highly vocalised performances at Tenants' meetings, described by one resident as verging on the 'bawdy', and a keen participation in the 'Brunswick grapevine', or the 'gossip opportunities' which used to arise in the old supermarket. While at a more explicitly performative and ritualistic level, there have been dramatic funeral wakes, with streams of people passing through the atrium space to the address concerned, which embody the differentiation between cultures in a very public manner.

Among those who have arrived to live into the building in the last 10-20 years, there is a tendency to maintain the home itself as a zone of privacy segregated from the public realm, while the process of constructing a sense of identity as Brunswick residents is focussed more on putting themselves as people onto the public stage of the Brunswick by assuming particular roles and responsibilities there. Rob and Francoise perform their own connection with the building and its residents in a very public way, in their roles as chairman of the TA (Rob), and organiser of an ambitious site-based art show at the Brunswick (Francoise) which aroused some antagonism among long-term residents who suggested it had no connection with their lives, clearly differentiated from those of both the organisers and the artists. Rob also 'performs' his identity as a Brunswick resident regularly by wandering round the building taking photographs of it for his personal enjoyment, an activity which simultaneously embodies his sense of belonging to another kind of community, of people 'like him' who have aspirations to creative self-expression and achievement. These aspirations are also expressed in the kind of material culture they have in their home – not over-sized televisions and mass-produced 'clutter', as he sees it, but screen-printed Banksie posters and other artefacts related to sophisticated contemporary art culture – which forge a direct link between their existence at the Brunswick and other aspects of their self-constructed identities beyond it. Within, and without, the flat once intended to house local blue-collar families, they find a freedom to perform a sense of belonging at the Brunswick as a geographical and social place, while also developing their own narratives of multiple identity in a mobile world through a personal lexicon of material artefacts and activities that co-exists alongside the relics left by the previous occupant in the form of the decorative, Spanish-style ceramic tiles which display the flat number beside the front door.

6.3. 'Community', Communities and Material Worlds

6.3.1 Social dynamics at the Brunswick

Through individual and collective performances of belonging and identity, residents of the Brunswick delineate and manage boundaries between themselves and others, and between their private spaces and those beyond. Although the space and form of the Brunswick constitutes a specific territory within a particular geographical locale, it does not in itself constitute or identify a recognisable 'community' as such, but rather provides a physical and symbolic framework within which residents act out personal narratives of identity, belonging, and indeed marginality. This is understood by residents who tell me there is 'no real community' at the Brunswick, although an aspiration to ideals of locality and cohesion seems to underly much of the conversation about their lives there. The moment when such ideals came closest to realisation was when the Brunswick was first threatened with redevelopment, and various energetic forms of communal action within the Brunswick were mobilised. Even people who had, and continued to have, strong reservations about the aesthetics of the building participated, revealing a sense of identification of the building with its residents as a united group. So there is also a real sense in which the ideal of community is merged with the architectural and material identity of the building itself, understood as a vehicle for social relations. At an everyday level, however, there is neither 'no community', nor one united community at the Brunswick, but rather several different 'communities', classified by residents and outsiders alike into contrasting groups of differing status. Co-existing alongside these, and partly because of the proportion of sheltered flats, are numbers of individuals who occupy what might be termed a 'liminal' status in relation to those groups because they do not obviously 'fit in' to the accepted categories. However these differing groups, amongst whom there is a good deal of implicit conflict, are also transcended by the powerful symbol of the Brunswick which constitutes a focus of disagreement (and thereby differentiation) on the one hand, but also a unifying device in that it is a common topic of discussion and appraisal.

One of the areas of conflict between groups, which has also served to identify those groups, has been the issue of noise, particularly children's noise. Brunswick residents often mention the privacy, peace and quiet which it offers as one of the advantages of living there. Yet the conflict between the elderly residents and those with children, over noise in the public spaces, is one of the most dominant themes of

its history, and has effectively set a vast area of territory at the Brunswick, the terraces, out of bounds to anyone at all. Kevin, the caretaker, thinks the ideal solution would be to fence the whole area off and cultivate it as a garden, to be looked at from above, but not actually occupied by anyone. Thus this apparently ‘dead’ public space at upper level is in fact animated by the most intense territorial dispute between different groups of residents at the Brunswick, which have been reawakened by the efforts of some newcomers to identify a positive future for it. This in turn has highlighted differences between old-timers and newcomers, the former accusing the latter of a lack of understanding about the Brunswick’s history, the latter accusing the former of a lack of interest in new ideas about the future of the Brunswick; and, further, has reinvigorated old fears about the invasion and occupation of the internal spaces of the Brunswick by anti-social ‘undesirables’ – seen as an ‘other’ community, set apart from all the rest as a unified body of respectable residents.

That there is an awareness of different groups or ‘communities’ of people at the Brunswick is represented even by the name of the Tenants and Residents Association, which makes a deliberate differentiation between two types of occupant at the Brunswick – council tenants, and home-owning residents – despite the fact that right-to-buy legislation has greatly blurred that boundary. Many council tenants bought their homes, and so became bona fide ‘residents’, yet some of those are still keen to proclaim their old ‘council’ status, declaring that home-ownership has not affected their old sense of identity in any way. In the meantime, a new Leaseholders’ Association has recently been set up by one of those former tenants to provide a separate forum, and identity, specifically for leaseholders to discuss the increasing financial obligations of home-owning at the Brunswick. Thus although there is overlapping and a blurring of boundaries between groups, there is nevertheless a continuing sense of their differences and a need for their identification, which co-exist with a tangible ideal of community as a united whole.

6.3.2 Notions of community and symbolic markers

Cohen argues that the notion of community as an ideal has remained as vital as ever in the modern era, notwithstanding the pronouncements of those who saw the conditions of modern life – industrialisation, urbanisation, global communication and diaspora, an overwhelming proliferation of artefacts and commodities – as inseparable from social fragmentation, alienation, and extreme individualism, leading to loss of

identity and the death of community (Cohen 1985). George Simmel outlined his fears for modern society as early as 1911, and the spectres of depersonalisation and a loss of empathy between individuals which he conjured up are as powerful as ever today. He suggested that industrialisation and the sheer proliferation of goods had eroded the ability of humans to appropriate and assimilate in consciousness the fruits of their production, rendering the external world increasingly bewildering and oppressive (Simmel 1911 [1997]). For many commentators in the 1960s and 1970s, the spectacle of the apparently failing and already dilapidated structures of modern architecture embodied the worst of their fears about the effects of modern social conditions, summed up in one word: alienation.

