Reconfiguring Class and Community: An Ethnographic Study in East Manchester.

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of PhD Social Anthropology in the Faculty of Humanities

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Abstract
Reconfiguring Class and Community: An Ethnographic Study in East Manchester.

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This thesis provides an ethnographic account of post-industrial life in East Manchester, a locality which has undergone repeated waves of regeneration. The neighbourhoods of Beswick and Openshaw were once located at the heart of manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution but have since undergone deep social and economic change in the twentieth century which has resulted in widespread unemployment and perceived ‘social deprivation’. In 2000, New Labour introduced a regeneration plan to create ‘New East Manchester’ with the hope that material transformation would bring about economic growth and social change by creating a cohesive community and a productive and profitable space in the post-industrial city. This research, however, demonstrates that for long-standing residents, the relationship between redevelopment and change is more complex than this simple formula may suggest. Despite millions of pounds of investment and radical physical transformation, long-standing residents argue that East Manchester is dislocated and characterised by an overwhelming sense of uncertainty about the future.

The thesis draws on twelve months of residential, ethnographic fieldwork carried out in 2010. It focuses on a group of older, female, long-standing residents and explores the issues which are important to them which include neighbourhood risk, memories of the past, gift exchange, housing and political alienation. For these residents, change is understood in terms of unpredictability and inequality. Images of a stable past are drawn upon in order to articulate anger and frustration against mainstream politics and feelings of social exclusion. On the surface, it appears that social life has declined and community has fractured due to the pressures of economic and social change but, on further examination, it is clear that intense social relations and attachments to East Manchester continue to exist. In order to understand the apparent contradiction between narratives of community decline and observations of social relations which are evident in East Manchester, this thesis argues that it is necessary to re-examine concepts of community, belonging and class which are presented in the anthropology of Britain literature.
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Introduction

It is February 2010. On my second day living on Alan Turing Avenue in Beswick, a parcel is accidentally delivered to my house. I take it around to the correct address, number 16, where Anne is watching Eastenders on television and looking after her grandson, who is playing quietly on the floor, pushing toy cars along a fluffy red rug. Anne invites me in. I remove my shoes at the door, anxious not to spoil the spotless beige carpet which covers the pristine living room floor. Anne and I had met on the street the day before, as I carried boxes into my new house. I told her that I had moved to Beswick in order to do research about local life to which she responded: ‘I’ll tell you, when you come over, I’ll be getting the soap box out!’ The parcel delivered to my house by mistake offers a perfect opportunity to go and introduce myself properly and to talk more. As soon as I sit down, Anne launches into what appears to be a well-rehearsed narrative about how she has come to be living on Alan Turing Avenue in Beswick. In a loud, commanding voice, she says: ‘If you want to hear about regeneration, Camilla, I’ll tell you about regeneration. It’s been a bloody mess from start to finish’.

This study provides an ethnographic account of post-industrial life in East Manchester a locality which has undergone repeated waves of regeneration. During the New Labour period (1994-2010), cities like Manchester were placed at the heart of government plans. The plans were to redesign cities to foster a more inclusive, mutually supportive society (Mace et al. 2007:52). Consumption based, property-led forms of economic regeneration were seen as a ‘panacea for urban problems’ in localities coming to terms with severe deindustrialisation and the loss of employment in the manufacturing industries (Raco 2003:1869). The Labour Government introduced a diverse array of political strategies to

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Some places names in this thesis including the names of streets have been changed in order to protect the anonymity and privacy of my informants. Alan Turing Avenue is a pseudonym.
encourage developers to invest in run-down and derelict urban areas (Jones & Evans 2008:4). East Manchester was one such site. Urban regeneration was intended to, 'guarantee economic, social and environmental sustainability; achieve the highest standards of physical redevelopment; retain its existing population; and improve its social and economic prospects' (Parkinson et al. 2006:3).

Urban regeneration policies, like those seen in East Manchester, were introduced in order to remake communities by rebuilding the physical landscape and introducing economic and social initiatives to provide jobs and increase employment. The Labour government drew on the rhetoric of 'community' in their policies, describing it as the key scale of 'meaningful human interaction and the basis for the distribution of social obligations and responsibilities' (Imrie & Raco 2003:5). In this thesis I explore the consequences of urban regeneration for residents, like Anne, who live in Beswick and neighbouring Openshaw, in East Manchester in 2010. Drawing on twelve months residential fieldwork, I examine and reflect on the social relations that matter to residents themselves and focus in particular on the ways in which local people articulate a sense of community or bemoan its absence. In addition, I explain how social relationships are often mediated by objects which bring about a sense of stability in a context of rapid social change. The aim of the thesis is not to provide a critique of processes of regeneration but to ask what insights ethnographic research of this particular locality might add to our understandings of community, belonging and class, as lived in places like East Manchester in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In this introduction, I describe the evolution of the anthropology of Britain from the 1950s to the present and explain how my own research builds and develops key themes which are addressed in this body of literature.
Anne’s story

For the twelve months of my fieldwork I rented a house on Alan Turing Avenue in Beswick from a private landlord. I found the house through a letting agency in Manchester city centre. Alan Turing Avenue is located in a so-called ‘mixed community’ which is comprised of properties owned by private landlords, social landlords and private individuals (Figure 1).

![Housing on Alan Turing Way](image)

**Figure 1: Housing on Alan Turing Way**

Like my house, Anne's is four years old. It has an open plan design but, in contrast to the sparse, minimalist decor pictured on the advertisements for the new development, Anne’s living room is full of photographs, ornaments and soft furnishings. She invites me to take a seat on the large, pale green sofa next to her matching arm chair. While I get myself settled, Anne points to a white mock-marble fireplace which is the centre piece of the room and tells me that it was the first item she installed when she moved in to the house, to make it more ‘homely’.

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2 All photographs were taken by the author unless otherwise stated.
Now in her sixties, Anne moved to Manchester from Scotland, in the early 1970s with two young children. She came to the city in search of work. After living in a couple of council owned rented properties she was offered a newly built terraced house by the council on an estate in Beswick which is one hundred metres away from her new home. Eight years after moving in, Anne bought the property, as part of the Right to Buy scheme. She tells me that when she moved into the house it was like something from an American magazine: ‘It was beautiful. It had a kitchen you could dance in, it was so big.’ Anne describes her old neighbourhood in Beswick with great affection. It was what she called a ‘third generation estate’ as her daughter and granddaughter lived close by. Everyone knew each other and any trouble between neighbours was sorted out quickly. She says that you could tell a troublemaker ‘to pack it in’ or else get their Mum to ‘sort it’. I will return to the notion of trouble and neighbourhood danger which Anne is referring to later in the thesis (see Chapter Six).

Anne tells me that she developed a strong sense of attachment to the estate in Beswick and to her neighbours and soon felt as if it was her home. However, this feeling of stability came to an abrupt end. In 2002, Anne and the other twelve homeowners on the estate were issued with Compulsory Purchase Orders. Even though a number of the residents formed a committee to oppose the plans, the demolition went ahead. In her words:

There wasn't a stranger in the 181 houses [on the estate]. It was a terrible shock when they [the council] said the houses were going to be demolished. It was

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3 The Thatcher government introduced the Right to Buy scheme as part of the 1980 Housing Act. Council tenants were given the opportunity to purchase the houses they rented from the local authority for a discounted rate calculated from the rent they had already paid as tenants (see Chapter Five).

4 A Compulsory Purchase Order is a notice served to a homeowner by the council which allows them to obtain a property without the consent of the owner. Compensation is usually paid at the price of the value of the property. These orders are usually issued to make space for new developments.
madness. We moved into them in 1978. From 181 houses that were on the estate, there are only a handful who have moved across [to the new properties], some didn’t want to. Now they are all scattered around the area. There aren’t enough houses over here. No one knew what was going on. Some just accepted their lot. They just sat by and let it happen. They are the types that are scared to make waves. All that has happened is that they have moved me across the road to a more affluent community. I think the council should be held accountable for what they have done. It’s a type of social cleansing. Their first promise, was that people would be no less well off, well that’s a lie. What they have done is legal but it is certainly not moral.

Anne argues that the assault that took place on local residents was like a type of ‘social cleansing’. For her, ordinary people are defenceless against the actions of the council.

In comparison to the estate where she used to live, Anne tells me that there is ‘zero community’ on Alan Turing Avenue and says that she bitterly misses her old life. Even though most of her neighbours ‘get along’, she thinks that ‘new Beswick’ is not nearly as good as ‘old Beswick’. Anne looks out of the window and points to an empty plot of land behind the new housing development which is where her old house used to stand. She instructs me to look at the empty space. It is roughly the size of a football pitch and is covered in broken bottles, shrubs and scattered rubbish. Mounds of soil are banked up at the edges to prevent vehicles from driving on the land. Amid the debris, there are still some street signs from the old estate. Anne is furious that the land remains untouched. She says that it is insulting to the residents who were moved away. There were supposed to be new houses built on the land, she continues, but there has been no news at all about when building will commence. Looking out of the window she tells me that she bitterly misses her old life.
Anne goes on to explain how she has formed a Home Watch group with some of her new neighbours and that this has reduced the cost of their house insurance. They are currently petitioning the developers, who are continuing to build houses on an adjacent road, to make some final changes to their street such as adding plants to the communal gardens at the side of the road. The year before, the group were awarded funding from the company who built the houses which they used to buy palm trees in ceramic pots which now stand outside each of the houses on the Avenue. Reflecting on the achievements of the Home Watch group, Anne says that her new neighbours have come together and made a 'sort of community' but nothing like the old estate. In the middle of our conversation, a man taps on the front window which looks on to the street. The boy who has been playing quietly on the floor looks up. He quickly gathers his coat and bag and moves towards the front door. Anne lowers her voice slightly and says to the boy, 'don't run out, come and give your Nanna a love'. He moves back to her chair and allows her to place a kiss on his head before making a swift exit. Anne shouts, 'see you next week' and waves to the man. Returning to our conversation, Anne tells me that her family ‘mean the world’ to her. I wonder what it must be like for Anne to live alone on the street and ask why it is important to have her relatives close by. She responds with indignation, ‘well, why not, that's what family means, isn't it!’ For Anne, it seems obvious that family should live close by and be in daily contact with each other.

During our conversation, I struggle to write notes quickly enough to capture the details in Anne’s account. She barely takes a breath between sentences and speaks with confidence, often raising her voice and gesticulating dramatically. Anne enjoys telling me about her life and likes having a listener. It is clear that she is angry about what has happened and feels

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5 Home Watch or Neighbourhood Watch groups are informal associations of neighbours who campaign to improve their local areas on issues to do with personal and neighbourhood safety.
that regeneration is a deeply unfair process for long-standing residents in Beswick. Anne tells me that she has not always been able to articulate her views so clearly but gained confidence after being involved in a number of training courses offered as part of the regeneration schemes.

Before New Deal I wouldn't have spoken like this. The courses were supposed to be empowering and they were. Now I'm talking out against it [the regeneration], and I'm a trouble maker. But no one listens.

The New Deal courses were designed to ‘empower’ residents and teach them communication skills so they could participate in discussions about regeneration. But Anne says that, for her, they have taught her to speak out against the decisions which have been made by the local government. She is outraged about what has happened to Beswick residents in the process of regeneration and says that she wants to take Manchester City Council to court on charges of corruption but no one will listen to her. I ask her why she thinks that Beswick has been targeted for regeneration. She responds sadly: 'To get rid of working class people, but all they have done is to replace my community with a more affluent one'.

Listening to Anne's story, I was initially struck by how strongly her account resonated with well-known critiques of regeneration that I had read. The term gentrification was coined by British sociologist Ruth Glass (1964) who observed processes of urban change in inner city London where new residents moved into previously declining areas and displaced working-class residents. Since Glass's work, gentrification debates have spread throughout a number of academic fields including sociology, urban planning, anthropology, anthropology,

6 New Deal for Communities was established in 1998 and ran until March 2010. It offered government funding for deprived communities to increase the number of people in work, improve education levels, reduce crime and improve people's health (Raco & Imrie 2003). The aim was to reduce the gap between 39 of the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country (East Manchester New Deal for Communities Final Evaluation 2010:5).
sociology and geography and have produced a range of approaches and theoretical perspectives (Hamnett 1991). Proponents of the concept of gentrification describe how labels such as ‘urban renaissance’ or ‘sustainability’ are used in policy documents because of their attractive and positive connotations which mask the dynamics of social class in such processes of change.\(^7\) It is important to briefly mention the gentrification debates as they deal with many of the same issues that I wish to examine. As I go on to explain, even though it appears that the gentrification literature may be useful to analyse the processes of change which are taking place in East Manchester, in fact the theoretical and analytical tools from the anthropology of Britain are more suitable and give more traction to this ethnography of East Manchester.

From the perspective of critical urban studies Neil Smith argues that ‘regeneration’ provides ‘anodyne’ language which ‘sugarcoats’ gentrification (2002:445). In critiques such as this the British government is accused of selling its vision of ‘urban renaissance’ through the strategic use of certain keywords that serve to neutralise what is essentially a programme of state-led gentrification (Lees 2003:75). Loïc Wacquant argues that when researchers offer ‘rosy’ accounts of neighbourhood ‘renewal,’ they are in ‘lockstep’ with the views of government and business elites (2008:201). He has made a passionate call for urban researchers to overcome the ‘general pattern of class blindness’ and to draw attention to the inequalities inherent in cities. Wacquant asserts that there has been an ideological victory for the neoliberal vision of the city and the language of regeneration has successfully ‘anaesthetised’ our crucial understanding of gentrification (2008:200). In his research on new build developments in Britain, Tom Slater (2006) claims that the middle classes are the ‘gentri’ part of the world and they are moving into formally working

class industrial spaces, which are off limits to the working classes. Similarly, Smith argues that ‘third wave gentrification’ has evolved as a vehicle for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a ‘comprehensive class-inflected urban remake’ (2002:443). The work of these authors’ suggests that inequalities are deepening in urban areas as the middle classes are taking over previously working class neighbourhoods under the guise of ‘regeneration’ (Slater 2006 & Smith 2002).

There appears to be striking similarities between the way that Anne describes the consequences of the urban regeneration process in Beswick and the critiques of gentrification described above. Anne suggested that what the council have done may be ‘legal but it is certainly not moral’. From her perspective, regeneration has radically altered the lives of ordinary people living in East Manchester and ruined community life. She argues that the interests of ordinary, working class people have been sidelined in favour of new, more affluent residents, thus supporting the gentrification critique. However, as our conversation progresses, it becomes clear that the situation is more complex than it first appeared. In order to explain Anne’s story and the experiences of other long-standing residents in East Manchester, a different analytical and theoretical approach is required. I do not offer a critique of gentrification analyses or engage with gentrification debates any further. Rather, I situate this research firmly within the anthropology of Britain. In the remainder of the introduction, I explain how the thesis draws on theoretical and analytical tools about community, which have been developed in this body of literature.

Returning to my conversation with Anne, when I tell her that I will be living in Beswick for the twelve months of my research and ask her what to expect of life on the Avenue her
answer is unexpected. She says that as long as I keep to ‘our’ end of the street I will be fine, everyone is friendly and there are lots of families, but I should avoid going down to the far end of the road as there has been ‘trouble’ in the past few months. Anne attributes the trouble to residents living in eight of the new houses which are owned by social landlords. She describes these residents as ‘bad news’.

Down the end of Alan Turing Avenue the police are never away. They [the residents] are from where the Academy is [being built]. It was a bad area. There were good and bad, like anywhere. But there’s some wrong-uns put down there. Some of them have asked if they can join our Home Watch but we think they should set up their own.

While Anne is angry about the changes which the council and the developers have made to Beswick, she does not hold them solely responsible for its problems and particularly for what she identifies as the lack of community. She also blames other residents. In her words: ‘I’ve always said, it’s not houses who make slums it’s people’. Anne refuses to let the newer residents who have moved from another area of Beswick to join the Home Watch meetings. She does not think that they will contribute to the group and she wants as little to do with them as possible. I am surprised by her answer as she had previously stoutly defended Beswick residents and blamed outsiders for attacking working class people.

As I learn more about life in East Manchester what seemed at first to be a fairly straightforward narrative of ‘working class displacement’ opens up a series of complex and, interrelated issues which are not just about ‘regeneration’ but also about community life. Anne believes that the council have targeted ordinary ‘working class’ people and argues that regeneration has been a ‘bloody mess’ destroying community life in Beswick. At the same time, however, she blames the social demise of Beswick on the ‘bad’ residents
who live on her road and she does not think that all working class people are desirable. The way that Anne talks about community and class shifts from one moment to another and indexes a much more complex politics of differentiation than I have found in the gentrification literature. As I learn about the social life of East Manchester it becomes clear that I cannot assume that all gentrifiers have the same class position (see also, Rose 1984). Even though the gentrification arguments mentioned above offer an important critique of contemporary urban processes, they do not adequately explain my fieldwork data. They tend to rest on overly simplified understandings of social class and community which predominantly homogenises both ‘the working classes’ and ‘the middle classes’ and places them in opposition to each other. The argument that middle class residents displace working class residents ignores the complex politics of differentiation that are at play in sites of regeneration (Bondi 1999).

Anne’s account draws attention to both the personal impacts of urban change for families and also the broader effects of redevelopment on community life. Our conversation makes me aware that for some local people there is a great sense of uncertainty about the future. In Anne’s story, feelings of betrayal, frustration and disenfranchisement are striking. In order to understand long-standing residents’ perspectives of the changes which have taken place, it is necessary to examine the ways in which people living in post-industrial neighbourhoods are ‘surviving, resisting and giving meaning to the particular challenges they face in contemporary times’ (Edwards et al. 2012:12). In this thesis, I seek to shed light on issues of belonging and community which Anne’s narrative draws attention to. In the remainder of the introduction, I describe the evolution of ethnographies, within the anthropology of Britain, from the 1950s to contemporary times. Taking a chronological and comparative approach, I show how the themes of kinship, community, class, identity and politics which were presented in Anne’s narrative, have been explored within this sub
genre and explain how my research builds on issues which are explored in this literature. I also explain how broader debates in anthropology have influenced the writing and methodological approach I have used in this thesis.

**Anthropology of Britain: Kinship**

In post-war Britain, it was widely assumed across the social sciences that urbanisation and industrialisation would bring about social fragmentation, with only immediate family members continuing to have close relationships, and relying on one another for support (Willmott & Young 1957:12). The work of Raymond Firth (1956), Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957), and Elizabeth Bott (1957) challenged this assumption. These studies remain important in contemporary discussions about kinship and community in Britain as they showed that family ties hold renewed importance in urban settings and remain a focal point of individuals' social lives amid social change. For example, Firth's research demonstrated that, even though ties varied greatly depending on family circumstances and personal selection, people depend on 'pivotal kin' for knowledge and communication (1956:62). He noted that while a high degree of selectivity was common among families, kinship defined by strong links between mothers and daughters was evident across communities, which continued when the daughter married and had her own family.

Firth's findings were supported by Young's and Willmott's (1957) claim that attachments between female kin were a defining element of the kinship system in urban Britain. In rural settings, bonds between fathers and sons were found to be strong as it was commonplace for men to farm on the same land as their father. But with large-scale industrialisation in Britain, men began to work in diverse occupations in urban settings
whereas women continued to rely on support from their mothers to bring up children and, therefore, continued to have a 'host of interests' in common (1957:157). Young and Willmott argued that for working class women, the mother-centred kinship system offered a sense of security, 'in a life beset by its opposite' (ibid.). The wife had to 'cling' to the family into which she was born, and in particular to her mother, as the only other means of 'assuring herself against isolation' (1957:158). These studies drew attention to the dynamic and changing character of kinship ties and showed that the family remained a central component of individuals' lives amid major social change. They also showed that kin ties are shaped by social class and by people's relationship to particular localities and their sense of community.

In this thesis, building on these studies, I explore the way in which social changes impact on individuals' reliance on the family and examine how kin ties and other social relations have been reconfigured due to changes in the built environment. My research attempts to extend Young and Willmott's (1957) research about urban change and community by focusing on contemporary examples of urban change. Their account examined the impact of the 1945 post-war slum clearance program in Bethnal Green. It explored the effects of London County Council's decision to move families to a newly built estate, Greenleigh, in the suburbs. Residents were reluctant to leave Bethnal Green, due to their attachments to their homes, community facilities and place of sociality such as the local pubs and markets. Most significantly, the study illustrated that residents did not want to move because they held a strong sense of belonging to Bethnal Green, rooted in their attachments to their families who they relied upon for support (1957:164). Young and Willmott concluded that policy makers should regard belonging or community 'spirit' as a 'social asset' worth preserving and build houses around social groups rather than uprooting people (1957:166). Continuing these debates, I examine how repeated waves of redevelopments
affect kin ties, community and belonging in East Manchester. In order to do so, I follow Bott’s (1957) approach to social networks and examine how individuals’ attachments to particular places are mediated by their connections to other people.

Bott examined the relationship between family and society and suggested that ‘no urban family could survive without its network of external relationships’ (1957:93). Her analysis is supported by Anne’s story. After moving to Beswick from Scotland, Anne developed close relationships with the neighbours on her old estate. She considered her former home to be a stable place and described it as a ‘third generation’ estate. Strong ties formed between the three generations of residents who lived there. Anne’s account also reaffirms Bott’s (1957) analysis of the relationship between social class and kinship. Bott argued that kinship ties in social networks are fluid and dynamic as they are always mediated by a number of different factors, including social class. She said that individuals do not simply acquire their ideologies, norms and values but they re-work them and conceptualise them in new forms (1957:223). Indeed, Anne developed a strong sense of attachment to the people on her old estate as they held similar values to her. She described her old neighbours as ordinary and ‘working class’ and explained how if there was a problem someone’s Mum would ‘sort it out’. However, on the street where she lives in ‘New Beswick’, she says that she prefers not to mix with people living at the far end of the road as they are ‘wrong-uns’.

Following Bott’s analysis we can conclude that social class is dynamic, with considerable variations in norms and ideology existing between people with roughly similar social experiences (1957:224). Drawing on this approach, I examine social class as dynamic and fluid rather than assuming that people are defined by their class position. I pay close
attention to processes of differentiation among people who may be considered to occupy similar class positions and ask what this tells us about sociality in East Manchester in 2010. Also, I explore whether or not social ties or networks continue to exist, in a context, where it is often argued by residents like Anne, that community has fragmented as working class families have been targeted in the process of regeneration. In asking what happens to relations when individuals are uprooted, I pay close attention to social networks and articulations of community among long-standing residents.

**Community**

The three studies carried out in the 1950s provided important insights into the shifting dynamics of kinship and community in post-War London but it was Ronald Frankenberg's (1957) research on rural life which marked the beginning of what was to be a major shift of focus towards the anthropology of Britain (Macdonald et al. 2005). Frankenberg’s monograph *Village on the Border* awakened an interest in ‘taken-for-granted’ aspects of life in small communities (Jackson 1987:11). His research in a village on the Welsh-English border touched on a broad range of themes including community, kinship, local politics and economics which have continued to hold enduring interest in anthropology to this day (Chevalier et al. 2007). The book defined the starting point of a type of anthropology ‘at home’ which has its own methodological preoccupations (Jackson 1987). It was formerly assumed that carrying out research in a milieu which one felt linguistically and behaviourally ‘at home’ was not credible because the researcher would take too much for granted (Rapport 2002). However, detailed studies of cultural life in Britain illustrated that:

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The ‘anthropology of Britain’ includes ethnographies from social sites in Wales, Scotland and England but excludes Northern Ireland which ‘warrants its own writing’ (Rapport 2002:3).
Culture is not a secret, it is something experienced – the formal medium of an experience – and its study is not an esoteric pursuit so much as an exercise in concentration and will; anthropology as a frame of mind, and as fieldwork practice, is not a pervasion of an everyday mind set as an exaggeration of one (Rapport 2002:7).