But Cohen argues that the presumed opposition between ‘community’ and ‘modernity’ is spurious. Communities may not be so ‘*objectively apparent*’ as they once were, but they continue to exist and thrive, notwithstanding urbanism, materialism, individualism, and globalism. So while, on the one hand, it would be a mistake to presume that the architectural envelope of the Brunswick represents a clear boundary delineating a cohesive community which might be objectively identified with the building itself, it would also be wrong to presume, even though the concrete ‘megastructure’ of the Brunswick may appear to embody the conditions of modernity, that the Brunswick considered as a specific territory of inhabitation, necessarily represents a wholly alienated and dysfunctional social setting for reasons of its architectural inception.

Cohen’s definition of ‘communities’ helps to clarify an understanding of community life at the Brunswick. He defines communities as groups of people in which the members have something in common with each other, which also distinguishes them from others. In other words they embody what is essentially a ‘relational’, not an absolute, idea, and the boundaries which define such groups ‘*may be thought of... as existing in the minds of their beholders*’ (p 12), rather than open to objective assessment. Correspondingly, the ways in which different members of a group define those boundaries are also subjective, not objective. This argument highlights the fact that perceptions of community and identity, or its absence, at the Brunswick, or anywhere else, are essentially subjective and not necessarily objectively apparent. But that does not legitimate the claim that community does not exist in a certain place at all.

If the perception of community and identity is ultimately a subjective process on the part of those concerned, then the relationship between subjectivity and 'objective' material fact, in the form of the architectural structure which defines the inhabited territory, needs to be considered if one is to understand the relationship between the two. Cohen plays down the role of the physical in the construction of communities, but Rowlands' discussion of materiality is of interest in this context (Rowlands 2005). He suggests that the ways in which '*we apprehend our subjectivity*' (p80) are significantly affected by the access we have to 'materiality', understood as a social and political resource, and that limited access directly reduces or constrains the ability to enter into positive social and political engagements; in other words it impinges on the way that communities perceive themselves and on their vitality in relationship to the structures of power. He writes: '*I am concerned... that we should not lose an understanding of the conditions of hierarchical materiality which defines how some may become more material than others and how exclusivity of access to material being may be a product of or an elimination from practical and intellectual activity*' (p80). Residents of the Brunswick are very clear that, at an everyday level, the material conditions of their lives are not satisfactory, and represent a below-standard level of what a residential building should offer. They participated in a discourse of complaint about this for many years but, according to the local councillor, have finally lost the will to voice their concerns, to represent themselves as a community to the established authorities, even though they are well-represented by their tenants' association. In the light of Rowlands' discussion, and the particular situation at the Brunswick, it seems legitimate to draw out a relationship between the (reduced) materiality of council estates in general, including the Brunswick itself, and the perception of reduced social status, including social exclusion, which Hanley presents as an innate and inescapable condition of council tenants' lives, identified with and perpetuated by the physical and perceived boundaries of their living environment (Hanley 2007).

Cohen stresses however that the perceived boundaries of communities are '*largely constituted by people in interaction*' (Cohen 1985 p 14) rather than by physical constituents. He comments that, '*In this regard, the boundaries of communities perform the same function as do the boundaries of all categories of knowledge.... All such categories are marked by symbolism*' (p 14). At one level then, the Brunswick itself may be interpreted, less in the form of a physical artefact,

but rather as a symbolic image which marks the boundaries of an ‘ideal’ community that residents aspire to, however one which also does exist, in a relational sense, by contrast to those who live outside the Brunswick – for example, people on other estates which are perceived as less desirable, people who live in the terraced houses on the local streets and squares, seen by some as socially aspirational, by others as inconvenient and run-down (1.4.1). In counterpoint to this overarching symbolism, there is also a whole range of other symbols which mark the categories and boundaries of social interaction at a more detailed level within the Brunswick, constituting the reality of daily life within this field. Physical attributes – eg a certain way of dressing, preferred types of door furniture, over-sized TVs, the presence or absence of family photos – which are often identified as defining or inherent features of particular ways of life and forms of association, are more accurately understood as recognisable symbols of differentiation. They are used as part of a strategy to establish and sometimes to reinforce identity in contrast to others when it is felt to be under threat of erosion, in the sense discussed by Cohen: people will resort to symbolic behaviour to reconstitute the boundary. In response to the fear of losing a particular way of life, and the sense of self embedded in it, some people will do so quite aggressively. This process may also describe what happened at the Brunswick when redevelopment was proposed, to the extent of transcending internal community boundaries in favour of a larger sense of social unity, by evoking the symbolic image of the building.

Cohen draws a contrast between the idea of community understood as subjectively perceived in relation to others, and, say, a Durkheimian notion of objective ‘social fact’, whereby communities are defined by certain structural principles. Although objective social fact clearly plays a part in defining communities at the Brunswick – for example, income bracket, ethnicity, or religion – it may not accurately portray the reality of community life within the building, since, as Cohen stresses, one of the conditions of modernity is that each individual will draw on different sets of social relations for different purposes, and therefore may quite legitimately exist as a member of several different ‘communities’ at the same time, which may have little or no basis in geographical territory. He cites Simmel’s analysis of the ‘*anatomy of social life at micro-level [as being] more intricate than among grosser superstructures*’ (Cohen 1985, p 32-33) as an antidote to the notion of social breakdown at grass-roots level, and challenges Robert Park’s more pessimistic

perspective on the notion of the intricate in social life as ‘*“a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate”*’ (p 26). Cohen suggests that this constellation has its own vitality: ‘*the vitality of cultures lies in their juxtaposition*’ (p 115), and his view suggests that the modern built environment (made up of buildings like the Brunswick) should not necessarily be identified with ‘social disaster’.

6.3.3 Interaction of physical and social landscapes

Analysed in social terms, the Brunswick seems to make more sense as ‘a mosaic of little worlds’, than as a homogenous local community of the sort idealised by communitarians. However, it would be wrong to suggest that these little worlds do not ‘interpenetrate’, using Park’s terminology, or even that it has no existence as a cohesive entity, transcending internal boundaries, at all. Cohen has suggested that a community can sometimes become ‘*debased through the fetishisation of its material objects*’ (p 104), but, ironically, the effective ‘fetishisation’ of the Brunswick as a building, an architectural artefact, through the media and official discourse, could be seen as having played, in some ways, a more positive role in the social context of the Brunswick, helping to generate and sustain a concept of a larger, more unified community than exists at the level of day-to-day interactions. As a result of its continuous assessment and exposure as a notable architectural icon, it has become a common reference point for the communities which live within its walls. In contrast to other, less distinguished council estates, therefore, the Brunswick has been re-evaluated as a material resource, on a scale of relative ‘hierarchical materiality’ (citing Rowland), and in the process, has become a powerful symbolic marker of (trans-local) cultural identity, transcending the fragmented nature of local social reality within its walls.

I have argued that the social landscape within the Brunswick is signposted by many different markers, and that its co-existence with the physical and material landscape of the building gives shape and meaning to both, although it would be misleading to present the two as mutually interdependent. In their study of the social landscape of post-war Bethnal Green, Wilmott and Young stressed that the strong social ties characteristic of neighbourhood life there had no particular connection to the spatial and built form of the physical landscape (Wilmott and Young 1957). They concluded quite emphatically that ‘*The sense of loyalty to each other amongst the inhabitants... is not due to buildings [but] to ties of kinship and friendship which*

connect the people of one household to the people of another' (p 166). They quote one Mr Wilkins, who explains: *'I suppose the buildings in Bethnal Green aren't all that good, but we don't look on this as a pile of stones. It isn't the buildings that matter. We like the people here'* (p 28). However, the authors somewhat undermine their position with their findings that, when transplanted to the new town of Greenleigh built by the LCC to relieve poor housing conditions in the East End, those social ties were weakened. Although residents loved the modern houses, *'Their relationships are window-to-window, not face-to-face'* (p 135) – in other words, more distanced, more 'framed' or abstracted, as a result not only of the dispersal and fragmentation of a social group that in its old setting had been much more cohesive, but also of the design and layout of the new town. In other words, buildings and the design of the built environment in general, must constitute a factor in helping or hindering human relationships to some extent.

Wallman's more recent study of Eight London Households, in a compact area of south London, also seems to show that community bonds, within a similarly working-class, but ethnically diverse group, can be sustained fairly independently of the built landscape in which they are geographically located (in this case, a network of a few streets), even though there is a strong tendency to identify the 'community' as a whole with the area itself, at least as means of differentiating it from other residential settings in the locality and further afield (Wallman 1984). Wallman highlights a conception of household boundaries shaped by intrinsic social, rather than physical factors, echoing Cohen: *'like all social boundaries they depend on who is defining them, what they are defined for, and whether they are defined from inside or outside'* (p 11). Social cohesion is sustained through a network of contacts which give access to local resources, rather than by a love of and loyalty to the physical landscape per se, which is barely mentioned in explicit terms. The environment is essentially defined in terms of the resources for livelihood that it offers, rather than in the more phenomenological terms of a physical and spatial setting for human lives. In this sense Wallman's hypothesis also evokes the work of Raymond Williams (Williams 1973), which challenged the popular (urban) ideal of the countryside as an abstracted arcadian landscape setting of the sort portrayed and celebrated by the British landscape-painting genre, and revealed it in 'other', less palatable, terms as 'practice' focussed around the harsh necessities of rural livelihood. He stressed the need for a historical perspective acknowledging the realities of rural experience, where 'country

life ... has many meanings: in feeling and activity; in region and time' (p 4), where history is *'active and continuous... moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions'* (p 7), which subvert the ideal, scenic images treasured by city dwellers.

Williams' emphasis on the need to understand landscape or place as a dimension of social relations and history, rather than a self-contained phenomenon in itself, echoes Douglas' observation that, ultimately, reality is 'socially constructed', but also points to the notion of an interaction between people and materiality which is perhaps underplayed by Wallman or Wilmott and Young. At the other extreme, however, is the view of an architectural theorist such as Norberg Schulz (1980), who sets out a phenomenological concept of landscape which is almost deterministic in its implications for human behaviour, interaction, and well-being. He argues that environments formed by buildings of 'weak' presence drain 'place' of existential meaning, and that society will unavoidably suffer from a corresponding weakening of its sense of cultural identity and existential purpose. In other words, the vitality of a society is inextricably tied to the vitality, or otherwise, of the landscape, the territory, in which it is located. This seems perhaps to over-emphasise the role played by the physical environment in shaping social realities. However Tilley, who supports a phenomenological understanding of the relationship between place and people, suggests a more equal balance in the effect of one on the other, which seems to offer a more acceptable angle from which to approach an understanding of the Brunswick as an architectural space which cannot fully exist until 'activated' by human life in its different dimensions. He writes: *'space does not and cannot exist apart from the events and activities within which it is implicated.... Socially produced space combines the cognitive, the physical and the emotional... A social space, rather than being uniform and forever the same, is constituted by differential densities of human experience, attachment and involvement'* (Tilley 1994, p 10).

Tilley, like Williams, emphasises that a physical landscape cannot exist independently of human life, in the abstract. So, although the Brunswick has arguably taken on an existence in a plane of architectural discourse which scarcely recognises the building as a social space, I would suggest that such a segregation between the architectural and social dimensions effectively empties a building of much of its cultural significance. At the outset, the design agenda for the Brunswick was quite explicitly socially driven, and that agenda strongly informed the aesthetic decisions

that were taken, a factor that should not be forgotten. Furthermore, the subsequent social history of the building had a powerful influence on its evolution as a building through time, once the keys had been handed over.