Ethnographic research in British cultural sites showed that 'exotic' social life may be present close to home but as Jackson argues, 'it is, indeed, all around one' (1987:8).

Following on from approaches taken in these studies, I explain how even though my field site was situated in a city where I had lived before, I had to learn how to participate with my informants as the social life which I observed was unlike any I had experienced before. While living in Beswick I was often asked by people where I came from. East Manchester residents often remarked that I did not sound 'local' because of my 'posh' accent. Also, they told me that they could tell I was not from Manchester as I did not recognise idioms, sayings, place-names and traditions which are well-known in Beswick and Openshaw. Even though I explained to my informants that I had lived in the north all my life, they told me that I was definitely not 'northern' (see Chapter Four). In the proceeding chapters, I explain how my informants taught me about life in East Manchester. In so doing, I 'make strange' the sometimes taken for granted and homogenising notion of 'British culture' (Cassidy 2002:161).

By conducting a detailed account of the social life of individuals living in East Manchester I hope to emulate the way in which anthropologists working in British social settings have accounted for the specificity of local cultures in different localities. For example, Frankenberg's (1957) research described how 'Pentrediwaith', ('village without work') lay in an isolated geographical position but was nonetheless shaped by both English and
Welsh society. He explained how in order to stress their continued cohesion villagers drew on narratives of a common history (1957:157). His account shows how divisions are made between insiders and outsiders in the village. Anthony Cohen's (1982) research later added to these discussions about community. He described how people living in Whalsay, in the Shetland Islands, recognised their ‘culture’ as that which distinguishes them from others. Cohen's account explains how different articulations of 'culture' became the source of his informants' identities (1982:6).

Extending Frankenberg's (1957) work on community, Cohen took a detailed local analysis of class and argued that it did not map directly onto a straightforward division between working and middle class residents. Following in a similar vein to the post-War research on urban life in London, described above, these ethnographies of cultural life documented the ways in which individuals draw a sense of connection to one another through idiom of kinship. The studies demonstrated how articulations of community and understandings of kinship have specific characteristics which are, crucially, shaped by wider social change. In order to extend these debates further, I explore the meanings of community and kinship, for residents like Anne, who argue that social ties in East Manchester have become disrupted and weakened due to the broader processes of change.

In order to examine articulations of community, in East Manchester, I draw in particular on Cohen's (1982, 1985) work. I reflect on the seemingly contradictory ways in which residents like Anne discuss social change from one moment to another. His theoretical framework enables me to explain why articulations of belonging or community shift from one moment to the next and even appear to be contradictory. Rather than understanding notions of community as stable, which can be defined in advance, I argue, following Cohen
(1985), that community is a symbol which is variable from one context to another, as it gives people the capacity to underline meaning. Drawing on Cohen, we see how the consciousness of community emerges in the perception of its boundaries which are largely constituted by people in interaction (1985:13). Following this approach, I explore the ways in which community is made through social relations and also examine how belonging to a locality is mediated by membership to its more fundamental structures, such as kinship, friendship and neighbourhood. Building on these studies, I suggest that individuals do not simply ‘belong’ to the places where they reside but develop a sense of belonging depending on the social relationships which they form over time. Moreover, I explore the social relations which matter to residents themselves, in their terms. I extend these discussions by suggesting how in East Manchester long-standing residents make community, paradoxically, by sharing narratives about the loss of social ties and lamenting the demise of the old ‘working class’ community (see Chapter Three).

Social class

Anthropologists working in British cultural sites have brought attention to the way in which individuals form connections to different localities and argued that they not only relate to understandings of kinship but are also deeply embedded in ‘class thinking’. Most notably, Marilyn Strathern (1982) explains how class and status categorisations are expressed using the language of kinship. She suggests that understandings of class are not restricted to one community, but are part of a wider model of society. This is particularly important for my analysis of how people in East Manchester make relations. The ‘outside’ world, she notes, is highly ‘class conscious’ (1982:74). It follows that constructions of kinship are ‘compelling frameworks of concepts’ which concern the place of the ‘individual’ within ‘society’ (1982:91). For Strathern, kinship provides a model not only of an
individual's own position in a class system but also of the class system as a whole (1982:249). This theoretical model of class helps to explain the contradictory references to kinship and class presented in Anne's narrative. For example, Anne talks about an attack on 'working class' people but also, speaks of her disquiet about some of the other people who live in East Manchester who she describes as 'wrong-uns'. She blames the demise of the area on some residents while also drawing a strong sense of similarity to the families who live on her old estate.

As Strathern (1982) argues, what makes class specific in Britain, is how individuals are imagined to move between classes that are fixed. Individuals make distinctions between one another, as they negotiate their own position in the broader class system. Further, we see that class is a broader model of society and relates to continuities and reformulations of disrupted relations into familiar categories of insider and outsider. Strathern's ethnography suggests that class is not fixed and rigid but is dynamic, changing from one generation to another, guided by historical circumstances and with finer degrees of differentiation. In this view, a person, 'is a mixture of what he is and what he does, both moulded by background and created afresh by his unique achievements' (1982:272). This work is also significant, as it highlights the potential pitfalls of analysing class ethnographically. Strathern argues that we must draw a distinction between colloquial references and economic understandings of class.

Following Frankenberg (1957) and Cohen (1982), Strathern (1982) suggests that anthropologists should carry out local analyses of social life, rather than assuming that class maps directly onto a straightforward division between working and middle class residents (Edwards et al. 2012). She suggests, like Cohen (1982), that the social
organisation of a community must be understood in the categories which its own members use to understand their milieu (1982:74). Drawing on this approach, I pay close attention to local idioms and explore the ways in which my informants draw a sense of similarity, or difference, between themselves and other people living in the locality. I explore how community is made sense of in the everyday lives of residents of East Manchester for residents like Anne, who argue that urban redevelopments have ruined community life for ‘working class’ people. In the conclusion to the thesis, I return to this point and explain how in order to explain the strong sense of uncertainty and unpredictability which is evident in East Manchester, it is necessary to extend existing theoretical understandings of community which are presented in the anthropology of Britain literature, in relation to a number of different interrelated factors, which includes social class.

**Ethnographic writing**

Developing the themes of kinship, community and class which have been presented in the ethnographies discussed so far, Nigel Rapport’s (1993) *Diverse World Views in an English Village* explains how there are many versions of British social life which are ever-changing. Rapport uses a more distinctive, innovative ethnographic style to those previously described in the anthropology of Britain. His work draws attention to the dynamic personalities of individuals. Rapport engages with issues raised in a series of debates which emerged in the *Writing Culture* debate in the 1980s challenging disciplinary conventions in anthropology, in regards to the authority of ethnographic writing (Clifford 1983, Marcus & Fisher 1986, Gupta & Ferguson 1987 to name a few). Rather than assuming that an individual’s behaviour is simply shaped by the place in which they live, Rapport argues that ethnographers should examine individual subjectivity and forms of
social behaviour in great detail, rather than celebrating cultural heterogeneity (Chevalier et al. 2007). As well as discussing his informants’ subjectivity, Rapport (1993) also reflects on the ways in which his own subjective position shaped his research encounters and subsequent analysis. He stresses emphatically that, rather than being defined by a class position, or being ‘from’ a certain place, ‘selfhoods become allocated from societal repertories for use in certain collectively structured worlds of experience’ (1993:179).

Since the *Writing Culture* debate in the 1980s, self-reflexive modes of ethnographic writing have dominated anthropology (Clifford & Marcus 1986). This has seen the inclusion of personal reflections on the researcher’s being (Leap & Lewlin 1996). Rapport’s (1993) research draws attention to the multiplicity of worldviews of his informants and dwells on lengthy extracts which describe his informants’ interactions. Considering the debates raised by Rapport, I have chosen to write some parts of this thesis in the ethnographic present. I use the ‘being there’ approach (Becker 1996) in order to illustrate the complex, sometimes contradictory, nature of individuals’ experiences and the ways in which long-standing residents describe change in East Manchester in 2010. Critics of the ethnographic present style argue that it has a tendency to place people and cultures outside of history, in an unchanging reified trap (see Hastrup 1990). Keir Martin (2012) defends the approach, however, arguing that it offers a sense of clarity and does not necessarily depict an unchanging social reality. This writing style seems to offer a ‘logical corollary’ for the peculiar nature of anthropological practice (Hastrup 1990:45) and to convey the specificity of the encounters and multiplicity of voices I encountered during fieldwork.

By writing sections of my research in the present and being clearly visible in the text myself, I show how ethnographic moments are produced and explain the reasons why I
have chosen to focus on certain issues, rather than others. I do not pretend that my
ethnographic account is representative of all residents' views in East Manchester, but
focus closely on key issues which preoccupied my informants. I explain how all research
encounters are partial (Skeggs 1997) and describe clearly how the aim of the research was
to understand the social world of a small group of people living in East Manchester. It was
not an attempt to present the opinion of all residents. Following Rapport, I hope to
highlight the ‘disjunctions’ in social life and portray the ‘inconsistency, the incomparability,
the multiplicity and contradiction that may exist in a social setting beneath the physical
contiguity, daily exchanges and uniform contours of behaviour’ (1993:191). In this thesis, I
argue that shedding light on apparently contradictory elements of social life is particularly
important, as it enables us to be able to consider the complex ways in which individuals
articulate a sense of belonging to people and places.

**Belonging**

As the ethnographies which have been discussed so far indicate, the post-Second World
War period in Britain has been a place of ‘considerable and dislocating social changes’ in
which the conceptions of time, space and identities have been transformed (Macdonald
2002:97). Research from the anthropology of Britain has repeatedly indicated how
narratives of belonging are used by individuals in order to assert a sense of similarity and,
at the same time, difference amid wider social change (Frankenberg 1957, Cohen 1982,
Rapport 1993). The detailed studies of social life described above indicate that place and
locality matter not just because they are where people reside but also because they are
where community, belonging and character are invested (Macdonald et al. 2005). With the
onset of rapid deindustrialisation in Britain, anthropologists have brought attention to the
multiple ways in which shifts in employment have impacted upon identity, individuals’
connections to place and community in these localities. These anthropological debates are particularly important to consider in relation to this research because, as Anne’s story reflects, East Manchester has been reshaped by a number of different periods of change.

Jeanette Edwards’ (2000) ethnography of Bacup, a post-industrial town in the north of England, examines the changing relationship between community, belonging and kinship. Her study specifically focuses on the ‘performative’ nature of kinship among her informants. Identity and belonging are aspects of persons which mobilise, and are mobilised by, kinship thinking (Edwards 2000:26). In Bacup, individuals reproduced kinship through the active practice of ‘neighbouring’ and they conceived of kinship as hybrid networks of ‘blood’ and ‘residence’ through the idiom of being ‘born and bred’. Social and economic changes which have occurred in the twentieth century are explained by local people through the survival or loss of certain Bacup qualities. For example, Bacup residents are said not to ‘neighbour’ like they used to and doors can no longer be left unlocked. Bacup is said to ‘exert an influence’ over people and moulds those people who live there (2000:134). So, while incomers are not born in the town, they can be socialised into its ‘customs and expectations’ (2000:134). Drawing on the approach taken in this research, I explore whether or not changes which have been made to the built environment are thought to have affected social ties and ways of life.

By focusing on the day-to-day lives of long-standing residents I explore the ways in which the social life of Beswick and Openshaw has been reconfigured in light of the significant rebuilding which has taken place. This is particularly important for residents like Anne, who feel that the redevelopments have brought about a strong sense of uncertainty. She laments the loss of her former community and is annoyed that she can no longer live in
close proximity to her family. Even though she moved from elsewhere, Beswick soon felt like home to Anne. She describes how on the ‘third generation estate’ where she lived family members and neighbours would look out for one another. These findings support Edwards and Strathern's (2000) work which suggests that what is distinctive about kinship in Britain, is the division and combination of social and biological facts. People construct chains of association, 'that enlarge their own sense of belonging to families by belonging to a place' (2000:151). Following their argument, it is possible to conclude that belonging to a locality is mediated through kinship ties.

Drawing on the work of Edwards and Strathern (2000), I explore how community is described in terms of ‘stability and communication’, and its ‘breakdown’ is linked to the loss of these things. Like communities, families are said to be both 'tight knit' and 'breaking down' (2000:151). I examine the relations which matter to residents and pay particular attention to the ways in which my informants form relationships or experience divisions between residents in the newly reconfigured landscape. In particular, I focus on how the demolition of old houses and the building of new housing developments have reconfigured social ties and given long standing residents a sense of belonging to East Manchester. In so doing, I pay close attention to the meanings attributed to kinship relations and social relations among social groups in order to analyse articulations of belonging and community. Also, I focus on the ways in which social relations are mediated by historical ideas about place.

As my conversation with Anne reflects, in localities which have been reshaped by economic and social change, it is argued that the built environment continues to remain embedded with meanings from former times. Andrew Dawson (2002) and Cathrine
Degnen's (2005) work highlights the role of memory in the way in which individuals relate to place in post-industrial sites. Dawson describes how older people in Ashington, a ‘coal-mining town without a coal mine’, in North-East England ‘work-out’ change through leisure activities (2002:116). He describes how the population was once fairly stable but, since the closure of the pits, there has been a large increase in outmigration and feelings of uncertainty about the future. In this context, Dawson explains how leisure pursuits in familiar localities, such as keeping an allotment, provided a ‘cultural resource’ through which to negotiate the practicalities of change (2002:116). Degnen's (2005) research supports these observations. She argues that memories become lodged into places; people do not ‘layer’ meaning onto the otherwise changing physical forms of the environment, but rather they construct relationships with place, creating a depth of knowledge and feeling that accumulates over time (2005:737). In order to extend these studies and anthropological discussions about belonging, I examine how the identities of former locations continue to shape the ways in which individuals relate to place. I focus on the ways in which long-standing neighbours share memories of the past, in order to articulate a sense of similarity to one another in the present and also make sense of the changes which are going on around them.

**Identity**

In recent years, anthropologists working in Britain have focused their attention on the ways in which occupational changes, brought about by deindustrialisation, have shifted notions of identity. Elizabeth Hart's (2005, 2008) research in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1980s explains how working-class identities were once related to distinctions between different occupational groups inside and outside the industrial workplaces as well as overlapping ties of kinship, friendship and neighbourhood. The nature of working and community life
in the potteries permeated the social, moral and spatial distinctions between workers who had been historically classified as those who were seen as ‘rough’ and those who were seen as ‘posh’ depending on the type of work they were employed to do (2005:175). Hart’s ethnography demonstrates that the working classes are not a homogenous group but comprise people occupying a range of positions, both in and outside the workplace.

Revisiting Stoke fifteen years later, Hart (2008) found that nearly three quarters of the pottery industry had disappeared and ex-workers felt as though they were in the ‘wilderness’. Many had only ever had experience of working in the potteries and their skills had become obsolete. Further, ex-workers were ‘self-conscious’ about their accents and way of life because of negative portrayals of Stoke residents in the media. Disenfranchisement and uncertainty are also evident in East Manchester. The issues associated with deindustrialisation and community decline which are raised in this ethnography are particularly important to discuss in relation to East Manchester, which has also been reshaped by economic decline.

Taking inspiration from Massimo Mollona’s (2009a) work in Sheffield, I explore how high rates of unemployment and occupational changes have shifted notions of identity in relation to work. He suggests that political, economic and social changes have not ‘turned the working class into the middle class or wiped it off the political map, but increased its fragmentation in ways that were difficult for workers to comprehend and combat’ (2009a:170). I explain how my informants make fine-grained distinctions between people who work and those who are unemployed. Following Hart (2005, 2008) and Mollona (2009a) I seek to explore the meanings of the varied perspectives on what constitutes respectable work in post-industrial life at the beginning of the 21st century. I ask whether
social ties have fragmented, as Anne’s narrative suggests, and explore how social relations among long-standing residents have been reconfigured in this context. In order to push these discussions further, I explore the effects of rapid urban change in a post-industrial locality on ideas of community.

Mollona (2009a) describes how Young and Willmott’s (1957) findings from the 1950s resonate with his own research in Sheffield, over fifty years later. This work suggests that extended families continue to be of central importance for individuals living in Endcliffe in Sheffield, as residents do not make clear distinctions between ‘nuclear’ or ‘extended’ members. In his analysis, Mollona argues that a more nuanced analysis is required in order to examine the relationship between kinship and social class today in post-industrial Britain, than previous studies about kinship give credit for. He concludes that kinship is not a static characteristic of working class life and that extended family connections do not offer a form of resistance against change. Mollona criticises Young and Willmott for replicating ‘essentialist assumptions’ and says that their work is guilty of ‘exoticising the working class’ with depictions of timeless kinship and social patterns (2009a:71). With this critique in mind, I use ethnography as a tool to uncover how class, kinship and identity emerge in post-industrial Britain. My aim is to add insights to a growing body of literature about the ways in which people are coming to terms with de-industrialisation and the kinds of persons they can become in a globalised service economy (see also, Evans 2012a:26). In order to do so, I engage with a set of interrelated debates in the anthropology of Britain, which examine how at the beginning of the 21st century, white working class people in Britain are now categorised as a ‘new ethnic group’ (Evans 2010).
Ethnicity

As well as drawing attention to the ways in which dramatic shifts in employment patterns have occurred in post-industrial Britain, anthropologists have also analysed the impact of political shifts on ideas about social class and ethnicity. Gillian Evans (2006, 2010, 2012a) describes how the emergence of the category of ‘white working class’ is the product of a combination of different factors which can be traced back to thirty years of British political and socio-economic history. She explains how during industrial times, Bermondsey, in London, was renowned for its fiercely protective, close-knit community. A sense of belonging was defined along ‘born and bred’ criteria which was inseparable from an individual’s sense of place (following on from the work of Strathern 1982, Edwards 2000). Families and neighbours formed strong bonds with one another for mutual support against the difficulties of living with limited economic resources. However, from the 1960s onwards large-scale immigration rapidly increased and protectionism began to prevail. Long-standing residents felt under threat from outsiders (Evans 2012b). Evans’ work clearly illustrates a shift away from ‘kinship-based localism’ to an extreme kind of protectionism and territorialism, leading to strong discrimination against outsiders by Bermondsey ‘locals’. Drawing inspiration from this research, I seek to explore how notions of belonging are constructed in East Manchester. For people like Anne, community links are perceived to have deteriorated, leading to a sense of hostility and resentment between residents and towards politicians who are regarded as ignoring the interests of local people.

These findings support other research in the Britain that shows a growing sense of resentment against politicians by working class people who do not feel that they have benefitted from the promise of economic growth and social cohesion (Jones 2011).
Drawing on Evans’ (2010, 2012a) work, I explore how a ‘political vacuum’ has emerged in Britain as the mainstream parties have shifted to the centre ground, and explore the consequences for some working class voters. I describe how my informants feel as though their interests are ignored by politicians, like Anne who feels that no one listens to her views about the ways in which urban changes have impacted on ‘ordinary’ people. Further, I explore how many long-standing residents articulate a strong sense of frustration with equality politics which they perceive to be illogical, nonsensical and further deepening unequal relations in East Manchester.

There have been a number of studies within the anthropology of Britain which suggest that there is a huge amount at stake in discussions about social differentiation because of the politics of race and ethnicity in Britain. Katharine Tyler’s account of life in a former mining town explains how ‘racist attitudes are shaped through the lens of a perceived competition over socio-economic and welfare resources that become fuelled by negative media representations of ‘non-whites’”(2004:306). Her work examines the impact of immigration policies on individual understandings of race and nationhood (2004:301). She attempts to debunk popular representations of the white working classes as ‘cultural dopes’ by examining young people’s ‘moments of questioning’ of racist discourses. Each new generation has novel views on race as young people combine their parents’ attitudes with their own experiences. Drawing on this work, I hope to update anthropological discussions on community, by exploring how individuals in a hostile economic climate argue that they must protect their own interests. Here, Katherine Smith's work is helpful. She claims that fairness is a morally evaluative term which has different meanings for different individuals (2012b). In her work in Manchester, Smith draws attention to the rise of far right parties such as the British National Party who appeal to sentiments and aspirations of members of the white working classes. She explains how there was
widespread dissatisfaction among some working class people about the lack of political representation at both the local and national level.

Building on these studies, I explore how political alienation is said to have exacerbated feelings of uncertainty in East Manchester. In subsequent chapters, I examine a common narrative of my informants about how ‘local’ or white people are missing out on jobs and houses as members of ethnic minorities are perceived to be favoured due to equality politics. I examine these narratives closely in order to add to our understanding of why the contemporary political moment feels like a ‘crisis of belonging’ for many individuals (Edwards et al. 2012). Drawing on the approaches taken in these studies (Evans 2010, 2012a, Tyler 2004, Smith 2010) I explore how wider political shifts impact upon subjective experiences of identity. I examine the ways in which relationships among longstanding residents have been reconfigured in the light of significant urban change in Britain, which has, as yet, not been fully explored in the discipline.

**Methodological approach**

Building on the work of the literature cited here, this thesis provides insight into the lives of a group of long-standing local residents in Beswick and Openshaw. It is based on ethnographic research, which, unlike other qualitative research methods, does not have a fixed form (Stewart 1998). Social anthropologists working in Britain have shown that seemingly ubiquitous concepts such as ‘community,’ take on different forms in particular contexts. In order to examine the ways in which notions of community are made, I examine how residents not only ‘narrate’ but also ‘experience’ living in Beswick and Openshaw (Ray et al. 2008:115). I chose to live in my field site in order to be able to become immersed in the local social world of East Manchester and so I could observe
‘incidental moments’ of day-to-day life, which are not often captured in other types of research (Becker 1996:65). I examine the tensions and difficulties that arise in projects of urban transformation, such as those that Anne described in our first meeting and pay close attention to the ways in which people experience place as it transforms over time.

Following other anthropologists (Firth 1956, Young & Willmott 1957, Bott 1957), my research examines the effects of urban change on community, kinship and social class. To gain a deeper understanding of social life in the area, I participated in the local social worlds of my informants and reflected on the outcome of this participation (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983:16). The thesis asks what changes under conditions of post-industrial regeneration and does not assume from the outset that we understand the parameters of these changes. Rather than judging the successes or failures of regeneration or studying the way that residents participate, or not, with the regeneration schemes in their neighbourhood, I explore how the reshaping of the built environment and broader social change are experienced in multidimensional ways. I do so, from the point of view of a number of different residents.

The study reflects on the process of ‘making science out of everyday experience’ and ‘empathising and ironizing the social cultural milieux’ of a supposedly ‘home’ environment (Rapport 2002:8). I explain how the meanings of community are contested and diverse. There is no single ‘working class community’ but a number of different and conflicting ideas about class and community which are underpinned by diverse understandings of place and belonging. I describe how change is experienced in various and sometimes unexpected ways and argue that in order to explain why diversifications in social life has occurred, it is necessary to engage with an anthropological approach to social class
outlined above. I draw on Rapport’s ethnographic approach which emphasises the importance of representing diversity and the multiplicity of people's views. Following this style, I show that the social life I observed cannot be essentialized or absolutely defined (Rapport 2002:17).

Defining the field

East Manchester is a large geographical area which covers 1900 hectares of land and spreads from the edge of the city centre, to Tameside and the M60 orbital motorway. As I explain in detail in Chapter Two, in 2000, New East Manchester Limited was established (hereafter, NEM). The company established a masterplan for the area which public partners used to prioritise the redevelopment of key infrastructure and to look for private funding (Jones & Evans 2008:18). It was decided that the company would be called 'New' East Manchester in order to mark the latest period of regeneration as distinct from previous state interventions which had taken place (Ward 2003:123). The light blue colour on the map in Figure 2 shows the localities which were included.

![Map of New East Manchester](neweastmanchester.com)

*Figure 2: Map of New East Manchester* (from neweastmanchester.com)
NEM’s vision was outlined in its original Regeneration Framework in 2000. A number of key aims were defined, which included increasing the population of East Manchester by 30,000, building 12,500 new homes and improving 7000 existing properties (Parkinson et al. 2006:4). Housing formed a key element of the regeneration plans to improve the living standards for existing residents and also to encourage new people to move to the area. It was argued by NEM that improving living standards and repopulating these neighbourhoods would reduce the unevenness and fragmentation which separated the neighbourhoods in East Manchester from the rest of the city. Across the area more widely, NEM delivered a wide range of regeneration programmes including, building mixed housing and green spaces, creating greater access to employment and providing community resources. A wide variety of new facilities, institutions and commercial sites were built. These include, to name a few: the City of Manchester Stadium, an Academy school, new shops such as the Morrison’s shopping complex in Openshaw, Asda supermarket in Beswick and a number of community centres.

As Bott (1957) notes, it is impossible for a researcher to examine the exact content of all members of a social group but a detailed investigation into the lives of a small number of informants offers a glimpse of the workings and structure of that social group (1957:49). Following her approach, I focus closely on a small number of key informants. I do not claim to carry out an ethnography of regeneration per se. Nor do I claim to have carried out an exhaustive ‘community’ study of East Manchester. Rather, my ethnography seeks to explore the meanings of sociality for a particular group of individuals living in Beswick and Openshaw in 2010. I focus on the lives of a small number of residents and explain how they engage in increasingly intensified efforts to shore up what counts as appropriate sociality. In what follows, I explain how I went about defining the field for this research.
After moving to Alan Turing Avenue, Anne is helpful and welcoming and enjoys telling me about what it has been like living in Beswick. She is always friendly when we pass each other on the street and pleased to answer questions about our houses, but it is clear that she is not interested in helping me any further. Anne tells me that she is always pushed for time as she has many family commitments such as looking after her grandchildren. She suggests that if I want to talk to other residents I should go to the local community centre rather than bothering people on the Avenue: I am likely, she tells me, to have more luck there. Following Anne’s advice, I became involved in a number of different groups in East Manchester and spend time in a variety of social spaces, which are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Map of institutions and social spaces in East Manchester

Over the twelve month period of fieldwork, I mainly spent time in Beswick and Openshaw but also travelled to Clayton, a neighbourhood to the north. Each week I attended a number of different sessions in three different community centres. They included a coffee morning, jobs club, craft class and Mother’s Union meetings. At the community centres I was able to join in with group activities and engage in longer conversations with local
people. As Rapport noted, taking on a ‘role’ or a ‘niche’ gives the ethnographer ‘a purpose which other people could recognise and appreciate’ (1993:56). In these sites I was invited to local accompany local people to other social spaces, for example, the market, the allotments as well as Asda and Morrisons supermarket. I also visited the Sure Start centre, Academy school and the Stadium in order to learn more about ongoing regeneration projects. In the thesis, I explain ethnographically how my informants’ social networks revolved around these key sites.

Over the twelve month period I developed a small group of key informants. They were all women between the ages of fifty and seventy who regularly attended the community centres and informal places like the market as they did not work, tended to live alone and sought company. I found that in social spaces across East Manchester local people came together to share memories of the industrial past. Leisure spaces provide important places where people can ‘work out’ change (Dawson 2002a: 116). Older people often tell me that in comparison to the past, there is no community anymore. During the initial periods of fieldwork I was surprised by the dominance of these descriptions of life in the past. For example, in my conversation with Anne, I noticed that she was much keener to talk about her life on the old estate than her life in ‘new Beswick’. At first narratives about the past seemed to be counterproductive to my interests as the stories did not appear to tell me anything about local ways of life in the present. However, as I became more familiar with the way in which these stories are exchanged, it became clear that stories about former ways of living are highly valued sources of local knowledge which offer valuable insights into contemporary life (see Chapter Three). I began to realise that the past is re-appropriated by residents and has come to define the way that individuals define themselves in the present (Cohen 1982).
In the thesis, I reflect on the process of being taught local knowledge in these social settings. I describe how my fieldsite was confusing and utterly different from anywhere I have lived before and explain how I had to learn how to interact with my informants. As a female researcher, I was welcomed to certain social spaces in East Manchester more than others. The thesis reflects on the way in which various aspects of the ethnographer’s identity, together with the specific events that unfold during the research, generate a particular and unreplicable field experience (Leap & Lewlin 1996:2). In general, I found that men did not feel comfortable talking to me for long periods of time and there were a number of social settings which were off limits and to which I was not granted access. For example, one evening, I visit husband and wife Mike and Danielle, who live around the corner from me in Beswick. We have a cup of tea in their living room and I ask a couple questions about their family and working lives. Mike tells me how he spends his spare time at the weekends. His best friend who lives next door comes round to play on the Xbox games console when their children have gone to bed and they drink beer. On special occasions, the men go to the pub, *The Manchester*, which is a ten minute walk away in Beswick but, Mike tells me, often they cannot be bothered as pubs are full of people who are looking for trouble and the beer is now too expensive. Danielle agrees, she used to love going out drinking but now prefers to spend time with her female cousins who live round the corner from her in Beswick.

There are four pubs on the estate in Beswick which have all been renamed after Manchester City since the football club moved to East Manchester. I am often told by local people that not only have their prices risen, but they have also lost their ‘local feeling’ as they no longer attract regular local customers. After Mike has finished his cup of tea he becomes distracted and returns to the computer on which he had been playing an online game. Danielle is not surprised and explains that he does not enjoy ‘nattering’. She
continues to talk to me for another two hours. While, of course, there are exceptions, men and women tend to socialise separately in Beswick. My key informants recommended to me that I should not try to spend time in male settings which are deemed to be off limits to women. Local residents often socialise with their neighbours or family members in their homes but as an outsider I was not often invited into these spaces. I was welcomed into social spaces by women but in male dominated environments it was difficult to be taken seriously as the following incidents demonstrate.

Sean, the organiser of the allotments in Openshaw, invites me to the AGM one Sunday morning which is held in a large shed on the site. There are not enough seats for everyone, so a number of men wearing outdoor clothing and wellingtons or boots stand at the back. After going through the agenda, Sean asks if I would like to introduce myself to the assembled plot holders. I turn around to look at the group and explain that I would like to come and spend time at the allotments in order to learn about life in East Manchester. One man says; ‘You can come and talk to me, whenever you like, love’. Everyone erupts in laughter and Sean carries on the joke, saying, ‘stay away from him Camilla, he’s got a dodgy ticker’. I feel embarrassed by their teasing but decide to persist.

After the meeting when some of the members have left, I approach a group of four men and ask them if I can talk to them about the allotments. There are two plot holders I am particularly keen to speak with. I have noticed that they keep pigeons in large sheds which line the edge of the allotments like fortresses, festooned with flags and tall gates that are protected with thick locks. I have noticed that they spend a great deal of time tending the pigeons and I am curious to know more about their pastime. Despite repeated attempts, however, I am never invited inside to see them. I ask the men if they will tell me about
their pigeons but I am only offered monosyllabic responses before they make an excuse and a hasty exit. These encounters with men are commonplace. I usually find that men I meet are polite, but difficult to engage in longer conversations and they do not invite me to participate in their social interactions. Like Rapport, I often felt as though I was ‘snooping’ and interrupting the normal ‘flow of life’ (1993:71). Due to the difficulties of these encounters, most of my attention is focused on the more productive relationships I developed with older women in East Manchester who facilitated my research and looked after me socially.

Nora, who I first meet at the coffee morning, is not surprised that men are unwilling to talk to me. She warns me that it is not appropriate for a young woman to be seen with older men and says; ‘what would their wives think?’ In contrast, the women I meet tend to be welcoming and do not mind me spending time with them. They regard me as naive and tell me that there is lot they can teach me. They are intrigued about my life and ask me many questions about my family. What brought me to Manchester? Where I am living? Among the women, I am treated as an object of curiosity and attention (Golde 1986:10). They like to give me advice and tell me about their experiences. Some remark that aged twenty-three I should really be thinking about having children rather than studying while others say that I am making a wise choice waiting until I am a bit older. Nora is concerned that I should make sure that I create a secure financial future for myself by getting married. On one occasion, I pretend to ignore her advice about having children and change the subject abruptly to a different topic. She responds affectionately saying; ‘Don’t you joke with me! Don’t make your Nana slap you!’ As these exchanges demonstrate, Nora and her friends are used to interacting with younger women. With patience and generosity they enable me to participate in some aspects of their daily lives.
In April, I am invited to attend a Saint George’s Day celebration at a local market. The group at the market tell me that they have decided to celebrate together as they feel that it is important to continue traditions and mark their national Saint’s Day. Twelve regular customers at the market sit on plastic chairs outside the café where tea, coffee and sandwiches are provided. I ask the group what the various symbols and rituals associated with the celebration mean and write their answers in my notebook. Nora wears a red and white cowboy hat (Figure 4) and hands me a red rose to pin to my jumper. She explains how it must be worn on the left side, next to your heart.

Figure 4: Nora at the market on St. George’s Day

A man, in his late sixties who is sitting at an adjoining table leans over and asks me, ‘are you doing your homework?’ I explain that I am writing notes about the day for my research and how I am a student at Manchester University. The man continues by telling me that he knows a lot of people who are studying and how they are wasting the government’s money. Mocking the idea that I want to know about ‘local life’, he suggests that I should take him for a drink to the pub. Overhearing this exchange, Nora, tells the
man: ‘She is not taking you for a drink! No one will take you for a drink’. Denise, another woman sitting with us, also responds in an aggressive tone: ‘She’s not going to that pub, it’s full of knuckleheads.’

The women turn their chairs away from the table where the man is sitting and direct me to follow them. Nora says protectively, ‘you are not going down there doll, you stick with us!’ Denise remarks that the man is a ‘bloody idiot’ and says that I should ignore him. I am touched by the protective response from Nora and Denise. Throughout fieldwork these older women provide access to a variety of places and also act as symbolic ‘chaperones’ who offer guidance and reassurance (Golde 1986:7). More importantly, they are willing to incorporate me into their social groups and respond to my interests seriously. The time we spend together produces stimulating and exciting exchanges. The thesis focuses closely on the relationships I develop with these women and reflects on the process of making relations, which my experiences reveal. Spending time with these women in social settings across East Manchester taught me about local preoccupations which I could not have anticipated in advance.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis unfolds in seven chapters. To start, I outline the economic and political changes which have taken place in East Manchester from a historical perspective. In Chapter One, I describe the shift from the industrial to post-industrial period and explore the effects of unemployment for working people in Beswick and Openshaw which has resulted in economic, social and spatial dislocation. Despite funding from regeneration being invested into the area, my informants say that East Manchester is isolated and dislocated from other residential areas and the city centre. In contrast to one-dimensional portrayals of
'deprivation' which flatten complexity, my approach explores the dynamics of social class, gender and notions of community. I argue that remains of the industrial past have largely been erased from the landscape but former ideas about work remain indelibly etched in the local consciousness. In Chapter Two, I describe how state organised urban development in Manchester has been introduced in a number of phases and how East Manchester has become defined and circumscribed as a distinct and distinctive place through politics and processes of regeneration. I outline how there are a range of actors with different interests and who, within the processes of regeneration, have different perceptions of place and change. In addition, I explore how place-naming is a powerful tool within regeneration schemes that also holds great value for local residents. In Chapter Three I go on to discuss how feelings of marginalisation and isolation in the present produce a longing for the rich social life which characterised the past. I explain how local narratives of the past highlight a clear disjuncture between experiences of belonging in East Manchester and the wider discourse of regeneration which depicts linear ideas of progress and development.

The following four chapters provide detailed ethnographic accounts of everyday social life that I observed in East Manchester. In Chapter Four, I describe how material objects and gifts play an important role in mediating social relations and also in commemorating the dead. In contrast to dominant depictions of deprivation which refer to individuals living with depleted economic resources and social ties, these examples demonstrate how rich social ties are deepened by sharing small items. Carrying on these themes, Chapter Five explores the reasons why housing has come to symbolise feelings of uncertainty in local discourse in East Manchester. I explain how ideas about housing may not only be understood in terms of economic logic. They also tell us about historical and emotional
connections to places and to people which are individually deployed and complexly constructed.

Chapter Six examines perceptions of risk in relation to ideas of community as uncertain and precarious. It describes how stories of the Moors Murders haunt East Manchester, fifty years after they were committed. Danger is felt to shape the area and there is a general perception that in recent years, the neighbourhood has become more dangerous due to violent crime. I describe how children are thought to be particularly at risk and explain how my female informants feel that they have had to take on the role of being protectors. Chapter Seven deals with the ways in which political alienation is said to have exacerbated feelings of uncertainty in East Manchester. The people with whom I worked in East Manchester feel alienated from politics and unfairly treated by political calls for equality. At the time of the general election, I was frequently told that the views of ordinary people are not represented by mainstream politicians. Residents attribute blame to both the political elite who do not speak and act on their behalf and to newcomers who have moved into East Manchester. The chapter argues that social change is regarded as inherently unpredictable and long-standing residents in East Manchester feel as though there is no one to protect their interests. I describe how equality politics are thought to be illogical, nonsensical and further deepen unequal relations. Adding to these recent debates in the anthropology of Britain about the white working classes, I argue that my informants’ views about race, which often appear to be exclusionary and intolerant, tell us about their desires for equality. In the conclusion, I return to the discussion that has been set up in the introduction about the anthropology of Britain. I examine issues arising from the thesis and draw comparisons between different lines of argument presented in each chapter. I elaborate on the ways in which the material presented in this thesis shows how social change is characterised by unpredictability and uncertainty. I argue that my findings
require us to rethink notions of community, in relation to narratives of the past, place, material objects, risk, ethnicity and social class.
Chapter 1

‘People want jobs, they want a life!’

In a community centre adjoining his church in Openshaw, a United Reformed minister, Patrick, tells me about his concerns for the area to which he has dedicated over twenty years of work. I ask him whether he feels optimistic about the future of East Manchester, to which he responds:

No. They were making steam engines here. This was an area for working people who were highly skilled. Now, due to globalisation because of Korea, Hong Kong, China there is nothing here. There is massive unemployment. All that NEM have done is build houses, that’s all they’ve done. People want jobs, they want a life! These areas have been redeveloped but they are dislocated.

This chapter describes how deindustrialisation radically transformed East Manchester and has brought about a sense of dislocation and uncertainty about the future. During fieldwork, when I asked my informants how Beswick and Openshaw have changed in recent years, the term ‘regeneration’ was hardly ever mentioned. Rather, the issue of widespread unemployment came up time and again. I was presented with a contrasting range of opinions about the reasons why high levels of unemployment and welfare dependency continue to characterise East Manchester, as indicated in the following two examples.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in July, I meet Gerald, a man in his sixties, at the opening of the East Manchester Library. We get talking while leafing through a collection of old black and white photographs of Beswick and Clayton which are on display in the library. As Gerald looks at the pictures he smiles fondly and tells me stories about when he was a child. Gerald explains how he had a good upbringing but how it was tough to make anything of yourself living in East Manchester. Aged twenty, he ‘got out’ and left Beswick...
for the south of the city where he built a successful life and worked hard to provide for his family. Gerald tells me that he comes back to East Manchester as little as possible. He is visiting on this occasion to watch his daughter perform in a street dance group at the opening event at the library. I ask him whether Beswick has changed much since his last visit, he answers:

I don’t think that no end of money would make things better here without making jobs. But then people round here don’t want to work. They’re comfortable with benefits. Why would they want to work? It’s a well known fact that girls round here get to sixteen or seventeen and they think, what do I do next? If I get pregnant I’ll get a house. So that’s what they do, they make that decision so they can be comfortable. When I was a lad, we all went into apprenticeships. You did your time and then you could get a good job at the end. There’s nothing like that anymore. Don’t get me wrong, universities are good places, but where are our young people who are learning a craft? Well, I suppose there’s no jobs at the end, but it’s all wrong to me. There used to be good blue collar jobs and now there are only white collar ones.

Gerald is appalled by the number of people who depend on benefits. He acknowledges that there are very few opportunities in the job market but says that those who are unemployed in East Manchester make a decision to live off the state rather than searching for work. For Gerald, the values which once united the ‘old’ or ‘traditional’ working class community have been eroded. He tells me that no matter how much regeneration funding is invested in East Manchester, the locality will never improve because the people who live there do not want to change.

While Gerald clearly acknowledges the limited opportunities available, he says that high rates of unemployment in East Manchester are as much, if not more so, a consequence of people’s attitudes. For Marie, a woman in her fifties who lives in Beswick, the idea is inverted. She has great sympathy for people who are unemployed as she believes that
there are no job opportunities on offer. Marie has four grown up children and has been out of work for twenty years. I ask her whether she thinks her children have more opportunities than she had to which she responds that there are fewer than ever before. Marie tells me how everyone living in East Manchester finds it extremely difficult to find work.

It's the inner cities, we're just left. They built that new Morrisons up there but there's probably only about 30 jobs for local people. None of the people at the top are from round here. I went in the other day and was being nosey. I asked someone where the boss lives. They told me he's from Warrington! I don't understand why it can't be run by people from Openshaw.

I ask Marie whether or not she felt optimistic about the future. She tells me:

Not really, lots of the jobs round here have gone. What's the point of working for 5 pounds an hour? It's slave labour! My friend has just got a job and she's earning less than she did when she was on the dole [Job Seekers Allowance]. There's no point. I think they should put up the minimum wage first or else people won't bother getting jobs. We need a decent wage. They've got it all wrong round here. They closed the pits, they closed the textiles. What do they expect? How do the government expect us to live?

Marie feels angry about the way that people who are living in what she describes as 'lower class areas' are treated. In her view, politicians are to blame for unemployment in East Manchester and the uncertainty which residents face. She tells me how for the past ten years she got by living off benefits as she has found a loop hole in the system. Marie does not want to tell me exactly how this works. She seems to be slightly uncomfortable talking about benefits but tells me resolutely that there are no other viable options available to her.
The three opening vignettes clearly outline issues about unemployment and welfare support in East Manchester which I will explore in this chapter. I examine the concerns my informants raise and offer an alternative account to well known narratives about post-industrial life by exploring the consequences of economic shifts for working people. I ask what counts as work for my informants, and why? To start, I describe how even though the industrial buildings have been erased from the landscape in East Manchester, the past still influences the way that individuals relate to Beswick and Openshaw. Then, I examine how the shift from the industrial to the service sector has transformed ideas about work. In the final part of the chapter, I explore the relationship between gender and work in more detail and argue how these constructs are underpinned by ideas of social class.

‘I guess we were self-sufficient round here’

The subject of work and community in the industrial past is dominant in day-to-day topics of conversation among older long-standing residents. Even though the remains of the industrial buildings have largely been erased from the landscape, narratives about work in the past continue to shape the identity of East Manchester and its residents (see Chapter Three). During the first couple of months of fieldwork I spend a morning every week with Colin who works on a fruit and vegetable van which stops outside community centres, residential neighbourhoods, schools, Sure Start Children’s Centres and sheltered housing. The van was set up by a local healthy-eating initiative and is supported by public funding from the NHS and the local council. Their aim is to supply reasonably priced fruit and vegetables to areas of East Manchester where there is limited access to shops which sell fresh food. Since the Asda supermarket was built in Beswick in 2002 many local grocery shops have closed down and some of the residential areas have become known locally as ‘food deserts’.
It is February, on an icy winter’s morning. I meet Colin before eight in the morning at the market on Ashton Old Road in Beswick and help to load crates from a lock-up into the grocery van. The van stocks among other things; two types of potatoes, ‘easy peelers’ and ‘washed whites’, celery, bananas, apples, pears and red peppers, which Colin says are never very popular with the ‘old folk’. He tells me that he sometimes stocks punnets of strawberries. They always sell out quickly but are difficult to get hold of at the market for a reasonable price. As we travel on the van, rather than talking about the healthy eating initiative, the majority of our conversations are about East Manchester.

Colin is an accomplished story teller and very knowledgeable about local history. Every Christmas his family give him books about Manchester’s past. He laughs and says that he has become an ‘old git’. Colin is in his early sixties. He was brought up in Clayton and has lived in Openshaw since he got married. When he was twenty-one, he followed his ‘old Fella’ into the newspaper printing industry and worked there for twenty-seven years. During this time, he became a militant trade-union activist and campaigned at a number of national demos and strikes. Colin has worked on the fruit and vegetable van for two years, after a period of unemployment. He tells me that he was a highly skilled worker in the factory but found it difficult to get a new job when he was made redundant. Colin says that he is extremely lucky to find work with the fruit and vegetable van as many of his ex-colleagues had to retire early. Colin wanted to continue working in order to supplement his state pension but also because he has ‘always worked’ and feels that it is important to stay occupied.

After completing the morning route, Colin draws into a bakery shop and buys a meat pudding which is served in a polystyrene tray and covered in a pool of glossy, dark brown
gravy. He turns the heating up full blast to keep us warm. While he eats, Colin tells me that East Manchester is unrecognisable compared to when he was growing up but even though the landscape of Openshaw has changed dramatically, many people still refer to old landmarks. For example, when Colin travels on the number 219 bus from Manchester city centre to Openshaw, without thinking he often asks for a single to ‘the Don’, the name of a cinema which was demolished thirty years ago. As we drive from place to place on the route he makes detours in order to show me places of interest.

In Clayton, Colin pulls up outside what looks like a boarded up house (Figure 5). At street level, the building blends into the row of terraced housing either side, but looking up it has an impressive brick facade. It is still possible to see the Droylsden Industrial Cooperative Society banner and its crest mounted on the smoke covered bricks.

*Figure 5: Droylsden Industrial Cooperative Society Building in Clayton*
Looking at the building, Colin explains that when he was growing up East Manchester was a bustling industrial neighbourhood. Workers filled the streets every morning and evening, making their way to local places of employment. After their shifts they would spill into the busy pubs which were on every corner. Back in the van, we cross a dual carriageway crossroads between Ashton New Road and Alan Turing Way, Colin gestures out of the window, and says with a sigh and a tone of resignation; ‘You’d never guess it but there were 20,000 jobs on the Asda site. It was heavy engineering, the steel works, it was a hive of activity. Like Bradford Colliery, there were loads of people employed there’.

For Colin, even though the landscape has changed a great deal, the remnants from the industrial past continue to influence the way in which he relates to East Manchester. Tim Edensor (2005) describes how industrial ruins possess rich histories. He suggests that the ‘contingent, ineffable, unrepresented, uncoded, sensual, heterogeneous possibilities of contemporary cities are particularly evident in their industrial ruins’ (2005:19). In addition to this analysis, it is also striking how absences in the landscape evoke rich historical resonances. Colin tells me that if he were to bring his ‘old Fella’ who died fifteen years ago back to life and place him somewhere in East Manchester, he would not know where he was. After hearing these stories, it is clear that Colin is fascinated by the way in which the landscape has changed dramatically in the space of two generations and feels that it is important to keep stories about the industrial heritage of the area alive.

**Work and the industrial past**

At a coffee morning I attend every week in a community centre in Beswick, women in their fifties to eighties often talk about the variety of jobs they had in their formative years. After the returned home from school, they had to look after themselves when their parents
were at work. They describe how they were ‘latch-key kids’ as from a young age they were trusted with a front door key. The women describe how they would let themselves into the house and would carry out tasks such as lighting the fire, cleaning or preparing tea. When the women left school aged fourteen or fifteen, they had to grow up quickly and find paid work. They found jobs in factories, as machinists, in local pubs, as cleaners or shop assistants. In East Manchester a large proportion of work was based in manufacturing and engineering for men but women were also employed in the surrounding industries and leisure spaces. It is often said that employment was readily available for hard workers and could be found in various sites in the local area. The women at the coffee morning describe how vacancies were easy to come by as news of work was circulated among informal networks. Gail, a woman in her fifties from Beswick says:

> When someone was leaving a job, you’d find out and go and ask at the place if you could have a job. You were never out of work. You just approach the place and say, ‘I believe someone is leaving on Friday, can I start on Monday’. Friends and family would tell you if something came up where they worked.