6.3.4 Elements of the social landscape: kinship and communities

The Brunswick was never originally designed to house a single ‘community’ of residents but always – perhaps as a manifestation of its modernist social agenda – as a framework for a mixed social setting – ‘*a liner without class distinctions on its promenading decks*’ (Hodgkinson, 1987 p 20). When Camden Council bought the lease on the housing, however, the programme changed and became socially more monocultural: it was to house local working-class families in the southern part of the borough. As the council forged ahead with its purchase of properties in the surrounding streets from local landlords, whole blocks of tenants were given the option of re-housing in the newly-built Brunswick. As one resident says, the fact that family members, friends, and long-standing neighbours were given the choice to move together showed that the council had at least some sense, since, as a result of this policy, kinship networks amongst local blue-collar families were established within the Brunswick early on. For some years they were sustained by the council’s policy of giving existing families first choice over flats that became vacant. On the occasion of a son or daughter’s marriage, the parents would head straight to the local housing office to request accommodation for them, and for years this was the accepted form of housing allocation, resulting in many ‘extended families’ living within the Brunswick blocks.

This scenario evokes a very similar working-class neighbourhood to that described by Wilmott and Young (or indeed Gans 1962), in which accommodation, and jobs, would routinely be secured through kindred, as ‘*a doorway to the community*’ (Wilmott and Young 1957, p 91), and their personal relationships with housing agents, landlords, and employers. But whereas Wilmott and Young describe a collapse of this system when private landlords started to be replaced by the local council as the main provider of working-class housing, and the word ‘nepotism’ entered common currency, in the case of the Brunswick, Camden Council seemed willing and able to perpetuate the status quo until the 1980s, when pressure on housing resources became so great as to force a re-evaluation of the allocation system, and give priority to homeless ‘outsiders’, as they were seen by locals. This meant that

sons and daughters of local families were increasingly forced to move away as they reached adulthood, and turned out to be the catalyst for an erosion of the kinship networks which still existed at the Brunswick, and a cause of considerable resentment among 'locals', who began to perceive the social landscape of the Brunswick more explicitly in terms of differentiated groups of 'us' and 'them'. The original monocultural, local, working-class profile of the place started to become diverse, generating a more mosaic-like structure to the social life of the Brunswick.

Kinship has been a significant aspect of the social landscape at the Brunswick in the past, and, I would argue, significantly contributed to a correspondingly weakened perception of the physical boundaries between flats, seen less as discrete and separate homes than as connected, permeable, and even interchangeable spaces, 'upstairs', or 'across the landing', occupied by aunts, sisters, and mothers, in one big house. This is also evocative of Willmott and Young's description of '*merged*' households, and a '*mixing-up of domestic arrangements*' (p 31) in working-class Bethnal Green, with family members regularly visiting and eating at each other's homes, transcending the physical limits of the home as a wholly private, internalised space.

Although strong kinship networks helped to establish a sense of internal cohesion at the Brunswick in the early days, which subsequently came under pressure as increasing numbers of 'outsiders' moved in, and 'insiders' moved out, kinship should not in itself, as Cohen stresses, be conflated with the notion of 'community'. In fact, they are two different things: Cohen defines community specifically as the area of social interaction that goes beyond the family, where humans, as he puts it, learn to 'be social', learn culture. It is the idea expressed by Gloria when she speaks of her need to be 'recognised' and 'acknowledged' when she goes out onto the street, while her social relationships within the Brunswick seem to be couched in more domestic, familial terms. So although kinship ties were strong in the early years of the Brunswick, that does not necessarily imply that the Brunswick was perceived as a cohesive 'community' internally by its inhabitants even then. Notions of community seem to be pinned more explicitly on an idea of geographical locality that embraces various social networks, in the context of which the Brunswick is just one nodal point. Furthermore, some of the original Brunswick residents had no desire to be identified with such a community in any case. Some of them explicitly welcomed, and still do, the anonymity that central London living can offer, and one of the advantages of the

Brunswick itself is that the homogeneity of the internal design, the lack of major distinctions within the range of accommodation, especially from the outside, does provide a cloak of anonymity to residents if they want it – an antidote to community, in fact.

According to one of the wardens, this is a positive aspect of the design particularly for those who are housed by the council in the unmarked ‘sheltered’ flats at the Brunswick on the grounds of particular health problems, because it allows such residents to blend into the block without being immediately recognisable. But nevertheless, there is an awareness of, and differentiation between different ‘cliques’ – the term used by some residents to describe the subtle nuances of the perceived social structure at the Brunswick. And to an extent these are explicitly correlated with the material and spatial qualities of the physical landscape which the Brunswick constitutes. O’Donnell Court is quite openly described as inferior to Founding Court – less friendly, dirtier, and isolated from the main public thoroughfare of Marchmont Street. While the lower floors of both blocks, which are darker and more enclosed, are perceived as rather unsavoury and anti-social, while the upper floors, which are the most popular among those buying into the block, are seen as a superior community with its own particular community spirit, even though the residents of those floors are by no means all of the same social class.

The idea of ‘class’ is not defined as such, and certainly not in terms of residents’ imagined income or even the type of work that they do; however, distinctions are drawn between those who have more education and expertise – those who have a ‘university degree’, who have knowledge that many of the longer-term residents, who started out as council tenants, do not have, and who are basically more articulate – ‘la-di-da’ as one resident puts it, without ill-feeling. But this is certainly not true of all older residents, many of whom are well-educated, from substantially middle-class backgrounds, but were offered council accommodation because they were single parents, or living in properties within the borough that had been earmarked by the council, at an expansive moment in its history, for its own acquisition or demolition and redevelopment, or for some other reason.

If class as such seems fairly significant as a point of reference for defining notions of community identity, then length of residence certainly plays some part in forming people’s perceptions of belonging with regard to one particular ‘community’ or ‘clique’ which might be regarded as having some superiority to others. But within

that group itself there are many distinctions between people. In the case of the ethnographic sample studied by Wallman in Battersea, length of residence was a 'significant' factor primarily because longer-term residents would have had more time to get involved in informal and personal networks and gain a superior access to resources, which in turn would help them to feel more securely located, or 'emplaced' within the neighbourhood as a specific landscape to which they experienced a sense of belonging or attachment. But at the Brunswick, this does not seem necessarily to be the case. Longer-term residents pride themselves on their knowledge of the history of the estate, from a personal point of view, often evincing a sort of nostalgia for the 'old days', which gives them a self-perceived superiority of 'emplacement'; but because newer residents tend to show a greater awareness of, and resourcefulness in quickly identifying, tapping into and benefiting from local networks and information systems, they may rapidly acquire a strong degree of emplacement, and a superior 'status' within the community from that point of view. As the people with the 'know-how' and the ability to be proactive and make decisions, they may even have a more accurate objective knowledge of the history of the estate, even though it is the older residents who see themselves as the guardians of that past. This dynamic seems to be acknowledged by older residents, while they may not particularly like it. One of the effects seems to have been that some of the longer-term residents who used to be involved in representing the estate on the TRA committee have withdrawn, feeling their input is no longer valued or necessary. But at the same time, the 'newcomers' are frustrated by the lack of positive response to their initiatives on the part of long-standing residents, and the perception that they will get on with all that needs to be done on behalf of the rest, who are a bit like schoolchildren waiting for parents and teachers to sort their lives out for them.