The women had to juggle work commitments, caring for their children and looking after the house. These narratives support Bott’s (1957) findings in London which hold that the connectedness of kinship networks was strengthened when family members were able to find each other jobs.

One of the women from the coffee morning, Grace, a widow in her seventies, invites me around for lunch at her home in Clayton (see Chapter Five). When I arrive, she shows me a number of photographs of her family (Figure 6). In the picture her seven children are wearing their ‘Sunday best’, a smart outfit which they wore to church and for visiting relations. It was taken when Grace took the family to visit an aunty who lived in Ancoats, a suburb to the north of the city centre.
The photograph of the children is placed above the gas fire in her lounge on a shelf which is filled with ornaments of birds and cut glass. Grace smiles and looks at the picture with pride. She tells me how these were the best days of her life and how she remembers the photograph being taken 'like it was yesterday'. Grace's husband worked as a bus conductor but his pay was not enough to support their family so she also worked in a number of jobs.

I used to get coal from Clayton pit in the morning. I had three jobs. I’d get up and do the coal, so we would always be warm. Then I’d come home and get the kids up, make sure they were clean for school. Take the children to school, go cleaning at the pub and light all the fires. Then I’d go home and have lunch, go and clean in the furniture shop, come home and cook for the kids. And then I’d clean all night until six am.

With this routine, Grace did not have time to sleep at night so would rest for a couple of hours in the day between her jobs and the children coming home from school. She was able to carry out this routine as her work places were close to home. It would appear that Grace exaggerates for effect in order to make the point that when she was bringing up her children she had to work tirelessly in order to support them.
According to my older informants, post-war Manchester was defined as a period of stability which as disrupted by the onset of deindustrialisation in the 1970. Strong social ties connected individuals who lived in East Manchester. Residents commonly worked together in industrial and manufacturing jobs and socialised in the pubs and terraced streets. My informants stress that work and community were intrinsically linked and mutually constitutive. There were a variety of jobs available in Beswick and Openshaw and the neighbourhoods close by, which made it a productive and sustainable place to live. My informants describe how work was a defining way in which sociality was constructed and differences of status were described. Some people completed an apprenticeship after school and then worked in skilled manual jobs for many years while others would go from one employer to another in quick succession.

Sheila, a widow in her seventies who I meet at the Mothers’ Union in Beswick, tells me that when her daughter was born, she left her job as a school receptionist in order to be a full time housewife. Her husband’s job as an engineer at Clayton Aniline, a chemical factory situated on the border between Clayton and Beswick provided the family with enough money. I ask her whether they were good employers, to which she responds: ‘Oh yes, they would give you a ham every Christmas. Either cooked or not, depending on what you like.’ Shelia describes how her life was ‘comfortable’ and explains how they could afford some luxuries on her husband’s wage. The accounts of industrial life which are offered by Sheila and Grace differ greatly and demonstrate how during the industrial period the living standards of families in East Manchester varied enormously. In shared conversations about the past, however, long-standing residents do not dwell on the distinctions of class

9 Mothers’ Union is a Christian charity which has organisations around the world. The charity aims to support marriage and family life. In Beswick they hold meetings every two weeks which include prayer, activities and informal support. The members are all women in their fifties to eighties. See Chapter Six.
and wages of individuals. Instead, their narratives stress that all residents had similar opportunities. Overwhelmingly, discussions about work in the industrial past stress that employment was available to people who wanted to work and suggest that common values around work supported a strong sense of community. Reflecting on the strength of industry in East Manchester and a strong sense of neighbourliness, Margaret, who I meet at Openshaw allotments, tells me, 'I guess we were self sufficient around here'. Overall, in these narratives, the past is regarded as a period of stability where social ties between neighbours and family were strong. In order to analyse why the industrial period is referred to in terms of stability, it is necessary to provide a brief historical discussion of deindustrialisation in East Manchester.

**Historical narrative: industrial leader to post-industrial loser**

In the nineteenth century, Manchester was a leading force in the Industrial Revolution with an abundance of cotton mills and manufacturing activity. The city gained an international reputation for its export of cotton products. In 1853 it had over one hundred mills and was referred to 'Cottonopolis' (McNeil & Nevell 2000). With further industrial growth, the city gained a new status as an engineering centre and sustained its position as the financial centre of the region. In 1907, five out of twenty of the largest manufacturing companies in Britain had their headquarters in Manchester (Davenport-Hines 1990 in Dicken 1993:1). A number of foundries and engineering firms were established in outlying areas to the east of the city centre. In addition, light engineering industries, such as chemical and textile firms were also established (Tye & Williams 1994:43). East Manchester contained a number of the key industrial sites and was dubbed the ‘metal bashing heart of the city’ from which a large proportion of the city’s wealth emerged (Robson 2002:40). For example, Bradford Colliery, which is pictured in Figure 7.
According to Peter Dicken, despite exerting a powerful influence over global markets, few industries in Manchester had much 'natural protection' (1993:2). This was because Manchester was heavily dependent on large employers compared to the rest of Britain. The effects of deindustrialisation were particularly prominent in East Manchester as the major firms closed down such as Bradford Colliery (1968), the locomotive manufacturing industry based in Gorton (1965, 1968), English Steel (1973), Bradford Glassworks and Stuart Street Power Station (1975) (Tye & Williams 1994:45). Since the landscape was dominated by industry, the closure of these sites left over two hundred and fifty hectares of vacant industrial land in addition to widespread dereliction (Tye & Williams 1994:43). From its position at the centre of industrial prominence and wealth, Manchester suffered greatly from the effects of deindustrialisation brought about by global and national competition (Peck & Ward 2002).
As Britain moved away from industrial production to the creation of service economies, ex-industrial neighbourhoods such as those in East Manchester suffered from dramatic economic decline between the 1960s and 1980s. Also with global competition and trading between nations intensifying and the introduction of new technologies, advanced capitalist economies, like Britain, moved away from industrial production to the creation of 'service' economies (Beynon et al. 1993). This shift did not follow smoothly. It was characterised by profound economic and social 'dislocations' which emerged due to the scale of deindustrialisation and 'structural' unemployment (Peck & Emmerich 1993:22).

The closure of heavy industrial plants caused the landscape in East Manchester to 'shrink' and become 'perforated' (Mace et al. 2007:52). Jamie Peck and Mike Emmerich liken the scale of de-industrialisation in Manchester to the city losing its 'industrial heart' rather than its 'unwanted industrial blubber' (1993:1).

The second half of the twentieth century saw fundamental shifts in employment from work in manufacturing and heavy industry to the service sector which brought about widespread job losses in the city. It is estimated that between 1971-97 employment in Manchester fell by 26% (Mace et al. 2007:54). The manufacturing sector was particularly hard hit. By the 1990s with mass unemployment and depopulation, Beswick and Openshaw were two of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country. Rapid deindustrialisation created a 'fragile' economic base in East Manchester in which 12% of working people unemployed and 52% of households receiving benefits (Parkinson et al. 2006:2). The types of jobs available in the service economy and the workers they employed were radically different the employment patterns of former industrial times.

The loss of skilled manual jobs was not compensated for ‘quantitatively or qualitatively’ by the emergence of the service-economy (Peck & Emmerich 1993:22). During this period, the housing market collapsed. 20% of dwellings were vacant and some residents found
themselves facing negative equity (Parkinson et al. 2006:3). In accounts written by the city council, East Manchester was described as having high levels of ‘deprivation’; a shorthand for high levels of crime, poor housing, low educational attainment, widespread unemployment, poor health and poverty (see Chapter Two).

These accounts of de-industrialisation in Manchester are well known. They depict a narrative of transformation from the city being a productive hub in the Industrial Revolution to a redundant wasteland in post-industrial Britain. Repeated analyses describe how, over the past century, East Manchester has been marked by exclusion from the wealth, employment and social life of the city. They make reference to employment loss and widening inequalities but fall short of exploring the wider implications on working people of economic shifts which occurred in the city.10 This sometimes gives the sense that a ‘dual city’ has developed where inner city inhabitants can only find employment in ‘downgraded’ low wage, part-time, casualised sections of the labour market (Mellor 2002:12). And yet, these accounts still overlook the profound social effects which these economic changes have produced, and which continue to characterise parts of the city. Even though there have been substantial regeneration efforts, it is felt that progress has been limited for residents in East Manchester, as unemployment is still widespread. For example, Patrick, who I quoted at the start of the paper, tells me that ‘these areas have been redeveloped but they are dislocated’. He says that unless more jobs are created, there is no chance of building a sustainable future.

In contrast to the approach which is taken in prevailing accounts, anthropologists have argued that we must consider the 'critical junctions' which emerge in interactions between global processes and local histories, political experiences, divisions of assets and the relations of gender, race and class (Kalb & Tak 2005). This is not least because globalisation does not arrive spontaneously but is part of a state-imposed project and either exacerbates class-structured fights about land and indigenous rights or adds a new twist to them (Kalb & Tak 2005:16). It follows that it is vital to examine how widespread unemployment is made sense of by residents in East Manchester and to examine the power-laden processes which are involved in the production of particular localities (Carbonella 2005). This approach makes evident the importance of examining the contested production of particular ‘geographies of power’ and exploring how a range of interests, or ‘intersecting processes’ emerge in a particular locality (Carbonella 2005:90).

Following these anthropological perspectives, I explore the reasons why East Manchester is an area which is said to be identifiable through its dislocation. In what follows, I explain how unemployment has been discussed in regeneration strategies. Then, I describe how the language of deprivation has become a pervasive way of describing material and social inequalities.

**Unemployment and regeneration**

In 1999 it was estimated that 11,600 people were employed in the original regeneration area which included Beswick, Openshaw and Clayton. NEM aimed to create 10,000 new jobs which would virtually mean doubling the number of employees working in the locality (Parkinson et al. 2006:15). In 2006, NEM claimed they had created 3,131 jobs with the overall number increasing by 7.8% (Parkinson et al. 2006:15). Long term unemployment and associated social problems are described in policy documents in terms
of deprivation, which is evident in the Manchester City Council Corporate Research and Intelligence Chief Executive's Department Ward Profile (2011). The profile describes the 'Bradford Ward' which incorporates Beswick and Openshaw (Figure 8) and states that in these localities there has been continuously high rates of welfare claimants compared to other areas of the city and the national average.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Map of Bradford Ward (from www.manchester.gov.uk/info)}
\end{figure}

The Ward Profile (2011) presents statistics which are calculated following government guidelines called the Index of Multiple Deprivation. They measure income, employment, health and disability, education skills and training, barriers to housing and services, living and environment and lastly, crime. The profile is a principle document of reference for regeneration policies and local authority schemes. It describes Bradford as 'relatively more deprived' than other parts of Manchester and states that there is a pattern of 'higher deprivation, lower household income and higher benefit claims' across the ward (2011:13). The profile also states that 43.9 % of the population rent their properties from

\textsuperscript{11} It is important to note that these figures do not account for all unemployment, as they do not represent those people who are outside the benefit system such as immigrants who are claiming asylum or adults who do not claim.
registered social landlords (2011:18). It describes that the ‘dominant type’ in Bradford is 'single parents and pensioners, living in council terraces', with a high percentage of 'burdened singles' from the ‘hard pressed’ category (2011:11). Also, the profile explains how there are relatively more residents in Beswick and Openshaw who depend on the state for welfare support than in any other ward in Manchester. It is described that many residents in East Manchester are financially unstable and also have little family and social support. Similarly, my informants explain how despite the ongoing regeneration efforts, unemployment continues to be widespread in the local population.

Accounting for unemployment, the ward profile lists the number of people claiming benefits. The Bradford Ward ‘consistently’ has the highest rate of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants compared to all Manchester wards (2011:20). In January 2010, 8.8% of adults claimed JSA in Bradford, compared to 5.4% across Manchester, which is over double the national average (4.1%). In November 2010, the ward had a higher proportion of Incapacity Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance claimants than the Manchester average (17.5% compared to 9.9%) (2011:19). In the same year 9% of young people between 16 to 18 years old are classified as ‘NEET’ which stands for ‘not in employment, education or training’ (2011:20). These statistics show how in 2010 East Manchester is characterised by high levels of unemployment and dependency on benefits.

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12 In comparison, in the rest of Britain in 2009 just under 70% of homes were privately owned (www.hnm.org.uk/charts/housing-supply.html).

13 This is a state benefit for working age individuals who are unemployed or working for less than sixteen hours a week and who are actively seeking employment.

14 Employment Support Allowance provides financial help to people who are unable to work because of illness or disability.
In a study of three housing estates in Norwich, Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor (2009) describe how in a bid for government funding under the New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative, a new boundary line was imposed in order to describe the estates as ‘deprived’ (see Chapter Two for more details on NDC). However, many people living in areas which are defined as ‘deprived’ resent and resist such categorisations (2009:133). They suggest that understandings of deprivation are fixed to certain places and do not consider broader social and economic factors which means that poverty is individualised. Defining an area as ‘deprived’ reinforces a prevailing stereotype in Norwich of the estates being bounded and poor and masks the fluidity of people’s understandings and experiences of these areas. Rogaly and Taylor argue that it is vital to debunk the common stereotype which is often associated with deprived neighbourhoods in which white working class areas are depicted as immobile, bounded and isolated (2009:3). I draw on this analysis with reference to the following two incidents.

In the summer of 2010, I meet a teacher called Sally who is about to start work at the Academy School in Beswick, which is due to open in September (Figure 9). Academies are secondary schools for 11-16 year olds which are funded by central government and private companies. They are run outside the local authority. In this case, the Academy is supported by Laing O’Rouke an engineering firm and Lend Lease, a property and construction company. These companies play a role in the running of the Academy and aim to bring employment opportunities and mentoring to students and like other Academies the school’s ‘specialism’ is guided by their corporate sponsorship.
Sally tells me how there has been a disagreement concerning the naming of the school. Initially it was going to be called the ‘construction academy’ but it was argued by some of teachers and the corporate sponsors that the label could put some girls off going to the school. After some deliberating, it was decided that the Academy would be named as a specialist centre for the ‘built environment’. Sally tells me:

It was decided that the school would be the ‘East Manchester Academy’ rather than the ‘Beswick Academy’ because Beswick has got rather negative connotations round here. People have a perception of a white working class area which is rough and difficult. It would put people off but there are a lot of people in this office who would have liked it to be called the Beswick Academy.

It is interesting to note that the former industrial identity which my older informants talk about with great pride is purposefully avoided in the naming of the school. These comments reveal how amid wider social transformations, the regeneration of East Manchester has brought about different understandings of social class. Older residents talk about the industrial past with great pleasure and refer to Beswick as a respected, stable, working class community. In contrast, Sally explains how the management of the
new school purposefully avoided the name because of the negative class connotations associated with the locality. The naming of the school exemplifies how in the rebranding of East Manchester, long-standing identifications with neighbourhood, community and therefore, belonging are challenged.

The second incident involves a conversation I have at a Sure Start Children’s Centre in Openshaw.\footnote{Sure Start is an initiative to support parents and carers in the local community which was established in 1998 by New Labour. There are two newly built centres in Openshaw and in Beswick. The centres are designed to provide pre-school aged children ‘the best possible start in life’ through childcare, early education, health and family support. The centres also provide outreach and community support.} I meet Carole, the centre manager, in her office and we talk about the work she and her colleagues do. As she is speaking, Carole gestures to a large ward map which is displayed on the wall. The map is marked with a thick, red, oval shaped line, illustrating the boundary of the area that the Sure Start Centre’s services cover, called a Super Output Area.\footnote{A Super Output Area (SOA) is a geographical area designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics. It is used on the Neighbourhood Statistics site, and has a wider application throughout national statistics. SOAs give an improved basis for comparison throughout the country because the units are more similar in size of population than, for example, electoral wards.} Carole explains how being up-to-date with the relevant data about the local population and deprivation is a vital part of her job. In order to apply for funding she must be able to provide statistics which demonstrate that the Children’s Centre is having an impact in Openshaw. The ward map is displayed in a prominent place in the Sure Start office and clearly influences the way that Carole and the other workers think about the role of the centre.

I agree with Rogaly and Taylor (2009) that we must question the common perception that ‘deprived’ areas are immobile and isolated and that we must consider people’s
understandings of the locality in which they live which are often ambiguous and fluid. In one sense, thinking about the diverse localities which lie within East Manchester in terms of deprivation is inadequate as it flattens these complex social spaces. However, my findings also show that the language of deprivation is an important tool for agencies working in these localities so they can apply for funding. As Carole’s actions highlight, the notion of deprivation is used as a tool by those working in the area to draw attention to material inequalities. Carole justifies her role in the area by referring to these statistics. This example reflects how public facilities like a Children’s Centre must imagine East Manchester in regards to the language of deprivation in order to be able to show how they are working towards government policies. My informants also frequently explain how East Manchester is identifiable specifically through its dislocation. They tell me that because a large number of people are unemployed or depend on benefits the area has become dislocated from the rest of Manchester. Employment opportunities which are available in other parts of the city are thought to be off limits to East Manchester residents as they are unattainable or too far to travel to. It is therefore often argued the Beswick and Openshaw are identifiable precisely through their isolation. Among local people there is an overwhelming sense that social mobility is impossible for residents because East Manchester is dislocated.

**Changes to employment**

Here, I explore how the shift from the industrial to the service sector has impacted upon ideas about what constitutes work. I examine how economic structural changes have not only caused dramatic job losses but have also altered understandings about work along gender lines. In Manchester service-sector jobs have been largely aimed at women in areas such as retail, call centres, banking and care work. The creation of these jobs has resulted
in a 'gender mismatch' in the compensation of job loss and job growth (Peck & Emmerich 1993:6). Sectors such as manufacturing, mechanical engineering, paper printing and publishing, textiles and electrical and electronic engineering which predominantly employed men suffered the largest losses in Manchester (ibid.). Shifts in the jobs which were available caused a dramatic change to employment patterns. In particular, in relation to the proportion of men and women who are in work which has in turn led to shifts in understandings about what constitutes suitable work.

Over a period of two months, I spend time at a jobs club which is held at a community centre in Beswick, organised by a public-private company called Employment Training and Support (ETS hereafter). Unemployed people are referred to the group by the job centre. The club is an additional, optional service to help them find work. When they sign up with ETS people are referred to as ‘clients’ and are required to attend the club weekly for individual guidance. ETS aim to find all their clients long-term employment and tell me that they have a high success rate. The group facilitators, Daniel and Sharon, offer one-to-one assistance to their clients by helping with CV writing and interview practice. They create an individual action plan for each client which gives details of goals and progress. Every week the attendees are required to inquire about a vacancy, complete an application form or attend a training course in order to meet their targets.

Nearly all the people I meet at the ETS group are men. I ask the facilitator, Daniel whether he thinks that unemployment in Beswick is different to other areas of the city. He tells me that ‘barriers’ to employment are widespread but adds that many of the clients he works with in East Manchester have been involved previously in manual jobs and are unable to find work, largely because the construction industry is ‘on its arse’. This is because
construction projects in the city have largely ground to a halt due to the recession. During one session, Daniel suggests that I should speak to Michael, a man in his late twenties who has not been able to work since being injured on a scaffolding job. He explains how he wants ‘something better’ for himself than working in McDonalds which he says is the only opportunity available to him in Beswick. With resignation he tells me, ‘you have to move out of the area to get anywhere.’ In contrast to narratives about work in the past, which hold that East Manchester was once productive and profitable, supporting communities of proud workers, the unemployed men at the jobs club describe how employment opportunities are scarce and, some feel, demeaning.

At the jobs club the most common vacancies which the clients apply for are in the local Asda supermarket in Beswick or Morrison’s in Openshaw. These sites are advertised by NEM as providing promising employment opportunities for local people. However, some of my informants suggest that it is impossible to ‘better yourself’ in these jobs because managerial positions go to people from outside the area. The other vacancies only offer minimum wage and are often part time. Supermarket work also does not match the skills or experience that many of the men have. In some cases, ETS advise their clients to apply for a ‘security badge’. Daniel tells me that a security badge is relatively cheap and easy to attain with few qualifications and can broaden the types of employment that his clients can apply for. On qualifying for the security badge, it is possible to work on the door of a night club or as a security guard in a shop.

Many of the jobs in the service sector tend to be in roles which are associated with female labour, such as retail work which has a relatively low income (Peck & Emmerich 1993). Daniel tells me that the security badge opens up the number of opportunities for his
unemployed clients compared to administrative roles, which younger people with qualifications apply for. The men who are applying for the badge seem optimistic. They tell me that when they have a badge, they will be able to apply for work which is ‘dignified’ and better paid than other alternatives. Such examples show how alongside de-industrialisation, skilled labour is perceived to have become feminised (Mollona 2009a:170). It is often said that in comparison to the past, the types of work which are available in East Manchester are undignified. As Patrick, the minister told me, work in the industrial past used to be highly skilled. Openshaw was renowned for making steam engines but now, ordinary people cannot make a life for themselves, as there are no well paid jobs available.

One lunch time I walk with Sharon, another worker for ETS, to the fish and chip shop which is five minutes away from the community centre on a housing estate in Beswick. Away from her clients, Sharon talks more openly about the challenges she faces in her job. Within the first week of working in East Manchester, She tells me how she quickly realised that an informal approach was needed. Sharon says, ‘the suit was off and the jeans were on’. She explains how there are some unemployed young people on the estate in Beswick who have qualifications but do not want to work. There are a large number of families in which two or more generations have never been employed as they prefer to live off benefits. Since their parents have never worked, they do not see why they should bother either. In these cases, Sharon feels that young people should have their benefits taken away, or else they will never ‘get out and find a job’. For Sharon, a ‘culture’ has emerged among unemployed people where it is acceptable and even respectable to live off state benefits rather than finding employment. In her opinion, these people have radically different values and motivations to ‘the working community.’ Sharon lists a number of
examples of stories where people have transformed their lives, after finding employment. She is optimistic that she could help anyone if they are willing to act upon her advice.

Marie, who I cited at the start of the chapter, holds a radically different view. She argues that there are no jobs available and believed that it is impossible for people to support themselves in low paid work. She has decided to live off benefits because the jobs which are available in East Manchester are degrading, like ‘slave labour’. In her opinion, people would work if they were able to earn a decent, fair wage. Even though she can survive living off benefits, Marie is anxious about the future for her children if they remain living in Openshaw. She believes that the government have written off ‘lower class areas’. In contrast, in Sharon's view, what is preventing East Manchester from improving is the attitude of some residents. A clamp down on unemployment benefits would not only help individuals who are out of work, but would also be of benefit to the entire community. If more people were working, Sharon believes there would be a stronger sense of optimism and solidarity between residents.

For many of the unemployed men I speak to, the job application and interview process are daunting and often quite confusing. Thomas Dunk explains how Western capitalist nations are engaged in self-conscious attempts to change the attitudes and behaviour of workers through ’suggesting perception of an underlying culture or cultural dispositions that are in need of adjustment’ (2008:882). He describes how there have been significant changes in the working practices of male pulp and paper workers in Canada. The problem of unemployment and underemployment has come to be seen as one of individual personality or cultural deficiencies and the solution preferred by governments and private capital is workers’ self-transformation. My findings from the jobs club in East Manchester
echo Dunk’s findings. The ETS workers Sharon and Daniel help their clients to prepare for an interview and take the men to Asda supermarket to buy them new clothes to wear. Sharon remarks that her clients always look proud when they see themselves in the mirror ‘suited and booted’ and tells me how for many of the men this is the first time they have dressed smartly for work. As Dunk (2008) suggests, prospective workers have to be conscious about ‘self-presentation’ to find employment in the service sectors.