But among the newcomers themselves, social distinctions are also drawn between those who bought more than five years ago, and the really well-off 'yuppies' who have bought at even more elevated prices since Allied London bought the freehold and began to canvas its plans for its transformation. For the earlier generation of purchasers, the Brunswick had a particular attraction as a sort of 'liminal' place which was somewhere between being a council estate and a utopian architectural vision of modern community life. Many of these, who included numbers of artists, architects and writers who had intellectual and artistic aspirations, but did not necessarily have large incomes, deliberately chose to come to the Brunswick

because it was run-down, socially-mixed, and therefore affordable, but also centrally located in relation to the cultural resources offered by the city, aesthetically inspiring, and offered what they saw as an opportunity to engage in ‘real’, local neighbourly relations. In terms of the effects of living in such an environment on their own social status and perception of their own identity, it set them apart from the mainstream, from commercially-motivated life, as pioneers of a sort in uncharted social and architectural territory. For these people, perhaps, the physical boundaries of the Brunswick as a building are more important than to other residents, as definitive of a particular type of community with which they want to be identified. And to an extent, their decision to step out of the mainstream – their friends are likely to live in large houses, or to have moved out of London to more salubrious suburban or rural environs - seems connected to a desire to enter into what might be seen, following Turner, as a state of statusless ‘*communitas*’.

6.3.5 Existentialism and liminality

This might be presented as constituting a significant stage of the Brunswick’s social evolution - from the mixed, privately-owned development which was originally intended, to flagship council estate in a specific local neighbourhood, through a sort of liminal or ‘statusless’ period of transition, arriving at a new phase of social re-positioning in which it has been projected as a potentially luxurious condominium in the heart of a global city. Although the London Borough of Camden initially publicised the Brunswick as an exemplary model of a new mixed-development, and a revived local community, the site very quickly became something of an embarrassment, as maintenance problems quickly mounted, exacerbated by the unusual and uneasy relationship between leaseholder and freeholder, and as the indeterminate ‘inside-outside’ spaces increasingly provided shelter for alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes. During this period, an entire subterranean community of homeless ‘misfits’ and ‘drop-outs’ took shape in the basement areas of the building, which they made their home. This dark realm of existence represented a kind of inverse of the realm of light above, reaching towards the sky, and was perceived as a threat to the whole building and its inhabitants – a problem of ‘*uncontextualised places being taken over by uncontextualised people*’, as one occupant put it, which characterised the Brunswick as a setting for unregulated behaviours outside the normal social structures.

Following the implementation of new security measures, delineating tighter boundaries between inside and outside, the social problems at the Brunswick began to ease, but its decayed appearance, as an ‘eyesore’, combined with its unique architectural design features, continued to define it as somehow ‘apart from’ or ‘outside’ its context. While for some long-term residents in particular, it was nothing more than a slum, newcomers were attracted to it for precisely those reasons and found it poetic rather than just degraded. For those seeking to escape the forces of Thatcherite free-market policies and ethos on society, the Brunswick – neglected, undiscovered, but centrally located, architecturally significant, and affordable – offered a haven of ‘liminality’ and a certain freedom from the pressures of mainstream social values.

The idea of the Brunswick as embodying a sort of ‘liminal’ state, transcending the normal conditions of everyday social life, corresponds with the existential agenda which fundamentally inspired the architect’s design approach, and his notion of an state of ‘communitas’ (though not expressed as such) comprising people from all walks of life brought together without distinction within the envelope of the building. As Turner writes: ‘*Communitas has an existential character... prophets and artists tend to be liminal and marginal people.... Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority*’ (p 127-8). The Brunswick always had an appeal to artists and intellectuals, who loved the subversive grandeur of its presence in the orderly Georgian and institutional structure, both physical and social, of the surrounding streets. There was also the strong sense that, once inside the Brunswick, social distinctions that would be self-evident beyond its walls, would evaporate, and newcomers would be able to enter into the life of a ‘real’ local community in a meaningful sense – much in the way that entering into a condition of ‘communitas’, in Turner’s terms, involves a process of ‘levelling’ and ‘stripping’ in terms of social status or preconception, and an embrace of egalitarian and democratic ‘comradeship’.

It does not seem too far-fetched to suggest that this is precisely what some of the earlier generation of property-buyers aspired to, and to a considerable extent they seem to have succeeded in sustaining this illusion, and glossing over the realities of status perception at the Brunswick which undoubtedly do exist. So while Susan, for example, speaks of her experience of ‘community’ there, and lovingly nurtures her vicarious relationship with the previous owners of her flat, a working-class couple

who moved out to a mobile home in the country, through the remnants of the material culture which they left in the flat, and which she has preserved almost like relics, longer-term residents of the Brunswick are more likely to describe the social structure in terms of ‘cliques’, suggesting considerable fragmentation and some level of distrust. And while Susan embraces the idea of refugees and other outsiders coming to live at the Brunswick, explaining that she wants to make them feel welcome – for, after all, they embody the tangible reality of ‘liminal’ status in society which she and others like her aspire to in more idealistic and artistic terms – older residents are adamant in their disapproval and disapprobation of such people, who do not, in their opinion, fit into and respect the social norms which they stand by.

The ‘existential’ dimension of the Brunswick’s design has been underlined by the architect, and was recognised by the film director Antonioni when he set a scene of his film *The Passenger* there in 1973. Hodgkinson has always stressed his intentions in designing the flats so that the most direct view from their large windows is of the sky, and not of the surrounding man-made environment. He said he wanted to transcend the banal and depressing qualities of everyday life in the post-war period, speaking from the perspective of a person whose faith in humanity had been severely jeopardised by the experience of the Second World War itself. So, although he designed the precinct below the flats as a ‘town room’, it was very much his intention that the experience of living in the stepped housing itself should be less focused on a connection with street level, and more orientated towards a sense of living somewhat apart, in what might again be described as a ‘liminal’ state between earth and sky (2.3.2).

For residents such as Lana, or Annie, and friends and relatives of Annie’s who live on other such estates, the very idea of living on a council estate may embody an idea of marginality which fits in with their perception of themselves, and indeed their professions, as commentators on society. In this sense they belong to a virtual ‘community’ of people in the same position, which transcends the actual locality, the physical boundaries of the estate which according to Hanley can constitute an impregnable ‘wall in the head’ to those who long to get out (Hanley 2007, p 148). For those people, the council estate represents an all too concrete manifestation of a constraining geographical locality, tied into a dependent relationship with the local government authority, which has effectively stifled individual initiative and independent action through the imposition of bureaucratic and autocratic procedures

in place of the old family and community networks. In reality, Lana and Annie's position is very different, as homeowners who have bought into developments which they have identified, with the benefit of their specialist knowledge and skills, and their participation in expansive social and information networks, and on the basis of their architectural value and central locations, as being very good investments for the future.

Ultimately it is the Brunswick itself, as a tangible place and a distinctive building, which gives the 'mosaic of little worlds' within its walls some sense of unity transcending the distinctions. Since its earliest days, the recognition and reputation of the Brunswick as an architectural work of distinction has generated a discourse around its existence and its future which has run in counterpart to, but also constantly intersecting with, the 'everyday' discourse of complaint and dissatisfaction generated by residents struggling with the problems of living there at a practical level. Since the building's first appearance in *The Passenger* it has continued to feature in art and media productions up until the present day, its image reproduced and manipulated over and again in different contexts completely independent of its existence as a real place, a London estate, where people live fairly ordinary lives.

6.4 Fetishisation of the Brunswick

When the redevelopment, and then the listing of the building was proposed in the 1990s, these two discourses decisively collided and became increasingly entangled with each other. Residents were forced to become more aware of the 'official' evaluation of the building, of the significance of their own situation as inhabitants of a place which for many people had a powerful resonance as an almost fetishised image. Likewise, the art historians, planners, developers, architects and journalists involved in evaluating the Brunswick were forced to recognise the existence of an increasingly vocal and tangible, but diverse body of inhabitants of this image, as radical solutions to its problems were proposed and hammered out. At times it seemed as if the growing tensions between the Brunswick as lived experience, the Brunswick as fetishised image, and the Brunswick as a potentially valuable commodity, depending on the market, might literally pull the place apart. For, as residents were warned, if satisfactory decisions about its future could not be reached, it would simply decay to the point where there would be no other option but its demolition.

If the Brunswick is a constructed and social space on the one hand, it also constitutes an objectifiable material object and visual effect on the other, and it is the latter perspective which has led the architectural heritage debate about its value. One might further argue that a fetishisation of the Brunswick has occurred during this process which bears little relation to the experience of living within its walls. Spyer defines fetishism as fixing and unsettling borders, and the fetish as an object that crosses borders and re-draws the relationship between subjects and objects, transgresses and exposes accepted distinctions and differentiations (Spyer 1998). She speaks of *'the passions, energies and motivations with which, in the case of fetishism, things are so fiercely invested'*, and the *'extraordinary power that with fetishism is precisely the problem'* (p 5). It is also *'an aggressive matter that strikes back'* (p 6), and a potent representation of *'the other'*. All of these aspects of the fetish and fetishism are quite arguably applicable to the Brunswick. From the moment the design concept was put before the planning committee, and the site cleared of shabby Georgian houses to make way for the new building, it seemed in terms of its vast scale, compared to its neighbours, its inverted relationship to the street, its materiality – exposed concrete, in contrast to the ubiquitous brick of the surrounding streets – and its focus towards the sky rather than ground level, very definitely of the *'other'*. It was a challenge to the status quo, both in terms of the traditional form of the built environment, its method of construction, requiring *'vast crowds of navvies'* to pour the concrete, and its social ambitions as a *'classless'* community. It was radical and subversive, and aroused intense passions and energies in those who loved and hated it. The sheer power of the architecture proved to be precisely the problem in maintaining it as a habitable building to an acceptable standard, making it extremely difficult to achieve the necessary alterations and adjustments, and the hard, unyielding, yet unstable materials used in its construction have very much taken on the quality of *'aggressive matter that strikes back'* at the residents whose everyday lives have been dominated by their awareness of it.

But, on a more positive side, the Brunswick has also transcended boundaries as something special and rare, even sought after, which presents an antidote to repetitive everyday life and constrictive social norms, and a source of inspiration for re-inventions of the self. As Pels suggests, the fetish is *'a denial of the normal hierarchy of values... but it is also made to function within this normality in some way'* (Pels 1998, p 92); the Brunswick is, or was, a denial of the conventional

methods of housing people at the time, but it was also made to function within a framework of normality as a council housing project. This resulted in a crisis of representation, or, perhaps, what Pels refers to as a '*struggle for primacy between things and people*' (p 93). It has also brought disparate groups of people together in some ways, re-drawing the boundaries between them, or 're-molding' them, both as individuals and collectively, because, as Pels suggests, '*humans themselves are molded, through their sensuousness, by the "dead" matter with which they are surrounded*' (p101).

While Hall, Rapport and others emphasise the role of narrativisation in the process of modern human identity-construction, the Brunswick represents, perhaps, the '*aesthetics of the fragment*' (Pels p 109), disconnected from pre-existing narratives of life around it, standing out like a 'big ship', an 'Alcatraz', a 'spaceship' or simply a 'showpiece' in its environs, but not really an integral part of them. At the same time, it has demonstrated a power to prompt the construction of new narratives of the imaginary, not only among residents themselves, but also by many film-makers who, following in Antonioni's footsteps, have explored the dimensions of the Brunswick as a powerful visual idea within the public domain - through cinema, television, video and other new media (Melhuish 1996).