For some of the clients at the jobs club, the advice which they are offered is at odds with their idea of what makes a good worker. Daniel advises a man called Duncan. He is in his fifties and worked in construction for many years. Daniel tells him that he has to ‘play the game’ and wear a suit if he is invited to an interview. With frustration, Duncan responds:

That’s why British industry is in such a mess, because the people who have got the skills are sat at home and the people who can do interviews have got the jobs. All this dress code nonsense, it really gets to me. If you’re scruffy [in the interview], you’re going to be scruffy when you work there.

For Duncan, adhering to a required dress code is ridiculous and unnecessary. He believes that the values placed on self-presentation are absurd. Yet, Duncan attends the jobs club as he is ‘desperate’ to find work and feels miserable being unemployed. This discussion shows how physical appearance is a ‘fierce arena’ for enforcing or contesting power, as clothing is a symbolic means of expressing identity (Bourgois 2003:161). Playing the game for Duncan comes at a cost, but if he refuses to engage with the support offered by ETS, he tells me that he fears he will be doomed to further unemployment.
**What counts as work?**

My older informants often talk about how job losses and the closures of factories in East Manchester have not only brought about widespread unemployment but have also obliterated community life. As a result, they feel that there is no shared sense of pride or work ethic today and suggest that people are only interested in themselves, rather than their neighbours and community. The future is felt to be uncertain. My findings strongly support sociologist Beverley Skeggs’ (2011) argument which suggests that precarious employment is an ever-present, historically haunting reality for the working-classes in Britain. Skeggs’ work contributes to theoretical debates about subjectivity and social class and is helpful exploring the relationship between new forms of employment and identity. She proposes that in order to understand the experiences of the working classes in post-industrial life, an alternative approach to personhood is required. Skeggs critiques Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of habitus, which offers a framework for understanding how people move through social spaces or fields of exchange. She says that sociological understandings of subjectivity have a problematic classed history.

Bourdieu’s (1984) model suggests that a middle-class position is attained through value accrual generated from birth, as individuals occupy spaces where they are able to encounter the possibilities for increasing their overall value through the acquisition, formation and composition of capitals (see Skeggs 2011). Bourdieu’s work has had a tremendous influence on the understanding of the ways in which individuals’ choices are informed by habitus or taste, but are not reducible to structural class positions. However, Skeggs (2011) questions whether Bourdieu’s concept habitus can offer an adequate framework to explore working-class personhood in post-industrial life. The working class women in her research were ‘non-propelling future accruing subjects with the wrong
capital’ who could not access the fields of exchange to convert, accrue or generate value for themselves which led her to analyse subjectivity in a different way (Skeggs 2011:502). In her view, contemporary theoretical approaches which have stemmed from Bourdieu’s work tend to be premised on the idea of the ‘singular self’ and see the working class as deficient in value (2011:509). Bourdieu’s concept of habitus draws on metaphors of capital which are rational, economic and calculative and, as Skeggs suggests, they are insufficient as they are premised on a particular idea of individualism which does not offer historically grounded concepts of the self. Conditions for personhood are not uniform, but come into effect through ‘regimes of value’ which have been ignored in theoretical approaches to the self. In light on this critique, Skeggs (2011) re-examines notions of personhood in order to be able to understand how people who are considered to be on the margins, such as the working classes, develop values.

My findings support Skeggs’ argument that we must take into consideration the strong sense of precarity which defines the way in which people in post-industrial life construct subjective experience. The unemployed men I meet are taught how to become valuable workers in new forms of employment and advised how they can present themselves to potential employers as ‘good workers’. For these clients, the guidance which is on offer is completely different to their previous experiences of what constitutes being a valued worker. However, I feel there are limitations to her approach and we must consider simultaneously Bourdieu’s perspective. Arguing that ‘working class personhood’ must be approached through sociality rather than individualism is also problematic and could result in romanticism and generalisation. For example, from Skeggs’ perspective, it would be hard to explain the experiences of the unemployed men in the jobs club who are preparing to retrain in order to search for new types of employment, such as the work promised by a security badge. It could be argued that these men have abandoned their
working class identity in favour of pursuing middle class individualistic goals. However, the ethnographic examples which I have discussed in this chapter point to a rather different analysis. The responses to shifts in labour practices which I encounter in East Manchester are diverse. For example, some of the men at the jobs groups readily engage in programmes to acquire new skills and find employment in the service sector, while others refuse to apply for work in retail which they see as demeaning. These ethnographic examples illustrate how outward signs of class allegiance are often much more complex and ambiguous than Skeggs gives credit for.

What is valued as work varies enormously among my informants. To return to Gerald, who I introduced at the start of the chapter, he told me that there is no future in the area because, despite the money being spent on regeneration, local residents choose to rely on benefits rather than contributing to the future of Beswick or Openshaw. In contrast, for Marie, there is no point in working because the types of employment that are available are like 'slave labour'. Similarly, Michael tells me that there is no point in working at McDonalds in Beswick as his wages would not support his family and he would not be able to 'better himself' in such a role. From the perspective of people in East Manchester, there are a range of explanations why unemployment continues to persist. It would seem as though rather than providing avenues of solidarity for workers, the restructuring of work has created greater ideas about difference (Dunk 2008). Residents often blame the actions of others for high levels of unemployment welfare dependency in East Manchester rather than explaining that there is commonality between their experiences. However, as I go on to explain throughout the thesis, even though diversifications in social life have occurred, social ties between people are resolute. Individuals are concerned about the future of East Manchester for themselves and more widely for other residents.
According to Leo Howe (1998) the image of the ‘scrounger’ plays a defining role in the way that employed and unemployed men living on two estates in Belfast made sense of their own position and that of others. Rather than a homogenous ‘working class’ identity, he found that there were many vertical distinctions which were consciously negotiated among his informants. Some people were deemed to be ‘genuine' recipients of welfare support while others were described as ‘feckless cheats' or ‘scroungers' (1998:534). His informants did not resist or contest the term ‘scrounger’ but applied it to other unemployed people in an attempt to justify their own situation and to deflect attention away from themselves. Howe sees an irony in the way that workers become ‘implicated in their own subordination’ through unintentionally subordinating others (1998:547). In the case of East Manchester, I would suggest that it is not particularly surprising or ironic that my informants do not perceive a sense of shared interest around employment. My findings show that shifts in patterns of work have had diverse effects and are understood in different ways. The discussions in this chapter so far have indicated how complex social relations have become reconfigured by economic transformations. The shift to the service-sector has reshaped ideas about work and led to a dominant belief among some that people, who are unable to find work in Manchester’s service-sector, need to change. Further, high levels of unemployment have resulted in a strong sense of spatial and social dislocation in East Manchester due to the belief that employment and the future of the area are precarious and uncertain.

Mollona's monograph Made in Sheffield (2009a) describes how deindustrialisation has not resulted in either the working class being transformed into the middle class or wiped it off the political map. Rather, deindustrialisation has increased its fragmentation in ways that are difficult for workers to comprehend and combat (2009a:170). Mollona's findings resonate with my own observations in East Manchester in which the values of work relate
to historical ideas about community and labour. However, the argument put forward by Mollona, favours a romanticised view of the past and ignores the dynamism and agency of individuals living in post-industrial contexts. Mollona depicts the experiences of steel workers as the traditional or ‘authentic’ working class and the fragmentations which have been produced due to de-industrialisation are portrayed as a modern, inauthentic version of working class experience. Even though he takes an ethnographic approach, Mollona portrays a fixed view of social class which does not have the capacity to explore other effects that these employment shifts have produced. For example, at the jobs club some of the men readily engage with skills training and CV workshops. Their experiences are no less authentic than those who are unwilling to engage with finding work in the service economy. I argue that it is crucial to explore the diverse ways in which individuals engage with these processes. In other words, it is vital to explore the meanings of social class as they emerge in particular localities, rather than assuming that social class relates to structural positions which we know about in advance.

Mollona describes how in Sheffield, workers express a sense of alienation with lack of relational labour consciousness because they do not have a broader perception of capitalist forces (2009a:176). He argues that class consciousness emerges from the relational value of labour whereas alienation has occurred as workers deny the existence of relational value which is obscured by relations in the informal economy, gender, generational and ethnic discrimination, consumerism and community relations. Even though the post-industrial economy is seen to be flexible, he argues instead that there is:

... a new despotic regime in which capital reproduces itself through the whole of people’s lives so that coercion and consent, dependency and entrepreneurship, freedom and self-discipline and working-class poverty and middle-class aspirations, are hardly distinguishable (2009a:177).
While Mollona’s argument may hold true, it is problematic in regards to my observations in East Manchester. If we extend the logic of his argument, the working classes are deemed to be static and immobile. Those who have found work in the service economy would be depicted as being coerced or duped, in contrast to the 'authentic' working class. This approach does not lend itself to the shifting dynamics which I observed or explain the multiple ways in which people are responding to new types of employment. Nor does it offer the possibility of listening to, and taking seriously, people’s own accounts of what is significant for themselves in a process of social change. Mollona rightly draws attention to issues facing marginalised people in post-industrial areas. However, by following a strict Marxist approach to social class, he does not account for the complexities which are occurring in the dynamic positions which different forms of unemployment and employment produce.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered an alternative account to well known narratives about post-industrial life by exploring the consequences of economic shifts for working people, from their point of view. Older residents recall stories about the past which depict Beswick and Openshaw as productive and profitable places which supported proud workers and self-sufficient communities. In contrast, they argue that in the present, East Manchester is dependent on the state and is isolated from the rest of the city. High levels of unemployment and welfare dependency are explained in different ways. Some residents are critical of others who are out of work and blame a culture of worklessness among the unemployed, while others suggest that there is no work available. These discussions appear to support the argument that processes of deindustrialisation have not turned the working class into the middle class or wiped class off the political map, but have increased
fragmentation between residents (Mollona 2009a:170). The future of East Manchester is felt to be uncertain as social relations have become reconfigured by economic transformations. In the chapters which follow, I argue that despite the apparent diversifications in social life, social ties between people remain resolute but the future is regarded as uncertain and precarious.

To return to Patrick, who I quoted at the beginning of the chapter, East Manchester is seen to be dislocated because of the lack of employment opportunities. In this context, I have argued that it is important to understand how precarity influences the way in which personhood is constructed. My findings support Skegg's (2011) claim that Bourdieuan analyses of class which use the concept of habitus may be problematic. If we think about class in terms of a rational and economic model, we cannot account for the unexpected ways in which individuals respond to change, nor does it allow us to think about the ways in which social relations are shaped historically. In addition, my ethnographic examples illustrate how understandings about work are often much more diverse and ambiguous than Marxist analyses give credit for (Mollona 2009a, Skeggs 2011). Some individuals go to great lengths to search for work and become involved in training schemes, while others ascribe blame to neighbours who they feel are holding them back. Such contrasts demonstrate how there are multiple ways in which my informants make sense of their position in wider processes of social and economic change. Further, we must take seriously the ways in which class is constructed in diverse ways in particular sites.

Following on from this discussion, in the next chapter, I describe how in the process of urban regeneration, a number of new place names have been introduced in this locality. I examine how in addition to the contestation around work the new place names and rebranding of the locality has produced ambiguity about the identity and future of New East Manchester.
Chapter 2

‘I was regenerated to there and then I was regenerated to here’

Throughout the twelve-month period of fieldwork I was often confused by the diverse number of names which local people ascribed to different geographical spaces in my fieldsite. I was aware that a number of different neighbourhoods are referred to under the banner of ‘East Manchester’ in the regeneration process. Even so I was still taken aback by how difficult it was to reach any sort of consensus among local people about where the lines of smaller residential areas, such as Beswick, Bradford, Openshaw, Higher Openshaw, Lower Openshaw, Clayton, Newton Heath and Abbey Hey, lie. I was not even able to reach a decision about what name I should use for the area where I was living. Eileen, a woman in her sixties who lived near the City of Manchester Stadium, told me:

    In my day we all called it Bradford and then it changed to Beswick and now they’ve renamed it Eastlands. Anyone who’s from round here will call it Beswick.

In contrast, David, a retired man who I met at the allotments seemed confused when I told him that I had moved to Beswick, he asked me ‘Why don’t you call it Bradford?’ He explained:

    They used to call the higher bit Bradford, down to where the garage is. Now there isn’t even a Lower Openshaw or a Higher Openshaw as it was when we were young. They have redeveloped and changed the names. It’s so it’s easier to sell houses.

To make matters even more confusing, one of my neighbours, Anne, insisted that the new housing development where we both lived on Alan Turing Avenue was different to the rest of the area and should be referred to as ‘New Beswick’ (see Introduction).

In this chapter, I explain how the boundaries and definitions of community have been redrawn in the process of extensive urban regeneration (Brown et al. 2004a). Throughout
the thesis I refer to these socially diverse localities as East Manchester as the label offers the most straightforward way of referring to the geographical areas involved in regeneration activity. My intention is not to homogenise or generalise but to explore the effects of this large scale regeneration project for local people living in the neighbourhoods of Clayton, Beswick and Openshaw. Here, I provide ethnographic material which reflects on the multiplicity of place naming and the ambiguity over what the parameters of these different places are for local residents. Regeneration programmes are as concerned with creating new discourses and meanings of place as they are with changing their physical form (Raco 2003). Place names are powerful tools within regeneration strategies, as they create a vision of a 'new' area. There has been ‘frenzied activity’ in place marketing in Manchester, which has attempted to overcome negative images of deprivation and the industrial past (Quilley 1999:196). At the same time, as the examples above illustrate, place names hold great value and a variety of different meanings for local residents. Consequently, there is considerable confusion and contestation about the identity of localities in East Manchester.

Following Ash Amin and colleagues (2000), I argue that space and power are intimately interconnected as all spaces embody power relations of some sort. I describe how the city is a spatial phenomenon which is fluid, processual, open and interconnected and demonstrate how the geographical organisation of Manchester has had diverse social, economic, cultural and political affects (Amin et al. 2000:11). To start, I examine the history of regeneration plans for East Manchester and describe how the most recent manifestation, NEM came about within a political ethos which was shaped by influences in the local council and national government. I explain how there have been a number of different periods of redevelopment in Beswick and Openshaw which have been premised on the idea that material transformation will bring about social change. The chapter
explores how long-standing residents relate to East Manchester which has been reshaped by a number of different periods of regeneration.

**History and politics of urban development in Manchester**

Urban regeneration is a type of redevelopment and model of social change which has dominated UK cities since the mid 1990s. Before this, a number of contrasting periods of urban development reshaped Manchester's landscape. In the 1920s, Councillor William Jackson was horrified by the slums in Gorton, Openshaw and Ardwick. He campaigned to build estates in Wythenshawe in the leafy suburbs of south Manchester bordering the Cheshire countryside (Massey 2001:463). The creation of Wythenshawe marked the birth of a new type of social space as the city’s poorer residents were given housing in green spaces, on the edge of the city (Massey 1996:75). However, redevelopment was slow and it was soon found that occupants did not want to move from centrally located residential areas. They preferred to live close to their places of work and in neighbourhoods where they had already developed networks of support.

Instead, from 1954, the council decided to adopt a plan to build cheap, inner city housing. New developments offered a low cost solution to the housing crisis. With large-scale slum clearances underway they used prefabricated concrete constructions in order to create a new urban landscape. The most infamous examples in Manchester were the crescent-shaped flats in Hulme which were built in the 1960s. The crescents were a ‘vast modernist labyrinth’ with, ‘street decks winding round and interconnecting four vast, semicircular blocks which enclosed a no man’s land of indeterminate pedestrian space’ (Hatherley 2010:125). A similar style development called the Fort Beswick Estate was built by Bison Concrete in 1973. It was a huge ‘monolithic structure’, made up of deck access flats, built
to house over a thousand families (Shapely 2004:35). This photograph was taken just off Grey Mare Lane, one of the main residential roads in Beswick (Figure 10).

Fort Beswick is still often spoken about by older local residents. They describe how the concrete buildings were the worst style of housing in Beswick in living memory. Patricia, one of my neighbours tells me:

> It was finished in 1974 or 5. I remember reading in the paper at the time that it cost £9 million to build and £22 million to pull them down in 1984. Oh, Fort Beswick was awful. I’d never seen maisonettes before. They were terrible. There was deck access. If you walked past, a television would be thrown off the top.

The dwellings were poorly constructed and shortly after they were built there were widespread reports of infrastructure problems, such as rainwater seeping through the concrete causing flooding (Shapely 2004:35).

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17 Courtesy of Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives, Manchester City Council
By 1978 the majority of the residents living in the Fort Beswick estate were removed from their homes due to structural faults in the design. The myriad social problems which are remembered about the estate are still often talked about. One of my neighbours, Paula, who has lived in East Manchester for forty years, explained how the image of Fort Beswick has been indelibly etched into her memory.

There were the tall flats, Fort Beswick, they were depressing. You could see up onto all the balconies. There was a lad who died, falling off the balcony. Or, he was pushed, no one ever knew. He’d been drinking. He was only 17. He had a twin, but they didn’t look alike. He hadn’t ever grown properly so he was very small and had to have lots of operations. I think he was bullied. He’d been drinking and then had laid down on the side of the balcony. It was awful.

Fort Beswick and other housing developments are often described by my informants in this way. They were not only unappealing to look at but thought to be unsuitable places for families to live. As Paula describes, these flats became associated with dangerous accidents and social unrest. She is haunted by the memory of the young man who died in Fort Beswick and tells me that she has always thought that the council should not forgot what happened there. Paula feels that families deserve to be housed in dwellings which are structurally sound and aesthetically pleasing.

Local residents explain how there have been many different stages of regeneration in East Manchester, marked by a number of projects of demolition and rebuilding which have all been characterised by different styles of redevelopment. As I described in the introduction to the thesis, one of my neighbours Anne, has lived in two newly built houses in Beswick. In 1978 she was allocated a property in Beswick by the council which she went on to purchase as part of the Right to Buy scheme. After twelve years she was issued with a Compulsory Purchase Order as it was decided that the entire estate would be demolished. Anne was moved to a property, in what she calls ‘New Beswick’, which was built
approximately one hundred metres from where her previous house stood. She tells me; ‘I was regenerated to there and then I was regenerated to here’. Like the landscape around her, Anne says that she has been ‘regenerated’ a number of times and questions the rationale behind regeneration. She asks whether the housing stock is the focus, or whether, the actual aim of regeneration is to change the residents who live in East Manchester. In the following analysis, I explain how the political ethos which has shaped the current projects of urban regeneration is predicated on the idea that the reshaping of the landscape will create a more cohesive community. Also, I describe how urban regeneration in East Manchester has been shaped by other projects across the city and emerged from an accommodation of local interests and national policies.

**Urban redevelopment and Manchester City Council**

Urban redevelopment has been characterised by a number of distinct phases in Manchester. In the 1940s and 1950s, poor housing, planning and slum clearance were the focus of attention in Manchester. By the 1960s and 1970s more emphasis was placed on tackling unemployment and social marginality (Beynon et al. 1993:6). From the 1980s Manchester Council launched a new set of initiatives to change the physical and cultural transformations in the city. Between 1984-87 Graham Stringer, the leader of the council, radically changed the political and economic priorities in the city (Quilley 2000). Stringer created a strong political base by joining forces with anti-racists and feminist pressure groups to develop a new ‘local socialism’ in opposition to Thatcher’s conservative government which caused a rift between the council and the national government (Robson 2002:35). Old style socialism was replaced by a powerful mix of neo-liberal, conservative and even corporatist rhetoric which was dubbed the New Left involving different participants from business, central government, local government, community groups...
who were able to identify their own agendas (Cochrane 1996:1320). During this period, the Labour council in Manchester strengthened their partnerships with the private sector foregrounding a property-led strategy of urban regeneration in the city (Quilley 2000). Their aim was to harness the potential of private capital to be used for public good rather than solely for the beneficial effects of market forces which emerged in response to the funding cuts brought in by the Thatcher government.

In response to widespread unemployment, the decline in population and the onset of entrenched deprivation, Manchester City Council introduced a number of urban renewal projects in different areas of the city. Initially resources were directed to Hulme and Moss Side, residential neighbourhoods that had gained public attention after the 1981 ‘riots’ and had become associated with high crime rates and violence (Taylor et al. 1996:83). During this period, East Manchester continued to decline. In the late 1980s, the redevelopment of the eastern neighbourhoods of Manchester was planned to coincide with rebuilding work in the city centre but it was decided by the Central Manchester Development Cooperation to establish Trafford Park on the west side of the city first (Ward 2003:120). The East Manchester Initiative was formed (1982-89). Its central aim was to bring private investment and jobs back in to the area (Tye & Williams 1994:48). Even though it had missed out on larger bids, the Initiative was awarded £9 million by the government, which was used mainly for schemes to acquire and demolish derelict buildings and landscape vacant sites in preparation for development.
The Olympics bids and the Commonwealth Games

The real opportunity to direct resources to regenerate the area arrived in 1992 when Prime Minister John Major announced that Manchester would receive £55 million to prepare a bid for the 1996, and later 2000, Olympic Games under the 'East Manchester Regeneration Strategy'. The games were seen by the council as the 'ultimate expression' of place-marketing which could 'drive change in' and overcome social problems (Cochrane 1996:1330). Large areas of derelict land offered a 'key strategic opportunity' to give East Manchester a new lease of life (Parkinson et al. 2006:7). The council proposed that an event-themed regeneration strategy would have the potential to instil a positive physical legacy in these localities (Smith & Fox 2007:1128).

It was hoped that locating new facilities and associated infrastructures in brownfield sites which once housed industrial sites, would allow such areas to be reclaimed as 'integral urban zones' (Smith & Fox 2007:1127, Parkinson et al. 2006:1). However, from its inception, the idea to transform East Manchester into a site for a global sporting event prompted numerous questions about how the space, which was associated with dereliction and mass unemployment, could be reinvented. This is evident in an article written in 1993, during the bidding process for the 2000 Olympics Games, in the Guardian. The author, Matthew Engel discussed the merits of the other countries who were in competition for the Olympics and asked, ‘And will Olympia be builded here among the dark satanic mills?’ with the accompanying image (Figure 11) (Waters 1999). As the image clearly shows, some people held reservations about whether it would be possible for a global sporting event to be hosted in Manchester, a city which was synonymous, in the public imagination, with northern industrial, working class life.
Figure 11: Image from the Guardian Newspaper

The illustration is based on JS Lowry’s 1930 painting *Coming From the Mill*. Rather than a manufacturing plant, a stadium has been inserted into the background of Lowry’s scene which depicts industrial life. Lines of unidentifiable workers wander past, with their heads bent low while chimneys belch out polluted air. The image questions whether the Olympics would really bring about any change in Manchester, or whether the new sporting infrastructure would simply be ignored. A point to which I later return.

Even though the Olympic bid failed, Manchester managed to secure the Commonwealth Games which took place in 2002. In the bidding process, new political forms of private and public partnerships were developed. Further, prestige was acquired by the city from participating in the competition bid (Cochrane 1996). The City Council ‘proselytised’ the image of Manchester in order to attract investment and encourage development (Robson 2000:38). Despite the public scepticism before the Commonwealth Games, the organisers claimed that Manchester harnessed the enthusiasm and energy of the city to rejuvenate the spirit of the region as well as its urban infrastructure (Brown 2004b:11). East Manchester has since been marketed as a locality which boasts leading sporting facilities.
The lynchpin of the Sportcity development in Beswick is the City of Manchester Stadium, otherwise known as ‘Eastlands’ (Figure 12), which was built on the site of Johnson’s Wire Works which closed in 1969 (Brown et al. 2004a:25).