This kind of work has not only formed a part of, but also informed, a public discourse around the Brunswick and its significance as an artefact of national cultural heritage, which is recognised as holding up some kind of a mirror to British society and its cultural values, its cultural identity in the post-industrial era. Such images are remote from the reality of living at the Brunswick – apart from when the making of them intrudes on daily routine there - even if they are also of value in constituting a reminder of its 'special' status, its dimensions as a 'sacred' (existential) realm in relation to the 'profane' world of daily life (Eliade 1957); or, alternatively conceptualised, an 'erotic' level of existence compared to the everyday operation of the senses (Davis 1983). As one resident famously commented, on moving in, '*I thought it was Paradise*', and such evocations of some kind of 'other' world framed by the Brunswick have not merely been the purlieu of enthusiastic critics such as Hamilton Eddy (Melhuish 2006), but are still made by residents, even when the problems of damp penetration and malfunctioning central heating seem to be insuperable.

6.4.1 Fetishisation, commodification and social alienation

However, there is a danger in fetishisation too. Cohen points out that some communities (however those boundaries are defined), can become '*debased through the fetishisation of its material objects*,' while Spyer suggests that in the context of western capitalist society, and its inexorable impulse towards the re-framing of relationships between people and between things and people in monetary terms, the fetish will invariably be subjected to transformation by commodification in due course: it is only a matter of time. She argues that capitalism takes away the '*material, tangible, sensuous character of things*' (p 8), which in the case of the fetish, is invested with a particular power. It simply empties them of other meanings. This is arguably what has happened in the case of the Brunswick: the fetishisation of the architectural image with its own particular compulsive power made it ultimately attractive to market forces, and led to its re-packaging as a property 'commodity' of considerable value, subject to the rigorous rationalisation of its public spaces and commercially viable units.

Residents have had reservations about the process of the Brunswick's transformation from a council estate on the one hand, and an architectural icon on the other, into a commercially viable shopping-centre, focussed on the 'shrine' of the Waitrose supermarket at the north end, and potentially upmarket housing development – despite the fact that it has in some ways improved the cosmetic appearance of the building from ground level, and enhanced the commercial value of their own flats. Most people are aware that something of the former power of the architecture, even in its neglected state as a ruinous monolith, has been lost. In its reduction to pure 'exchange value', in which a fairly crude and superficial architectural makeover played a significant role, the 'material, tangible, sensuous character' of this dramatic concrete set-piece has been tamed, domesticated and arguably lost in the process (Melhuish 2007). Furthermore, the transformation opens up the prospect of an influx of people hoping to 'do well' out of the Brunswick, who have little or nothing in common with its existing and former residents. 'What sort of people?' asks one, while another speaks of her sense of loss and alienation in a place to which she has belonged for 30 years. For others it is the loss of the idea of the Brunswick as a sort of 'liminal' space which suited those who aspired to an idea of living and working at the 'margins' of society. There is a great sense of regret and

also the fear that, in the centre of the city at least, those kind of spaces have gone for ever.

It is clear that regeneration processes such as that which has occurred at the Brunswick are not unproblematic in terms of their implications for the life of the community, even though they may appear to bring objective and quantifiable improvements to the quality of that existence. It is arguable that the concept of 'debasement' of community through re-evaluation of its material artefacts, which Cohen speaks of, is relevant to the case of the Brunswick – even though it may be more familiar in relation to the very different, small-scale, non-urban societies that have jeopardised their vitality and ontological existence by re-packaging themselves for the tourist and entering into a state of dependency on the exchange-value of their material artefacts for survival.

As already discussed, the people of the Brunswick cannot accurately be considered a 'community' in the same terms; but, if it is accepted that the Brunswick itself, in its capacity as a 'fetish' object with a particular material vitality, has the power to slip across and transgress boundaries between self-described 'cliques', then it can be seen to constitute a symbol of some form of viable collectivity, a shared experience of, and view from, the 'inside' looking out, which is in turn infused with life through its clear differentiation from the view from outside.

6.4.2 National icon, or a phenomenology of everyday life

The official view, summed up in the government's Listing schedule (2000, Melhuish 2006), of the Brunswick identifies its value and its worthiness of preservation for posterity as lying in its formal and programmatic characteristics, rather than its materiality per se, and on its significance as a symbol of national achievement and cultural identity – a symbol of a very much larger collective identity than the residents of the Brunswick itself. Thus, while the social identities of the latter range between relatively localised and more widely spread networks, they acquire some kind of cohesion and meaning as a local group identity simply by virtue of the contrast between their personal, direct, and multi-sensory lived experience of the Brunswick, and the trans-local, virtual projection of the Brunswick into the public domain as a national landmark in the temporal plane of history, rather than space.

The image of the Brunswick was re-projected onto the national stage in a new context in the aftermath of the July 7th 2005 terrorist attacks. Two of the bombs

detonated were located in close proximity to the Brunswick, and the streets around the building were closed for several weeks, while images of the sites concerned were repeatedly depicted in the media. The Brunswick was rarely shown, but always just out of the frame, half hidden behind the huge temporary screens, a brooding presence which was also under ‘attack’ at the same time from the demolition contractors preparing the site for regeneration, and there was a palpable sense of the material vitality of the building itself draining away on the operating table of the building site.

Some Brunswick residents were badly affected by the visceral immediacy of the events, which they experienced as a direct effect on their everyday, local lives, rather than as a national crisis, at a distance regulated by the media. For one inhabitant, the most shocking aspect of it was the way it brought back vivid personal memories of playing on the long spiral staircase in Russell Square tube station as a child. Another felt compelled to go away from home for a few days. Their reactions seemed in many ways to sum up the difference between the idea of the national icon, or nationally-significant event, and local experience, the tensions between global and local identities.

While the idea of the Brunswick as national icon, or sign, is promoted and mediated through intellectual and visual channels (Baudrillard 1994), the experience of ‘inhabiting the image’, and ‘making a home’ at the Brunswick is a direct, visceral and material engagement. In order to understand it more fully, one needs to embrace the idea of a ‘phenomenology of the concrete megastructure’ (Melhuish 2005, 2006b), which may seem like a contradiction in terms to those who automatically identify the concrete architecture of the industrial era with a notion of human alienation, in contrast to the vernacular architecture of traditional societies, understood as an expression of human participation, belonging and self-expression.