![City of Manchester Stadium](image)

*Figure 12: City of Manchester Stadium*

As I have described in Chapter One, deindustrialisation left the landscape in East Manchester ‘shrunken and perforated’ so filling empty and derelict areas with ‘land hungry users,’ such as stadia, was seen as an appropriate solution for the area (Mace et al. 2007:52). Just opposite the stadium is the velodrome which opened in 1994 and Asda supermarket which was opened in 2002. At the time Asda opened, it was reputed to be the largest store in Europe (160 000 square foot). A total of £170m of capital investment was made in Manchester which included £111m for the City of Manchester Stadium (Brown et al 2004b:11). The stadium is now a central landmark in East Manchester and can be seen from the streets in Beswick and Clayton (Figures 13 & 14). The Manchester Commonwealth Games became famous for delivering a stadium with a sustained legacy use and the event is held up as a model for what a sporting mega-event can do for the host city and nation (Evans 2012). Furthermore, the stadium offers a clear example of how
regeneration brings major changes in patterns of land use in city centres (Jones & Evans 2008:4).

Figure 13: View of the stadium from Beswick

Figure 14: View of stadium from the play park in Beswick
The Commonwealth Games funding coincided with Labour’s announcement that the locality would become one of six ‘Beacon’ authorities (Robson 2002:34). The Beacons for a Brighter Future funding was introduced by the government to bridge the gap between the poorest neighbourhoods in the UK and the rest of the country. In 2000, New East Manchester [NEM hereafter], was established. It was one of three Urban Regeneration Companies created by the government to deliver physical improvements to the built environment through partnership with existing agencies (Parkinson et al. 2006:2). NEM were awarded £51.7 million to address deprivation in Openshaw and Beswick. The funding for the locality was drawn from two main sources which are illustrated in Figure 15. The red line shows the localities which were funded by the Beacons for a Brighter Future scheme which came from the New Deal for Communities programme. The blue line indicates the localities covered under the Single Regeneration Budget which was given a further £25.9 million to an extended area, which included Clayton, to the north. These geographical areas were joined under the banner East Manchester and have been described as one of the most ‘policy thick’ areas in the UK (Ward 2003:123).

Figure 15: Map of East Manchester indicating areas allocated for funding (From East Manchester New Deal for Communities Final Evaluation 2010).
From this point on Beswick, Clayton and Openshaw were referred to collectively as East Manchester and placed within a single regeneration strategy. It was hoped that the Commonwealth Games would be a catalyst, alongside other initiatives, for the regeneration of East Manchester and would override the prevalent negative associations of the area and bring further investment and new residents to the area. This brief discussion explains how a number of different phases of regeneration have reshaped East Manchester. The most recent redevelopment was led by the Commonwealth Games. I now go on to explore some of the local resident’s responses to the games.

**Responses to the Commonwealth Games**

At the community centre in Beswick I was advised to talk to Andrew, a man in his forties, to learn more about events which took place in 2002. He moved to Openshaw twenty-five years ago and has been involved in a variety of community groups and residents’ associations. At the time of the games he volunteered at some of the sporting events and explains how overall, it was an extraordinary period of time for residents of East Manchester.

The late 80s and the early 90s were so horrendous, at least that has all gone. I was cynical about New Labour but not in this area. With the Games, the attention of the world was on this area. I was interviewed by a news team in New Zealand! There was money and genuine engagement. Not just consultation but real engagement. The stadium was finished and the infrastructure was in place and suddenly everyone said, ‘this is going to work’. In the three weeks crime rates were reduced by 87% in this area. Okay, so there was the reality underneath. There were so many really superficial makeovers. Like in Beswick, there was an awful hardware shop and I remember the council just painting over it in the uniform green colour. But behind all that, there was some really amazing work.
Even though some of the changes which were made in Beswick were cosmetic like the green paint, Andrew is largely positive. He describes how the new facilities were met with great excitement and how mass public attention made people feel proud to be from East Manchester. What defined this period, according to Andrew, was that local people were genuinely engaged.

As our conversation progresses, Andrew explains how he moved to Openshaw in order to set up a Christian charity in the community after working abroad for a number of years. He tells me how the resources which New Labour have invested in East Manchester have made a terrific difference, but explains how there are still deep-seated social problems. In Andrew’s opinion, the council missed opportunities to engage people in the years which followed the games.

I think the best way to describe the area is that it was psychologically depressed and in many ways, it still is. I worked in El Salvador, in Central America, in areas where there have been civil wars and I don’t think they were as depressed. People were angry there but here, they weren’t even angry, they didn’t question why things were so bad. They had been treated like factory fodder. Vast, vast areas of Manchester were the same. People were cheaper than machines and treated no better. If I put on my Marxist hat, I’d say it’s classic alienation. In the 1950s at least you had a job in heavy industry. They were treated like dirt at work and then they were told that they weren’t even worth it when the jobs went. In East Manchester everyone went who could. The population collapsed in on itself.

Andrew tries to make sense of the persistent social problems in Manchester by comparing his community work with his experiences working abroad. His opinions are clearly influenced by his faith and his understandings of politics from his university education.
When Andrew arrived in Openshaw, in the 1980s, the community had ‘collapsed’. In his view, the government had to step in but he feels they should have done more to help local people. I ask him whether those people who stayed in Openshaw did so because they did not have the economic resources to leave. He says:

Not only economic. People didn’t have the social, psychological or spiritual resources to go. Education has always been very, very poor in the area. New Labour announced that they wanted 50% of school leavers to go on to Higher Education. At that time, there were 0.05% in this area. And I knew that 0.05, she was the vicar’s daughter! Now, all of what I am saying is sweeping generalisations. There have been exceptions but it comes back to the communitarian principle. The area has been severely depressed. I want to say clinically depressed. There are knock on effects. Like, for example, teenage pregnancy. Which I have done work with. I think it’s a really, really bad thing. I think lots of girls, and it is girls, they are not couples, they make a conscious decision to have babies. Their mothers did, and it’s a status choice. They don’t have anything else, so they have a child. All of the work that we were doing at first was attempting to change those perceptions. I want to use a L’Oreal slogan, saying: ‘because you’re worth it’. Like we spent £800 on hanging baskets for this road. We were investing in people and saying to them that they may not have new houses for a long time but they weren’t being forgotten or ignored. Hanging baskets, how stupid, but it was symbolic. We were showing people that they had value.

Andrew likens the lack of optimism in the area to a kind of social or spiritual depression. He tells me that it is vital for funding to be invested in East Manchester but also insists that alongside economic resources, there need to be schemes to repair the social and psychological damage brought about by deindustrialisation.

Even though Andrew is positive about the impact of the games, he says that in recent years, residents feel as though regeneration has been ‘done’ to them. His words resonate with the discussion I had with Anne in which she described how she had been ‘regenerated before’ (see Introduction). Even though Andrew did not grow up in East
Manchester, he considers it to be home. He and his family settled and committed themselves to carrying out their Christian work in Openshaw for the foreseeable future. Like my neighbour Anne, Andrew describes how the regeneration process has not only transformed the landscape but also has deeply personal implications for local people. His remarks show how residents are involved in the process of regeneration and how planning impacts upon people’s lives in intimate and immediate ways (Abram 2011). Following on from the previous chapter’s discussion, I ask whether the reshaping and rebranding of the physical landscape has compounded residents’ sense of dislocation in East Manchester.

In *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott, (1998) writes about how the state becomes ‘legible’ in different social settings. In Brasilia, modernist architecture was introduced with the intention of erasing external displays of status distinctions. Despite the egalitarian aims and promises of progress and reform, the plans which were implemented failed. Scott argues that planners imposed a grid-like system which did not account for ‘metis’, meaning people’s local, experiential wisdom (1998:343). High-modernist visions were doomed as they only accounted for standardised subjects, as though every individual’s needs are interchangeable. Scott illustrates this point by describing two maps. The first is the official map of a planned neighbourhood. It represents the streets and buildings and routes provided by the planners. The second map consists of tracings and time-lapse photography of all the unplanned movements which occur in the locality such as residents walking the dog or playing hopscotch. The first map, in Scott’s view, is drawn by the planners. It is a map of legibility and control which is ‘misrepresentative and non-sustainable’ (1998:348). In contrast, the second map reveals a much more complex pattern. By drawing attention to the way that residents use urban space, Scott argues that high-modernist designs are a form of social engineering. The effect of grids may be ‘frail
and evanescent’ but can ultimately damage local economic, social and cultural self
expression and ‘diminish the skills, agility, initiative and morale of the citizens’ (ibid.).

Following Scott’s analysis, it could be reasoned that local residents, like Eileen and David
who I quoted at the start of the chapter use ‘local’ place names in order to resist the state-
led regeneration interventions. Further, it could be argued that regeneration has been
‘done’ to local residents as it is part of a process of social engineering which is attempting
to create a new community through the redesign of the physical environment. Yet Scott’s
(1998) approach in some senses still relies on an overly simplistic understanding of the
ways in which places are made and lived. His perspective does not take account of the
multiplicity of diverse and ambiguous ways that the individuals relate to the physical
landscape. Nor does it explore why people like Andrew and other residents criticise the
state for not doing enough. With the limitations that my ethnography highlights in mind, it
is clear that an alternative approach to place making is required. This discussion reflects
how there are flaws in the classic terms of much current debate which posit ‘domination
versus resistance, strategy versus tactics, the system versus local people’ (Massey
2001:467).

In order to understand the multiplicity of place naming and the ambiguity over what the
parameters of these different places are, we must employ a nuanced approach to examine
the way in which places are made. An alternative understanding is required which draws
attention to the involvement of the state in the politics of place making, from the
perspective of local residents. Rather than two distinct and different maps representing
how space is imagined by planners as opposed to residents, my ethnography reveals a
more complex picture. It reflects how ‘the relationship between spatial plans and the
realities imagined in them is always fragile and multivalent; they both encapsulate and
exclude worlds of imagination’ (Abram & Weszkalny 2011:15). In what follows, I explain
how the most recent incarnation of regeneration in East Manchester has been shaped by New Labour's ethos.

**New Labour and the Third Way**

Regenerating cities was placed at the forefront of New Labour's 1997 electoral plans. The party pledged to make urban areas more sustainable and reduce social polarisation and exclusion (Amin et al. 2000: v). Robert Furbey (1999) observed that a number of different 'partners' were involved in these schemes which included the private sector, training agencies, community organisations, local people and so on. Labour's new urban policies emerged from the party's Third Way approach and combined the promotion of wealth creation and social justice, the market and the community (Driver & Martell 2000). Tony Blair supported centre-left values and embraced private enterprise.

A third way government might, then, be distinguished from an Old Left one by its willingness to find new forms of public intervention in the economy and society, in particular, by giving up its role as the direct provider of public goods; and from a New Right one by its willingness to embrace a wide definition of public goods, especially in social policy, and a more active and interventionist role for the state (Driver & Martell 2000:152).

The government's agenda for change was premised on the understanding that there was too much reliance on the power of the state (Raco & Imrie 2003:13).

Blair was guided by Anthony Giddens' *The Third Way* (1998) which outlined a new style of politics that could transcend both old style social democracy and neoliberalism. He acknowledged the potentially destructive effects of economic globalisation upon local self-sufficiency but also warned against protectionism (1998:65). According to Giddens, free trade would enable economic development as individuals would be able to benefit from
the opportunities of capitalism. The central role of government in his view was to promote 'proactive supply-side policies' and encourage everyone to build social capital so individuals would have the tools needed to work in the interests of wider social cohesion (Mellor 2008:317). The third way approach is evident in urban regeneration plans proposed by New Labour which were based on economic strategies, foregrounding public-private partnerships and place-marketing. They can be seen as an accommodation between left-wing values of voluntarism and the more conservative values of supply-side, market based strategies imposed by central government (Quilley 1999:185).

As well as engaging with the work of Giddens, New Labour adopted Robert Putnam’s use of the term ‘social capital’ which is outlined in Bowling Alone (2000). In his terms, social capital relates to ‘civic virtue’ which enables individuals to build strong, trusting bonds through networks and common values in which they can mobilise relevant resources and ‘get by’ (in Kearns 2003:43). Putnam asserts that social capital contributes to safe and productive neighbourhoods, whilst its absence hampers efforts at improving social cohesion (2000:318). He describes how an ‘inner city crisis’ has occurred throughout America since the Second World War. For Putnam, the decline in neighbourhood social capital cannot be explained by economic factors. New Labour incorporated this theory in their approach. For example, one of the first principles of the Social Exclusion Unit, established in 2000, was an attempt to ‘revive communities’ through volunteering schemes. Putnam’s argument holds that volunteering can put people into contact with those outside their normal circles, broaden horizons and raise expectations, linking people into informal networks through which they could find work more easily (in Kearns 2003:47). New Labour policies were based on the premise that strong social capital and social inclusion are directly related and can be built through social networks.
It is argued by John Harriss (2002) that social capital became a major preoccupation for policy makers because it offered a simplistic formula for social inclusion. Government policies could be directed at encouraging local self-help rather than distributing social and economic resources more equally (2002:28). Harriss suggests that inherent in these political ideologies, is the idea of depoliticisation, in which individuals could take control of their own lives, an ‘immensely attractive’ prospect for policy makers (2002:112). Labour’s approach to urban regeneration was based on policies designed to provide people with skills in order to reduce widespread dependence on welfare (Raco & Imrie 2003). In other words, communities would be provided with the skills and knowledge to actively eradicate their own poverty and deprivation (Raco & Imrie 2003:21). Urban regeneration in the New Labour period was proposed as a primary means through which the government could support the activation of citizens and communities. Understandings of social capital created a link between the urban regeneration policy field and the government’s wider agenda to modernise how it worked and renew British democracy (Kearns 2003).

The concept of community became a pivotal discourse in policy agendas based on the idea that the revival of citizenship and activation of communities would ‘spearhead change’ (Raco & Imrie 2003:4). In his vision of third way politics, Giddens proposes a new relationship between the individual and the community, arguing that there should be no rights without responsibilities (1998:65). Following this communitarian ethos, New Labour asserted that individuals should be provided with the skills and capacity to reduce their own poverty and dependence on welfare and thus ultimately to reduce social fragmentation based on an understanding of social capital outlined by Putnam (2000). The political ideologies which shaped urban regeneration have been premised on the understanding that redevelopment of the physical landscape will bring about social
change. In so doing, it was hoped that residents would become active citizens in their
neighbourhoods and ultimately bring about a reduction in social exclusion. In the next
section, I explore a number of ethnographic examples which reveal how regeneration has
been responded to by residents in multiple ways. Then, I discuss a number of different
anthropological approaches which examine the role of the state in remaking the physical
landscape.

Responses to regeneration

At the coffee morning I talk to two women, Grace, who is in her seventies and Gail, who is
in her fifties, about their neighbourhoods. Both women have lived in East Manchester all of
their lives and are both very knowledgeable about these localities. Their houses are
positioned close to the City of Manchester Stadium, in Beswick and neighbouring Clayton,
which have both undergone extensive rebuilding and dramatic physical transformations.
On the street where Grace resides, a large proportion of the terraced houses are boarded
up. The remaining residents in Clayton are unsure about whether or not the houses will
eventually be demolished (see Chapter Five). Grace explains how she used to be involved
with the residents’ association but how in recent years their meetings have stopped and
people who live in Clayton no longer know what is happening. Similarly, Gail says that
none of her neighbours are sure about whether there will be any further building in
Beswick. All of the houses are occupied but there are large areas of unused land which is
fenced off. Some residents have heard rumours about further building work taking place.

In general, my informants describe the redevelopments which have taken place in East
Manchester in ambiguous terms and question what the future will hold. Like the extracts
about place naming at the start of the chapter, my conversation with Gail and Grace
indicates how local people think about regeneration in multiple ways. At the coffee morning, Grace advises Gail to be patient and to try not to worry about what will happen in Beswick next. Grace has had to learn to remain calm and patient, as some of the houses in Clayton where she lives have been empty for sixteen years. For her, the best way to cope is not to spend too long about worrying about what the future holds. She says:

I’m a bit miffed really. Everything has been done around us and we’re just waiting here, like in a cocoon. We’ve been told there’s no money left so it’s like we’ve ended up as the last ones in the barrel. But I’m happy to stay here. Everyone always says that my house is dead cosy and homely.

Like Grace, Gail is anxious that Beswick has been sidelined since the time of the games:

They let the houses go to rack and ruin. The land is worth more to them than the houses. They did all the houses up by the Stadium at the time of the [Commonwealth] games with new railings and windows. But I live one street back and they’ve done nothing. When the Queen drove down they wanted the houses to look nice so they just did the ones by the main road, nothing has been done to ours. And the other houses have had new bathrooms, we’ve been told we’re on the waiting list but nothing has happened.

Their conversation indicates how regeneration is seen to have had uneven effects. Physical changes to the landscape are thought to target specific localities and to completely miss out other spaces.

The women at the coffee morning feel at the mercy of decisions which have been made in the regeneration process and they are uncertain about what will happen next. Rather than talking about broad changes which they have observed in their neighbourhoods, they tend to discuss how certain physical sites in East Manchester like new houses and also, empty spaces, are symbolic of different periods of urban development and political projects. It is perhaps not surprising that these women have come to see houses as symbolic of political
projects as housing has an immediate effect on these women’s lives and influences even their most intimate relationships, as I explore in the following chapters. Also, each new period of regeneration has involved distinctive styles of redevelopment. In East Manchester informal spaces like the coffee morning have become important sites where people like Gail and Grace can talk about how regeneration has resulted in a sense of exclusion. As Massey (2001) suggests, exclusion is identity-forming. Writing about how the estate where she grew up in Wythenshawe has changed she says, ‘as the built space shifts to respond to other, newer, desires, the consequent exclusions are part of what tells you who you are’ (2001:471).

In order to understand the politics of place making in East Manchester, it is important to examine the role of the state. Rather than exploring the ways in which residents resist the state (Scott 1998), Penny Harvey (2005) argues that a ‘tangential approach’ offers a more suitable approach in which to explore the ways in which the state is entangled in ‘mundane sociality’. This approach specifies that we cannot know where the state will appear from, or in what guise and so ethnographers must think across a range of practices. Some of which may be ordered and others highly dispersed and messy (Harvey 2005:138). As the discussions so far have illustrated, ethnography allows us to explore the way in which material entities invoke both the presence and the absence of the state and also, reveal how place is experienced in ways that planners and politicians never envisaged (Harvey 2005:131). This is evident in Gail’s and Grace’s experiences of living in East Manchester. They talk about the boarded-up houses and vacant land in order to draw attention to the inaction of the state in Beswick and Clayton and their anxieties about the future. As Madeleine Reeves (2011) argues, space is not a backdrop for social action but rather the outcome of complex social relations and competing claims. Reeves brings geographical and anthropological approaches to the state into conversation and explores
the way in which the spatialisation of the state is evident and aptly argues that specific sites reveal entanglements of 'state' and 'society', or the symbolic and the material (2011:906).

For my informants, the creation of 'New East Manchester' is not regarded as a singular project but a series of overlapping interventions which are sometimes seen to have contradictory effects. Different place names are attributed to particular sites, and there is a great deal of anxiety about spaces which await transformation. As Timothy Mitchell (1999) has argued, we should not take for granted the idea of the state as a coherent object clearly separable from society. For him, ‘the state-society divide is not a simple border between two freestanding objects or domains, but a complex distinction internal to these realms of practice’ (1999:75). Further, Steve Herbert (2000) suggests that anthropological approaches to the state can reveal how landscapes are constructed and lived. He says that the ‘veneer of a seamless, transcendent entity’ is stripped away via intensive analysis in order to reveal the processual, messy and ever-contingent reality of everyday state action (Herbert 2000:555). Through investigation of these processes, ethnography enables analyses of the moments when ‘macro and micro interpenetrate’, when constraints and contingencies alternately ‘pattern and perturb’ daily life (Herbert 2000:555). I will draw upon these approaches in order to examine the way in which state practices are made manifest in social settings.

My findings support Stef Jansen's (2012) argument which holds that we must take seriously the desires of individuals who wish for greater attention from the state. He contends that anthropological approaches, like Scott’s (1998), have traditionally only focused on unmaking 'the state' in order to satisfy their libertarian ideals. In this tradition,
anthropologists have tended to illustrate the state as a contingent concept and side with people who resist state power, showing ‘little people throw spanners in large-scale grids and retain difference against standardisation’ (Jansen 2012: no page number given). My findings support Jansen’s call to show the importance of taking people’s wish for further state intervention seriously. Many residents like Grace and Gail wait anxiously for news about whether or not further redevelopment will take place. They are hopeful that their neighbourhoods will soon be transformed. Similarly, Andrew argues that the state needs to invest in East Manchester and convince local people that they have not been forgotten but ‘they are worth it’. In the last section of the chapter I discuss the stadium which is a symbolic element of the regeneration of East Manchester. I demonstrate how spaces of cities reflect the different power of social groups and the constant, and frequently conflictual, negotiation between them (Amin et al. 2000:13). Further, I explain how places are ‘part of who you are’ as there are many different ways of constructing the relation between personal and place identity (Massey 2001:471). This is evident in a number of conversations which I had with local residents about the City of Manchester Stadium.

The City of Manchester Stadium

In 2002, Manchester City Football Club [MCFC hereafter] took over the lease of the City of Manchester Stadium after the Commonwealth Games. An agreement was drawn up between Manchester City Council and MCFC which included a quota for ‘community use’ of the stadium (Brown et al.2004b:24). Football clubs in Britain have increasingly been seen to have ‘social’ and ‘community functions’ (Mellor 2008). They are perceived to be institutions which have the potential to activate communities and have been incorporated into community and regeneration activities. However, as Gavin Mellor describes, football clubs occupy a precarious position:
On the one hand, they are economically liberal organisations which pursue profits sometimes at the expense of ‘the public good’. On the other hand, they have social responsibility sections which are designed to address the concerns of civil society (2008:322).

Of particular importance here is how the football club is contributing to making East Manchester a new place. The stadium is a prominent feature of the landscape in East Manchester (see Introduction). Elongated metal struts protrude upwards from the round drum of the stadium and are visible around the area. It is talked about in contrasting ways by local residents.

One of my neighbours, Graham, decided to move to Beswick from the south of England. He is a passionate Manchester City supporter and bought a new house which has views of the stadium from his bedroom window. He has adorned his back garden with blue and white football flags. Graham holds a season ticket at the stadium and already had lots of friends when he moved to Beswick as he had been going to watch the games for many years. He tells me how moving close to the stadium has been the best decision he has made in his life. For supporters of Manchester United, however, the stadium is often talked about with disdain. Colin, a staunch United fan, jokes that every time he drives through Beswick in the fruit and vegetable van, he winds down his window and spits at the stadium. He detests City playing in East Manchester which he says is a United or ‘red’ area. Colin tells me that City have no right playing in Beswick, as United originated in Newton Heath and started to play in Clayton Heath, which lies one mile to the north of Beswick. Since City used to play at Maine Road in Moss Side, a neighbourhood in southern Manchester, United supporters contest that ‘blue’ fans are not from East Manchester. Unsurprisingly, given the animosity between the teams, City fans maintain that Beswick is now their home and taunt United fans saying that they are not real ‘Mancunians’ as their stadium is in Old Trafford which
lies in a neighbouring council ward.

Arguments about football affiliations often take place among family members. Paul and Kim a couple in their sixties keep chickens at the Openshaw Allotments. When I met them at their plot, I notice how they enjoyed bickering about their opposing teams. Paul supports United and teases his wife by criticising the stadium in Beswick.

I don't like the stadium. It looks like a council car park. There is no character to it. At least Maine Road [the old stadium in Moss Side] had some character to it. I think it's too bland.

Even though Paul does not like the appearance of the stadium he believes that 'the Arabs' a multi-millionaire family who have bought MCFC will bring good fortune to East Manchester. Paul explains how the owners of the football club have unlimited wealth and says that he is certain they will invest money locally. MCFC use the stadium under an agreement with the council. He is under the impression that Manchester City now owns the stadium and have complete control over it. Even though he does not like City playing in Beswick he suggests that overall the club will have a good influence in East Manchester. The owners are deeply powerful and influential because of their global connections which Paul believes will have positive benefits for local businesses.

For some residents who live close to the stadium, there are many drawbacks about supporters coming to Beswick on match days. Local people describe how fans walk through the estate and take short cuts through their gardens. City fans are described as a nuisance and unruly; urinating in public, drinking alcohol and starting fights. This is

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18 Sheikh Mansour, a member of the Abu Dhabi’s ruling Al Nahyan family bought Manchester City for £210m in 2008.
particularly the case on ‘derby days’ where there is heightened tension between MCFC and Manchester United. Eileen who lives close to the stadium, told me about last derby match which had taken place at the stadium.

I didn’t move out of the house. Apparently there were quite a few fights. There were lots of rumours about this last match, some of them were started on the internet saying that they [United fans] were going to turn up and turn it [the local pub] into a red pub [United pub]. The people who run the pub were on tenterhooks for days. They were given a direct number to go through to the police, you know. If they heard so much as anyone shouting they were told to get in touch. She [the landlady] had two riot vans parked outside and one of them came in and asked her what she was going to do. She said that she would be shutting at 8pm and they said good. Apparently they made a real mess of the ground inside, with all the fighting. It’s ridiculous, it’s only sport. They’ve all got excuses but at the end of the day like some Manchester United fans were saying that City had extra time and some said that United should learn how to tell the time. We didn’t watch it. We’re not interested really. I wouldn’t have wanted to be there, I’d have been scared half to death. There was even talk of Asda shutting but there’s lots of rumours around. We can hear when there is a goal. There are good days though, like when they have concerts. Lots of people round here make money from parking like the pubs and the primary school. It’s a fiver a go, like.

Eileen’s account shows how games were felt to bring excitement, disruption and inconvenience by local residents and for some an opportunity to make money.

Gail who lives directly opposite the stadium, often complains about the matches. She tells me how when City are playing at home it takes her two hours if she wants to go to Asda because of the number of fans on the streets. Also, she explains how her family are unable to come and visit her due to parking restrictions. As Raco (2003) notes, the character of urban spaces in regeneration areas is changing with private developers increasingly owning and controlling access to public spaces. While the area outside Gail’s house is still
public land, her family are not able to park near her home on match days. For Gail, public spaces in Beswick, like her estate are being encroached upon by the stadium. Even though the football matches only happen every other week, she is annoyed as she feels the needs of the football fans are prioritised above those of local people.

Gail is also angry about the way in which local businesses have changed to cater for the football supporters and believes that local customers are losing out. Pubs, in particular, are said to have been 'taken over'. Many of the pubs in Beswick have their names changed. One has been renamed Eastlands, another The Manchester and another Mary Dee's Sports Bar. It is often said that they have lost their 'local feel' as they only cater for football supporters. Also, the fish and chip shops in Beswick have also been rebranded as Maine Road Chippy and Tony's Stadium Chippy. Gail tells me that the businesses exploit their position as they charge inflated prices and do not even provide good service to their local customers. On a more positive note, Gail is looking forward to the pop group Take That coming to play in the summer so she can open her window and hear the music, without having to pay fifty pounds entrance fee to watch the concert in the stadium.

Living near the stadium influences the day-to-day lives of residents but my informants are most concerned about what effect the football club's rising popularity, success and wealth will mean for the future of East Manchester. There are many different stories which circulate about plans to build a leisure park, more training facilities and accommodation next to the stadium for their fans (see Chapter Five). Some residents are concerned about Sheikh Mansour's investment in MCFC, while others are excited about the potential for further redevelopments and businesses moving to Beswick. As well as joking about football affiliation and contestation around which team was truly 'Mancunian' and more
authentic than the other, the stadium is a fundamental symbol of change in East Manchester.

Critiques of entrepreneurial urbanism

Urban regeneration, of the type seen in East Manchester, has been widely criticised for its emphasis on entrepreneurial models of redevelopment. As I have described, Labour’s third way politics were lauded as a ‘new’ approach but incorporated key concepts from the previous conservative government. Blair championed partnerships between public and private enterprises (Driver & Martell 2000:152). City authorities were encouraged to compete with other regions for financial investments (Mace et al. 2007). Manchester provides one of the most commonly cited cases of entrepreneurial urbanism. It is argued that the ‘new urban politics’ were based on an economic approach in which the city was viewed by the government and developers as a business (MacLeod & Ward 2002:155, Ward 2003:116). The organisation of the city produces social, economic, cultural and, political effects as the capital inevitably has uneven consequences (Harvey 1989, Massey 2001). It is questioned whether economic regeneration has the potential to bring about social changes for existing residents. Some critiques suggest that leisure facilities have been ‘parachuted’ into East Manchester and argue that there is no evidence that they have encouraged social inclusion (Mace et al. 2007:53).

Critical urban researchers also draw attention to the question of who is profiting from urban redevelopment. Mellor (2002) writes that Manchester’s post-industrial regeneration was based on the expectation that the middle classes work and spend their leisure time in the city centre and some of the benefits will ‘trickle down to local residents in the form of burger flipping and cocktail-shaking jobs’ (in Peck & Ward 2002:12). In her
view, redevelopment provides a particular method of inclusion because upgrading the look of the city means reinvestment from the public sector and, changing its clientele (Mellor 2002:321). Her critique of entrepreneurialism appears to resonate with some of the grievances of regeneration which I have discussed above. For some residents, the interests of football fans coming to East Manchester have been given precedence over local people whose lives are disrupted and feel uncertain about the future.

According to Mellor, entrepreneurial forms of redevelopment have had disastrous effects on local residents in Manchester where the ‘institutional foci of local’ life has been obliterated in regenerated areas (2002:232). Similarly, it is argued by Ward that East Manchester has become a rather ‘unreal place’ (2003:124). He notes that Beswick resembles the imaginations of local and regional policies, rather than of the communities (ibid.). In these critiques, like Scott’s (1998) account of Brasilia, neighbourhoods are seen to be places of authentic community life which have been ruined by redevelopment which has resulted in them becoming unreal or inauthentic places. My ethnographic findings do not fit neatly with these analyses. Instead, it is evident that places contain multiple meanings and associations for residents in East Manchester. My informants relate to the regenerated landscapes around them in diverse and often ambiguous ways. I argue that the critiques of entrepreneurialism are not broad enough in scope to be able to explore these perspectives. Today the stadium continues to invite global attention as the home of MCFC and has powerful material implications in East Manchester. For some residents, the involvement of the wealthy owners of the club offers an exciting potential for further redevelopment while others wish for the regeneration to be completed and for more state resources to be directed towards East Manchester. In this view we see how the interests and experiences of local residents are not distinct from the planners but are interrelated.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how the residential areas of Beswick, Clayton and Openshaw are referred to within regeneration rhetoric as ‘East Manchester’ but how multiple place names continue to be highly valued by local residents. My analysis shows how there is ambiguity over the parameters of these different places which reflects the way in which my informants think about the identity of the neighbourhoods where they live and the future of these places. In contrast to Scott’s (1998) approach, which invokes an image of two maps displaying contrasting pictures of a landscape, my findings demonstrate how understandings of East Manchester are ambiguous and blur the distinction between planning and local residents. Seeing the interests of the ‘planners’ and ‘residents’, as two distinct groups (as Scott’s 1998 analysis suggests) is rather misleading. The ‘public’ are ‘multiple and differentiated’ and have different demands on spaces and give it a variety of meanings (Massey 2001:467).

To return to the Lowry-esque image which I refer to in this chapter, my findings show that in contrast to the scene depicted in the illustration, the stadium has not simply been dropped into the existing social milieu of East Manchester. The sporting facilities built for the Commonwealth Games in 2002 not only reshaped the built environment but were also accompanied by a huge number of funding initiatives and schemes as part of East Manchester’s social regeneration. Rather than one moment of transformation, the social life and landscape in the area has been reconfigured in multiple ways through a number of different stages of redevelopment. There is not one uniform response to the change in the landscape but for residents in East Manchester, layers of meaning are embedded into built space (Massey 2001:471). Place and locality matter not least because they are where people reside but also because they are where community, belonging and character are
These findings support work by other anthropologists working in Britain which have shown that individuals draw a sense of identity from the localities in which they live and the social relationships which they form (Young & Willmott 1957, Frankenberg 1957, Cohen 1982, Strathern 1982, Rapport 1993, Edwards 2000, Evans 2006). In addition, this discussion prompts us to think about the ways in which notions of identity and social relations are reconfigured in sites which have been drastically reshaped by a number of different phases of urban redevelopment.

I have made a case for how ethnography can make visible the ways in which people engage with the state in their everyday lives and how meanings about places are complexly and significantly intertwined in the mixing of ‘the macrological and the micrological’ (Herbert 2000:557). Critical perspectives point to the ‘failure’ of regeneration projects for marginalised populations living within them and scrutinise the regeneration rhetoric which speaks of its own ‘success’. Rather than supporting these arguments, my ethnographic findings reveal how a range of actors operate in different worlds in a shared space. The ‘community’ and ‘regeneration’ are not in opposition to each other but local residents construct multiple ideas about belonging to the new landscape. As the examples at the start of the paper reflect, the way that my informants construct ideas about place are shaped by historical ideas about East Manchester. In the next chapter, I describe how the making of new places does not erase the past but becomes engaged with particular historical images of the locality.
At the coffee morning, in the Community Centre Grace, a woman in her seventies, explains how she has witnessed terrific changes throughout her life. Since the industrial times, the landscape of East Manchester has been completely transformed and so too have the lives of the people who live there. For Grace, a defining element of the industrial era was the widespread poverty. People did not have furniture or many material possessions in their homes and in some cases, they did not even have shoes. Grace and her husband lived in Clayton and both worked in a number of different jobs in order to support their eight children but with so many to clothe they would often have holes in their shoes.

I had to wear a plastic bag inside my shoes, to keep my feet dry. I could never afford the leather ones. They’d [the children] come home and say, ’Mum, my shoe’s snapped’! I’d think, oh no!

Grace goes on to explain how her daughter-in-law ‘is a bit posh’, and how she does not like talking about the old days whereas the other women at the coffee morning recognise and enjoy these stories. They nod in agreement and laugh affectionately, remembering the concessions which they had to make to bring up their children. The conversation continues with more recollections of the sacrifices that women had to make to provide for their children.

The women describe how being ‘poor’ was a defining characteristic of life when they were young and explain how people used to work hard and would always value the things they had. Clutching her mug of tea and laughing loudly, Nora tells me, ‘in those days, we didn’t have a pot to piss in, but we always had such fun’. She explains how most people in East Manchester worked in local industries and therefore earned similar incomes which
generated a sense of closeness as everyone knew what it felt like to struggle to support their families. Nora adds, ‘when you had nowt, you had nowt, no one did’. Even though residents in East Manchester tend to be much better off than they used to be, my older informants argue that the social life of the neighbourhood has declined dramatically. Nora says that there is ‘no community’ anymore because there has been a proliferation of ‘modern shite’ in everyday life. She tells me that even though people have got more material possessions now, they are ‘no better off’, as they cannot rely upon each other.

Among the members at the coffee morning and in other informal spaces around East Manchester great enjoyment and pride is taken in sharing stories about the past. In these conversations I was struck by the way in which long-standing residents talk about having had little money with pride and honour. In contrast, acquiring material wealth is seen to be important in the present day. For example, the women at the coffee morning tell me how it is shameful to look ‘scruffy’ today and often admire people who have expensive clothing, cars or housing. They explain how displaying one’s wealth is a highly valued part of identity. Somewhat paradoxically, however, the women lament the past as they argue that people were happier when resources were limited. They argue that life in the past was better as every family had similar possessions and most people earned the same amount of money. In these discussions, my informants explain how they were creative and resourceful and would always make ‘ends meet’. For example, they cut pieces of newspapers into squares so they could be used for toilet paper and transformed cheap cuts of meat into filling, tasty meals.

In this chapter, I explore these conversations about the past. I focus on two groups of long-standing residents who meet at the coffee morning and gather at the market. In the face of
precarity and living in a space of social change where ties are being severed, the past has come to be particularly valued. Residents talk about changes that have occurred as part of a general deterioration in 'the quality of life' (see also, Edwards 2000). I explore the images of the past which are portrayed in these narratives and ask whether they reveal how community in East Manchester has fragmented and dissolved, or whether my informants’ preoccupations with the past tells us something quite different. My informants spend a great deal of time talking about how there is no community any more, yet, in these sites, it is clear that intense social relations and attachments to East Manchester are evident. I ask what this apparent contradiction tells us about how residents make sense of living in a site of social change. I argue that these narratives are used by my informants to mediate their relations with one another as observers and participants in urban space and are stimulated through, and produced by relationships between people and places.

**The coffee morning**

The coffee morning is held every week in a Beswick community centre in a cul-de-sac, located in a residential estate consisting of terraced houses built in the 1970s. The group consists of between four and eight women. They bring along knitting, crochet and magazines and occasionally take part in craft activities, such as card making and flower arranging. The sessions are advertised as a craft making club but the women come to the meetings primarily to socialise. Even though the group is open to anyone the members tell me that men never join because they do not enjoy sitting around ‘nattering’. The women all live in different parts of Beswick, Openshaw and Clayton and tend to have resided in Manchester all of their lives. None of them work as they are either retired or receive benefits for ill health. They come to the coffee morning in order to enjoy each other’s company and tell me that they like to be busy and have something to do.
The group was set up in 2009 by two volunteers, Gail and Ellen, who are women in their fifties. They live in Beswick and are both unable to work due to longstanding health problems. The women met each other at a community project for young people and decided to set up their own group after gaining experience from the scheme. Gail explains how they wanted to set up a group to cater specifically for the needs of the elderly.

There is nothing in this area for people who are in their 50s, so not pensioners yet but people who are out of work. We just do social events and give out information. People who are in their 50s are stuck in limbo. Most of the groups are for 60 plus. But people are still lively. They are not stuck yet or in their dotage. They don’t want to go to things like bingo. We don’t just assume what people want to do. We ask them what they want. It would be pretty pointless if we only did what I wanted. They are young at heart. They want something to keep them alive. We want to encourage people. If they want to come and just sit, that’s fine. They don’t have to join in. There’s one lady who comes. She never used to get out the house. Now, she’s on the committee. She says she doesn’t know what it means but she’s really proud to be on the committee.

Gail and Ellen were initially awarded funding from Manchester Council to pay for advertising and cover the cost of renting a room in the community centre so they could set up the coffee morning.¹⁹ For Gail, it is important that the elderly should not spend too much time alone in their homes. She tells me how it is important for older people to socialise, saying that coming to the coffee morning is, ‘much better than just sitting in and watching rubbish on the telly’. Listening to the conversation, Ellen adds:

When you’re over 50 you need to keep lively. The amount of people who are out of work has made the problem even worse. They can’t socialise. For people whose

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¹⁹ The women applied for funding from Valuing Older People a partnership between the council and the NHS. They were supported to apply through NEM neighbourhood representative but their relationship became strained and the funding they received could only cover the cost of the room. The women decided that each member would pay fifty pence each week to cover the cost of tea and biscuits in order to keep the group running and are able to use the room free of charge by NEM.
kids have left, they don’t have anything to do. That’s when people get bad depression. We don’t want to fall into that rut.

The women who attend the sessions all agree that even though they are getting older, they are not ready to slow down and want to remain busy and active.

The year before, Gail organised a sixties night in Beswick in a local pub with fancy dress and entertainment. She explains how some of the women were nervous about going out after dark so she arranged lifts for everyone so they could arrive together and how the evening was a great success. There is a general perception that the neighbourhood is dangerous (see Chapter Six). The women feel intimidated going to leisure spaces and public places alone. Gail tells me how she has organised trips to the swimming pool to encourage the women to do exercise, she says:

Lots of them don’t want to go to lessons. So we just go and mess about in the water. We’re all shapes and sizes, so we just take the mickey out of each other. I’m a lot scrawnier than them so they laugh at me. They would feel embarrassed to go on their own. We do silly exercises and things, it’s not a class. We get some food after and make a day of it.

In order to put the women at ease, Gail makes sure that the activities which she arranges are relaxed and informal. She tells me how the women are willing to try new things together but do not want to be taught as if they are at school.

I ask Gail and Ellen whether they think the loneliness which many older people experience in East Manchester is unique. They tell me that it is the same everywhere but Ellen adds, ‘it is particularly bad here because of the poverty. People feel isolated’. According to Ellen, one of the reasons why there is so much depression among older people living in East Manchester is because the places where the elderly used to socialise have closed down,
such as working men’s clubs or church organisations. Also, in the past, older people used to socialise daily with relatives and neighbours but now they tend to be moved from council houses into sheltered accommodation where there are few opportunities to socialise. Ellen tells me that many people she knows who have moved into sheltered accommodation are unhappy as there are no events organised in these facilities and they feel cut off from their family members and old friends. The attendees at the coffee morning agree and explain how they look forward to coming to the sessions every week as they enjoy having company. They rely on each other for support, even though disagreements and arguments sometimes occur (see Chapter Four). The number of women attending has reduced dramatically in the recent months because free travel to the community centre was brought to an end. The members are determined to keep the coffee morning running but are worried about the future. Nora says that all of the women would lose touch and would be ‘lost without it’.

In general, the women feel that old age is a time of loneliness. Without much money there are few things to do and many of the places where they used to spend time have disappeared. When I ask them to tell me about what it is like living in East Manchester they barely mention their day-to-day lives. Instead, they prefer to talk about former times, when they were younger. They enjoy reminiscing about Beswick and Openshaw in industrial times and recall stories about when they were growing up, bringing up their children and their working lives. In these discussions, my informants suggest that the social life of East Manchester has deteriorated. Deindustrialisation not only brought about a dramatic loss in jobs but also resulted in the sense of community diminishing, as residents feel that they no longer ‘look out’ for one another. The women are anxious about the future of Beswick and Openshaw. These examples make evident how subjective experiences have been reoriented by the ‘erasing pressures’ of post-industrialism as:
Issues orbiting around selfhood become particularly relevant within this context as the excruciating shift out of heavy industry into post-industrialism threatens the foundations on which the self was written and understood locally, quite apart from those reorientations due to the subjective experience of old age itself (Degnen 2007: 225).

The women at the coffee morning reflect on the social changes which they have witnessed in their lives with great sadness and talk about their former lives with great affection.

In these narratives about the past, stories about the home and domestic rituals feature as a dominant topic of conversation. The coal fire is described with great affection, as it was a place where people would gather in the home.

**Janine:** Oh and the ashes! I loved taking them out when the fire had died down. I love a coal fire. I don’t like central heating, it gets on my chest.

**Nora:** I’d much sooner have a coal fire than central heating. I remember we used to get the mattress from upstairs in front of the fire. And me and him [her husband] would sit at one end and the kids would all sit at the other in front of the fire. They were good times.

The comfort and warmth of the hearth-side is remembered as a place where the family would gather and being ’poor’ is described fondly and remarked upon with humour. They recount:

**Nora:** All five of us would have a bath on a Monday and my Mam would make soup. I would always think, how can she tell the difference between the bath water and the soup?

**Gail:** We would burn everything, potato peelings, old shoes, everything. My Mam would watch me when I was putting coal on and saying, ‘that’s enough!’ Because we couldn’t afford to have much. All the older women would stand right in front of the fire, with their big arses against it [demonstrated by pretending to pull up her skirt and leaning over]. They would get motley legs!
**Thelma:** We used to call them corn beef legs, cos you’d get stripes up them like the meat.

**Gail:** My Nana and my Mam would stand there and block out all of the heat. I’d say, ‘can you just move a bit Nana’. But they’d stand there with their big arses, scratching! Oh and on another day, we’d have to put all the washing out in front of the fire. And the nappies stunk of piss.

In contrast, in contemporary times, day-to-day domestic chores are described as dull and physically exhausting.

As well as talking about their own lives, the women also enjoy discussing stories about the past which appear in fiction. In particular, they enjoy talking about novels which they have read by Catherine Cookson, whose stories are set in the nineteenth century. They bring her books to the community centre to swap with each other. The women joke that most of Cookson’s stories are pretty much the same, but say that this does not matter; they are still a good read. They talk about their favourite protagonist from the books and relish ‘old fashioned’ depictions of hardship, friendship and life in the north. Like their personal anecdotes, the stories are referred to as ‘better times’. The women also bring photographs to the community centre to show each other. They are passed around the table at the meeting to the other women. The pictures prompt laughter and more conversations about the past (Figure 16).
This chapter explains how my informants frequently refer to a dominant set of images which are associated with former ways of living in East Manchester as 'a yardstick' for making sense of the present (Blokland 2001:275). To start, I draw on the work of two historians, Chris Waters (1999, 2000) and Ben Jones (2010), who both conducted research on autobiographies written in the 1970s, which were published by QueenSpark community publishers in Brighton. Their research provides a useful starting point for my analysis, as the autobiographical accounts they analyse also depict images of working class life. In the first analysis, it is argued by Waters (1999, 2000) that a series of related cultural shifts in Britain in has produced a saturation of images of working class culture. These images, which are dominant in the media, have shaped individuals' own understandings of the proletarian past. Waters suggests that QueenSpark publishers encouraged working class people to publish their own stories which contributed to the valorisation of the 'authentic' working class voice in 20th century Britain. Subsequently, he
argues that across the autobiographies there is a 'ubiquitous industrial nostalgia' (Waters 2000).

In the second analysis, Jones (2010) suggests that a more nuanced approach is needed than the one provided by Waters (1999, 2000). He argues that nostalgia is not ubiquitous in the autobiographies and suggests that it is ‘far from the dominant tone’ (2010:360). According to Jones (2010), working class writers in Brighton did not sentimentalise the past, but registered their experiences of living with inequality in the present. I examine whether the stories which I hear at the coffee morning and market group are evidence of collective industrial nostalgia which draw on a shared sense of an authentic working class (Waters 1999, 2000). Or, alternatively, whether these narratives exemplify how individuals question their place in contemporary life (Jones 2010). In the last part of the chapter, I explore what this analysis tells us about understandings about community which are presented in the anthropology of Britain literature. I argue that taking a sensitive approach to the ways in which individuals construct memories in relation to place, enables us to extend Cohen's (1982, 1985) classic work on community which is presented in the anthropology of Britain.

**The market group**

Nora, who I originally met at the coffee morning, invites me to accompany her to the market near her home. She suggests that I should talk to the regular customers who she meets at the cafe as they are all knowledgeable about the history of East Manchester. Although the group is informal they refer to themselves as ‘a club’ as they send each other cards and presents to mark their birthdays and check up on each other by telephone if they are unwell. The regulars tend to be of retirement age and live within walking distance
of the market. Stretching out through the market place, there are thirty or more empty stalls which have plastic green and yellow plastic awnings hanging above. The remaining occupied stalls sell artificial flowers, second hand books, shoes, greetings cards and other assorted second hand goods such as ornaments and pottery. In April, two of the stalls are used to sell red and white St. George’s Day flags and hats (Figure 17). The stalls are run by volunteers who are organising a parade which is held in Manchester city centre every year. Nora tells me that traditionally St. George’s Day was an important day which was celebrated across East Manchester. She remarks with sadness that few celebrations are now held and says that it is important to support the stall so the volunteers will continue the tradition.