In the words of Merleau-Ponty, ‘*sense experience*’ becomes ‘*that vital communication with the world which makes it present*’, forging a bond between ‘*the perceived object and the perceiving subject*’, or ‘*intentional tissue*’ (Merleau-Ponty 1989 [1962], p 61). I would suggest that, paradoxically, the hard, unyielding, ‘alienating’ concrete of the Brunswick, and its over-scaled, dramatic, spatial contrasts and effects, have, precisely because of their ‘aggressive materiality’ and dominating quality, helped to forge a sensory bond between the residents of the Brunswick and the building which forms the framework for their homes, in much the same way as the genuine fetish object inspires a compulsive relationship with its audience. The fact

that the materiality of the Brunswick has been a constant source of problems and complaints has helped to engender a heightened awareness of the fabric of their larger surroundings in its occupants, which has brought people together at a direct, everyday level of interaction, and inspired a pervasive sense of anxiety and concern about the building as a an exposed, neglected and suffering body in urgent need of medical attention.

In Wilmott and Young (1957) and Wallman (1984), the material qualities of the habitat occupied by their communities are emphatically downplayed. Yet, if one accepts the principle of ‘things’ or ‘artefacts’ as being animated or brought alive by ‘*human traffic*’ (Pels 1998, p 94), then clearly the built habitat, coming under the umbrella of ‘material culture’ in general, must be included in that. Although Appadurai’s concept of the ‘social life of things’ (Appadurai 1986) cannot be directly applied to buildings, dealing as it does with mobile commodities rather than stationary structures, I would argue that the principle is much the same in both cases. As the subject of social processes and interactions, mediated by the senses, in much the same way as moveable objects, buildings – not just ‘homes’, understood as specialised repositories of specific manifestations of personal identity – may be regarded as animate entities which play a role in people’s perception and construction of identity, or identities. As Strathern also points out, things objectify relations between people: “‘*things*’ and persons may be co-presences in a field of effectual actors’ (Strathern 1999, p 17).

If this is the case, then Rowland’s evocation of a concept of ‘hierarchies of materiality’ becomes pertinent to an argument about the impact on identity-construction of the larger built habitat in which the internal space of the home itself is embedded. Rowlands illustrates his argument with the example of colonial subjects in Cameroon, whose deliberate exclusion from access to what he calls ‘material realisation’ in the terms of the colonial regime, effectively rendered them invisible and politically impotent: ‘*The notion that people were present only when named, indexed, censused, educated, dressed, housed, or otherwise materially demarcated illustrates the potential for a greater or lesser sense of materiality to define a presence or to confer a form of consciousness that was otherwise deemed not to exist*’ (p 81).

I have suggested that the Brunswick has its own powerful visual and material qualities, of which residents have a heightened awareness through the operation of

their senses on a daily, all-embracing basis, which sets it apart from other less 'significant' housing developments. However, the experience of living at the Brunswick may also be associated with a kind of liminal or inferior social status, both because of the historic dilapidation and shabbiness of the building, and because, in terms of its material form, it does not match up to conventional ideas of what constitutes an appropriate and socially-fitting housing environment. While it may be described as 'very striking' by those assured enough to step outside 'the box' of received ideas and make an independent choice about where and how to live, it is conversely described as being, in some respects, like 'a prison' by a resident representative of those who had comparatively little choice about their re-housing at the Brunswick. The term 'prison' effectively sums up an over-arching idea of exclusion from 'respectable' society, and, indeed, invisibility within the physical walls of an institution designed to bring people in line with the social norms laid down by the authorities which regulate the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

The Brunswick might be interpreted as evocative of a prison environment both in its physical and social dimensions. Firstly, the homogeneity of its long, unpainted internal walkways with repetitive front doors, like cell doors, which were originally identical, all painted red. The institutional scale of the development, its big, solid, unpainted concrete walls, lack of internal decoration, and absence of traditional architectural details, all add up to what may readily be read as a reduced materiality which by extension represents and diminishes the status of those who live there. Secondly, the social context of the Brunswick as a council estate, characterised by a relative lack of employment and social opportunities for its inhabitants, may also be interpreted as a 'prison-like' habitat, which may actually help to perpetuate a level of social disenfranchisement and 'invisibility' among its residents.

For many people, the material form of the Brunswick can be understood only in terms of a 'reduction' from the norms of formal expression symbolising accepted distinctions within the social hierarchy. At this level, its material form places a boundary around the people who live in it and labels them collectively in some way as 'disadvantaged', in the same way as any other group of people who have made their homes in council-built housing. The Brunswick steps outside the traditional hierarchy of architectural materiality, offering a different kind of – 'fetish-like' - aesthetic in exchange for the conventionally recognisable system, and this has social repercussions for the people who live there, even those who have made an educated

choice to opt out of the system. Residents' self-perception and anxiety about their 'invisibility' as individuals and as a group, as a result of the reduced material conditions in which they may be perceived to live, and what they say about their social status, have been a powerful contributing factor in the flare-ups of tension and conflict which have characterised the negotiations around the redevelopment of the building over the years.

6.5 Conclusion

Many residents have invested great efforts in using the material culture available to them to make homes within the private internal spaces of their flats. Within these spaces, they find considerable freedom to project whatever identities they choose and feel comfortable with for themselves, and one of the points made about the Brunswick flats is that a combination of good proportions and relative neutrality in terms of the original design provides a perfect canvas for the individual domestic project.

But notwithstanding the autonomy and scope for personal expression represented by the individual spaces, the experience of 'home' at the Brunswick is always mediated by the complex network of shared boundaries, material and social, which spread out beyond the individual flats into the structure and spaces of the building as a whole and out into the city beyond. While, from the outside, the overwhelmingly material and visual boundaries represented by the Brunswick itself will always constitute a frame of reference by which the social identity of its inhabitants is construed and negotiated by outsiders. Hence home and habitat, sociality and materiality, are inextricably merged. Architectural form, representation and lived experience cannot be disconnected from each other, but neither is there any simple deterministic or scientific formula for unravelling and understanding the interactions between them, particularly in the mosaic-like context of contemporary urban life.