![Figure 17: Stalls at the market, decorated for St. George’s Day](image)

Nora’s friends assemble at a cafe in the far right hand corner of the market in a portacabin which contains tables and chairs set out for customers. It is decorated with brightly coloured plastic table cloths, curtains, framed pictures and has a lino floor. The group meet up three times a week in the late morning at the cafe to have a bacon muffin or roll and cups of tea or a milky coffee. The owner, Deirdre, who is in her early fifties, wears a black and white chequered tabard. She is constantly on the move, making sandwiches and
cooked breakfasts and bringing out hot drinks and food to her customers. Deidre tells me how there are very few people coming to the market these days and only a few traders left as local people tend instead to shop at the supermarkets. Nevertheless, she is committed to keeping the cafe open and works hard to accommodate the needs of Nora’s group and make them feel comfortable. In the spring-time, she sets up a makeshift gazebo with open sides so they are able to be under cover and smoke at the market (Figure 18).

Among the group, some of members have visited the market for many years while others, like Nora, only started to go there in recent years. Nora tells me how when she mentioned her visits to the market to her family, her niece had remarked, ‘I’ve been on the market and there’s nothing. Only old dears’. Nora responded by saying, ‘oh I’ve seen them’ and pretended to be part of a different group. As Sophie Watson's (2009) research describes, local markets have become valued social spaces for marginalised individuals who seek the company of others. Often stall-holders, like Deidre, provide social support for their customers. Markets are often seen as safe havens, where ‘someone will keep an eye out for you’ (2009:1583).
Nora introduces me to Denise, who is in her seventies and has been a regular customer since she was a girl. They met a year before and have since become close friends. Denise comes to the market with her husband, Stan. After they have done their morning errands the couple walk up to the cafe together to have a cooked breakfast. They enjoy chatting with the other regulars before returning home. Denise has neat, short blonde hair and wears thick blue eye makeup, jeans and a blue jacket. Her index finger is stained bright yellow from smoking and her finger-nails are long, carefully shaped and painted with luminous pink varnish. While we talk, she smokes continuously, placing two cigarettes in her mouth at the same time to light. She gives one to Stan, who sits quietly while we talk. It has been widely reported in the local newspaper that the council are planning to close the market down because of the lack of customers. The regulars are extremely disappointed and wonder how long the remaining stalls will be able to stay open. Denise tells me how this would be a great loss to the local area.

**Nora:** It [the market] used to be very busy.

**Denise:** The council bought it, and wrecked it! It used to be a lovely market.

**Nora:** There was a watch man, a fella who sold vacuum bags, a fella who sold rugs, a haberdashery, everything. There were even two butchers.

I ask Nora why she thinks that the market is being targeted, she says:

Well, because the council bought them and then ruined them, we think they’ll build houses on it [the market site]. It’s another bit of history that’s gone down the pan. The council ruined it and now, they’re just walking away and putting people out of work. There’s hardly any markets left now.

As these discussions reveal, my informants are concerned about the redevelopment of the area for two reasons. They are worried that they will no longer have anywhere to shop and socialise and they are anxious that amid the dramatic transformations which have taken place, their local history will disappear.
Across East Manchester long-standing residents bemoan the loss of community and lament how the area used to be a busy and productive place in the past. Regulars at the market often remark, 'I remember it like it was yesterday' and 'I'd go back though, wouldn't you'? Karen O’Reilly’s (2000) research with people living in Fuengirola on the Spanish Costa del Sol offers a useful comparison for this discussion. She found that Britons occupied a ‘liminal’ space in Spain as they saw themselves neither as ‘colonisers’ nor ‘immigrants’. Temporary and permanent residents described how they were ‘still British’ but did not romanticise ‘home’. The expats discussed how Britain has changed and associated the country with negative qualities, such as:

... routine; dullness; monotony; greyness; cold; no hope for the future; a miserable old age; misery; modern life; rushing around; no time for pleasure; crime; selfishness; lack of caring; loss of community; lack of trust; poor health; poor education; and a poor welfare state (O’Reilly 2000: 99).

O’Reilly labelled this as a ‘bad Britain’ discourse. Her findings strongly resonate with the ways in which the majority of my informants in East Manchester argue that Britain is an unpleasant place to live today. In Spain, this discourse was found to operate as a means to claim legitimacy and belonging among residents of Fuengirola. Similarly, in East Manchester, it seems as though remembering the past in positive terms, helps to create a sense of belonging between residents who feel as though there has been a considerable social demise.

It could be reasoned that these ethnographic examples make evident how older people are alienated from life in the post-industrial present and how community in East Manchester has fragmented and dissolved. It could also be suggested that cultural shifts have produced a saturation of images of working class culture in Britain and produced a ‘ubiquitous industrial nostalgia’ about the past (Waters 2000). However, I suggest that a
more subtle interpretation of these narratives leads to a rather different analysis, which prompts us to think again about why notions of community are mobilised within these discussions. I explain how narratives about the past have a ‘binding power’ and help my informants to make sense of the changing environment in the contemporary world (Blokland 2001, Jones 2010). In doing so, I argue that paradoxically, my informants ‘make’ community by lamenting the loss of community. They dwell on selected, positive images of the past in order to make sense of their place in contemporary life. In what follows, I examine the relationship between memory and place in order to shed light on the reasons why stories about industrial times continue to hold such value among my informants.

**Old wives’ tales**

After spending time together over a period of a couple of months, Nora starts to ask her companions questions on my behalf. She wants to help me with my research and is familiar with the types of question which I often ask at the coffee mornings. Nora is a talkative member of any social group and enjoys initiating conversations. On one occasion, Nora says to her friends in the cafe at the market, ‘let’s hear all about old remedies. One at a time, so she can write them down’. The regulars reel off a long list of names of treatments which were used as preventative remedies or to help cure ailments. They include; putting goose grease on your chest, having a camphor bag or a sweaty sock round your neck, putting butter on bruises, dabbing paraffin on nits, taking Scott’s Emulsion, cod liver oil, lung healers, bread poultice and liver pills. The group laugh as they recall these unusual names. Nora looks pleased with the variety of responses which the group has come up with and tells me to make sure I write them all down carefully.

These narratives support the commonly held discourse that during the industrial period
the area was thriving and productive and there was a strong sense of neighbourliness (see Chapter One). East Manchester is described as ‘self-sufficient’ during this period, as local people could rely on local knowledge which was passed through networks of people. It is often said that neighbours were always on hand to help, as they lived in close proximity and everyone kept their doors unlocked and could rely on each other for support. In these narratives, the family is depicted as a defining element of community life. As Gail, who grew up in Beswick in the 1950s tells me:

We were all big families then. There were about eight children or eleven. If you can imagine us all walking down in town together, there were the old fashioned streets then. So if your family weren’t on your street you could go through the back door and they’d be behind. Everyone kept their doors open. We all shared everything then, now we’ve lost that. There are little pockets of it still but it’s not the same. There isn’t that family unit anymore. We would call everyone on our street ‘aunty’ or ‘uncle’. You lived next to them from the day you were born, so you had respect for them. You could leave your door open when you were asleep and nothing would have happened.

Neighbourhoods were people who lived in close proximity and who were often related. Kin terms were ascribed to other neighbours to indicate respect.

It has been noted by Mollona (2009a) how during the industrial era, workers feared, disguised and stigmatised illness, whereas today in a post-industrial era, they talk about, display, discuss and quantify illness. In East Manchester, it is also noticeable, that illnesses and ailments which are associated with former times are reflected on with a great sense of affection. Gail explains with pride how people living in Beswick and Openshaw were ‘hardy’. For example, there was no heating so women used to wear a liberty bodice, which was a thick sleeveless garment with small rubber buttons running up the front worn on top of their vest as well as flannel skirts to keep them warm. Gail explains how home
remedies may sound quite odd, but they were trusted because they were tried and tested.

She says, ‘I think we were a sturdier breed then’ and tells me emphatically, ‘I believe in all the old wives’ tales, because they work.’

The community is described as ‘close’, made up of dense ties and interwoven networks of trust. Margaret, a grandmother in her sixties who I meet as she tends her vegetable plot and chickens at the allotments in Openshaw, tells me how neighbours used to look out for one another.

As I’ve said to you before, there was more of a community in them days. Now people don’t look out for each other. When we moved into our house, we had a tiny little fence so we all chatted in our gardens. If it started to rain, then we would rush out and get the washing in for each other. Now, no one helps each other. The people at the back of us have put up a massive fence. I think people are selfish now.

Residents used to share news about employment and relied on each for informal support. In contrast, my informants often argue that there is no community anymore and explain how they tend to keep themselves separate from one another as the neighbourhood is a dangerous place which is characterised by risk (see Chapter Six).

In advance of fieldwork, I had not anticipated that hearing stories about former times would help me to understand life in East Manchester in 2010. I had imagined that local residents would want to talk to me about the dramatic changes which were reshaping the built environment. But as I spent more time with older people, it became clear that narratives of the past provide an important way to form friendships and to talk about social change. Contemporary life is seen to be fragmented and the quality of social life is said to be in decline, whereas my informants celebrate the uniqueness of their locality as
an assertion of their identity (see also, Dawson 2002b). In a practical sense, the old wives’ tales, which were once respected and relied upon, have now become redundant but they have renewed significance in local discourse. As Maurice Halbwachs (1992 [1925]) explains, individuals do not remember the same events with the same intensity but their memories become ‘merged and submerged’ with one another. In a critical analysis of Halbwachs’ work, Anna Green (2004) adds that we must also remember that individuals draw upon contemporary cultural discourses to make sense of their lives and to explore which ones they choose and to ask why they are selected. Oral histories are ‘works in progress’, as individuals grapple with contradictions and complexities in their lives. Following this analysis, it is possible to conclude that talking about ‘old wives’ tales’ and remedies is highly valued as individuals contest their local identity and former self-reliance. In the face of contemporary processes of change, shared narratives are drawn upon in order to articulate a former sense of collective strength and defiance.

Narratives about industrial life are particularly important in places like the market where long-standing residents feel as though their social sites are under threat. As Waters (1999, 2000) notes, people want to memorialise working class life as they feel as though their everyday patterns of life are being disrupted. He suggests:

If modernity entails both dislocation and a rupture in historical consciousness, then one of its by-products is nostalgia for older, presumably more settled, ways of life - and for the places in which past lives were lived (Waters 1999:138).

It could be argued that dramatic physical and social changes have resulted in a historical rupture for people living in East Manchester which has led to the deterioration in community. This analysis would suggest that the changes which have taken place have generated a nostalgic longing for the older ways of life and the places in which past lives were lived. Before reaching this conclusion, however, it is important to pay special
attention to the way in which notions of community are articulated in these narratives and to explore in further detail how individuals relate to place.

There have been a number of different periods of deindustrialisation and redevelopment in East Manchester. Therefore, there is no reason why former ways of life should necessarily be regarded as more settled than the present. Narratives of the past refer to community life in Beswick and Openshaw as homogenous and unified, but there is no evidence to suggest this is the case (see Chapter Two). As Mark Crinson suggests, all cities are in change constantly, they have no static moment as their spatial and architectural forms change in myriad ways: ‘rapidly reproducing themselves, in fits and starts’ (2005:67). The image of a rupture occurring causing a rift between identity and place appears to be rather simplistic as social relations and notions of community are fluid. In order to examine why long-standing residents refer to the past in relation to stability, therefore, I consider a number of different approaches which explore the relationship between memory and place in more detail.

According to Kathleen Stewart (1996), the difficulty for ethnographers is how to understand and write about the ‘densely textured poetics’ of particular places. In Western Virginia, she observed how identity, social history, and a sense of place are all described in relation to the hills, social places, and the body. Stewart’s work proposed that the relationship between locality and social relations is complex because there are interrelationships between people and places which are always made up of tensions. Stewart notes that it is only in holding the gaps and tensions in cultural representation itself that we can glimpse an ‘other’ mode of cultural critique that speaks from a place of contingency, vulnerability and felt impact (1996:140). In this view, sociality is not an
afterthought or a ‘context’ that adds a dimension to meaning after the fact, but ‘a force field that pulls meaning along in its wake’ (1996:151). Rather than simply assuming that transformations in the physical environment will necessarily result in a longing for the past, Stewart’s argument suggests that a refined approach to place is required in order to explain the way in which the memories and meanings of places are constructed. We see how places like the market and the coffee morning are valued sites of social interaction for long-standing residents. In these spaces, discussions about the past are shared so that people can make sense of the changes which are occurring around them in the landscape.

Places are as open to a multiplicity of readings just as much as the present; traditions do not exist in the past but are actively built in the present (Massey 1995). People relate to places and their identities become place-bound which means that identities should not be assumed to be place-based (Massey 2005). Memories are stimulated out of relationships to the landscape as individuals express connections to places which allows individuals to be able to construct relationships to one another. This approach makes evident the way in which places contribute to the production of memories. It does not simply assume that memories of the past are stimulated in response to changes in the built environment (Waters 1999, 2000). Rather, we see how places are always constructed out of articulations of social relations and memories are filtered through ‘a changing politics’ (Massey 1996:75). In what follows, I describe how narratives about the past are drawn upon to derive a sense of similarity between my informants and to stress a sense of belonging and inclusion with one another. Here, Jones’ (2010) analysis is particularly helpful. He describes how it is also important to understand the function of storytelling in relation to the specificities of social relations and to individual experience. Discussions about the past reflect the way in which individuals see their place in contemporary life. Following, Jones (2010) I argue that these narratives are used to register experiences of
living with inequality and reflect long-standing residents’ strong sense of uncertainty about the future.

**Belonging and inclusion**

At one of the coffee morning meetings, a woman in her early sixties called Jane joins the group for the first time. Before she arrives, Gail explains how Jane is coming to see if she would like to join the group, as she had been lonely since the death of her husband six months before. When Jane arrives she is welcomed by the other women. She seems shy and remains quiet in the company of the women, as they chat and joke together in a jovial manner. From her seat at the head of the table, Nora leans forward towards Jane and tries to involve her with the rest of the group by initiating the following conversation:

**Nora:** Jane, what do you remember about the war?

**Jane:** I don’t remember much. I’m a bit younger than you.

**Nora:** I can remember my Mum going out of the shelter and bringing a big flask of cocoa back. Oh I wouldn’t have done that. She’d put me in my one of those big Mickey Mouse shaped carry cots and I screamed, I was petrified.

**Jane:** There was still rationing after the war.

**Nora:** People had nothing. They built those bungalows [pre-fabricated houses]. People who lived in poverty were moved into them. They couldn’t believe it.

**Jane:** There are still some in Droylsden.

**Nora:** I’ll never know why they didn’t build more of them. After the war everyone was so friendly to each other. You realised what you’d lost. Mind you, we only had second hand clothes. I remember I had to wear my mother’s clothes to school so I got teased. But, she had the cleanest grate, it was shining. We would have our tea off the table, like this one. It would have paper spread out on the top and then we would have to cut it into bits and use it for toilet roll, I’m not kidding. But it was a great life. There was no electric in our house. We had an oil lamp upstairs. I
sometimes think now, if only I could still have that lamp, it was beautiful. Me and my mother would sit in bed with it on together. All the children played on the street together. I tied a bit of lace round my neck and pretend I was an angel [put arms outstretched]. We used to play with stubs of pencils.

Jane: We would put my Dad’s suit in the pawn shop on the Monday morning and get it out on the Friday night.

Nora: Me too! He’d say ‘please don’t scuff the shoes’. It was a lovely life, a grand life. The children could play out. There were no evil paedophiles. Well there probably were but we didn’t know. I’m glad I’m on the way out now. I don’t envy the kids. It’s an evil world. I think about my grandchildren, what’s it going to be like when they’re 18!

This exchange clearly illustrates how images and stories about the past provide common ground for individuals. Narratives about the past are shared among long-standing friends and new acquaintances. Even though she could not remember anything about the war herself she talked about the prefabricated houses and the pawn shop. These are both well known images associated with the past which Jane draws on in order to participate in the group conversation.

On a different occasion at the coffee morning, Gail explains how it is important to pass knowledge of traditions on to her family. She lived in London for ten years when her children were young as her husband got work there. After Gail’s marriage fell apart, she decided to move home to Beswick with her children. When the family arrived back in Manchester, the children had southern accents and felt out of place as they were teased by their classmates. Gail says that she feels relieved that they now have ‘proper’ Mancunian accents after living in the area for some time. I ask her whether her children are now northern even though they spent their formative years in London. Responding in an
incredulous tone, Gail tells me that of course they are northern, as she has brought them up and taught them her local knowledge and traditions from Manchester.

You try and get them to keep on the traditions but it's not the same with our grandchildren, they're not the same. My son comes round with all his football mates and he tells them about how to get good luck or something. All his mates will say, 'don't be daft' and he says, 'ask my Mam, she's done it all her life'. And they'll listen to me like rubbing gold on your eye so you don't get a puffed eye [if you have been hit].

Gail’s son and his friends are interested in learning about the practical benefits of these traditions and want to learn about local knowledge from their parents. Gail is surprised that I know so little about Manchester’s history and asks me where I grew up. Despite being brought up in Lancashire, fifty miles to the north of Beswick, she tells me that I am not ‘northern’ or else I would have heard these stories before and would be equipped with knowledge passed down from my family. These examples show how exchanging local knowledge through narratives of the past can draw a sense of similarity between individuals. Moreover, they are highly valued as individuals articulate a sense of belonging to East Manchester.

In settings across East Manchester narratives about the past are also shared among new acquaintances. Duncan, an unemployed man in his thirties, often joins the group gathered at the market for a cup of coffee. He knows some members of the market group through his mother, who also spends time there. On one occasion some of the older regulars discuss the impact of the Second World War on Manchester. In an authoritative manner Duncan tells the group how there was a munitions factory between Beswick and Clayton, behind the site of Johnson’s Wire Works. He explains how the roof of the factory had to be disguised with green paint so that it blended with Philips Park, to prevent it from being targeted by German bombers. The older people listen carefully to the story and nod in
agreement. Nora turns to me and says, ‘This is what I like about Duncan, he’s an encyclopaedia of knowledge’.

Even though Duncan is much too young to be a first hand observer of these events, he is a valued member of the market group and enjoys joining in the discussions about East Manchester’s history. This conversation demonstrates how narratives of the past may derive from personal experiences or may be learned and recited as a form of local knowledge. As Cohen suggests,

... it is the very imprecision of these references to the past – timelessness masquerading as history – which makes them so apt a device for symbolism and, in particular, for expressing symbolically the continuity of past and present, and for re-asserting the cultural integrity of the community in the face of its apparent subversion by the forces of change (1985:103).

In these instances, there is not an explicit distinction made between memories which may derive from personal experience and anecdotes or stories which are shared in local discourse. At other moments, similarly, narratives, stories and memories appear to blur together within broader narratives about the past.

It is argued by Degnen (2007) that older people’s narratives often shift between temporalities and how younger people often become ‘destabilised’, when they talk to older residents and may even come to feel alienated by the older interlocutor. She says that there is often a disjuncture between intergenerational narratives, not least, because older and younger people talk in different ways (2007:231). And yet while this may be the case in some instances, I found that in East Manchester, some younger people like Duncan, become actively engaged in learning local knowledge in order to draw a sense of similarity with the older generation. Discussions about local identity are not only restricted to
longstanding friends, but also are also evident among newer acquaintances. Residents of different ages exchange narratives of the past in order to assert a sense of local belonging through shared knowledge and in order to make sense of contemporary life.

Long-standing residents who attend the coffee morning and the market group contribute to a shared discourse which states that the community has disintegrated. In so doing, they build social ties and a connection to one another. These observations support Cohen’s argument that the consciousness of community emerges in the perception of its boundaries which are largely constituted by people in interaction (1985:13). As a symbol, community may well be held in common, but its meaning nonetheless varies with its members’ unique orientations to it. Due to this variability, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through the manipulation of its symbols. The symbols themselves do not tell us about meaning, but give people the capacity to make meaning (1985:16). Even though my informants talk about the fragmentation of social life, their narratives of the past are shared in order to propose a sense of stability in the present. This contradiction shows how symbols, such as the past, are ‘wonderfully malleable’ in contrast to the stifling and restricting access to social life in the present as:

Symbols of ‘the past’, mythically infused with timelessness, have precisely this competence, and attain particular effectiveness during periods of intensive social change when communities have to drop their heaviest cultural anchors in order to resist the currents of transformation (1985:102).

Long-standing residents draw on a sense of a shared working class past in order to articulate a sense of similarity to one another. My informants largely screen out negative elements of the past in order to stress positive values which they associate with former times. The exception is Colin who holds a radically different view about the industrial period in East Manchester.
Colin the grocery van driver offers a radically different view about the past, compared to my other informants. When he talks about his upbringing in East Manchester, Colin recalls the poor living standards and the low quality of housing rather than the more nostalgic images which are discussed at the coffee morning and at the market. He tells me:

There were two up two downs then but there were cockroaches in them! You had to check your shoes every morning. We don’t want to go back to that. We used to have to slop out as well, like in prison, cos you didn’t want to have to go to the loo in the night. We used to have the wash-house on Bank Street. You could walk through where they did the washing and have a bath at the back. That was only once a week! Or else you went swimming. There were showers on the way in and out.

In Colin’s view, living standards are much higher today. He explains how many older people are nostalgic about their former lives but how he would never want to return to the old ways of living. For many older residents, the past is particularly significant as memories offer a liberating extension to confined lives, as they enable ‘spaces of old age’ to be ‘stretched’ (Massey 2001:460). Colin’s view is quite different to the people who gather at the market and the coffee morning. He is employed and spends a great deal of time travelling around the area for his work. Colin’s opinion about the past therefore, is much more critical compared to those long-standing residents who socialise at the coffee morning and the market. In social settings, which are thought to be under threat, long-standing residents refer to shared narratives about positive elements of life in the past, in order to voice their concern about the future.

**Conclusion**

This discussion has described how groups of long-standing residents spend a great deal of time talking about how there is no community any more, yet, in the informal sites where
they meet, it is clear that intense social relations and attachments to East Manchester continue to exist. It is evident that residents create a sense of community in social settings across the newly regenerated landscape by sharing narratives of the past. These narratives operate as a medium through which urban forms of social relatedness are enacted today and are particularly important in settings which are under threat of closure, such as the market. The articulation of these narratives of the past brings great enjoyment and appears to have a cathartic effect. Therefore, the past is a symbol through which individuals assert a sense of commonality and shared values. As Waters (1999) suggests, if modernity entails both dislocation and a rupture in historical consciousness, then one of its by-products is nostalgia for older, presumably more settled, ways of life and for the places in which past lives were lived. For long-standing residents, the future is regarded with uncertainty while the past is thought to be a time when people shared a strong sense of community. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that narratives of the past act as an anchor which stabilise individuals in defence against what they envisage as a shifting and unstable present (Degnen 2007). They offer a medium or a discursive space in which to make sense of the changes which have occurred in East Manchester and to question the present. The notion of community, or its absence, is used in order to draw feelings of similarity to one another, particularly in sites which are seen to be precarious. My findings demonstrate that nostalgic narratives may be used to contest dominant stigmatising representations of working class neighbourhoods and indicate the ways in which individuals question their place in contemporary life, as Jones (2010) aptly suggests.

From these ethnographic observations, it is possible to extend Cohen's (1982, 1985) work about community which is presented in the anthropology of Britain literature. We see how social life in the past is used as a symbol through which people articulate a sense of community in the present. In East Manchester, a site which has undergone numerous
waves of regeneration, these narratives are highly valued. Residents stimulate particular understandings of the locality, as places are always constructed out of articulations of social relations and informed by politics (Massey 1995, 1996, 2001). Social relations are shaped by wider political conditions of post-industrial life in which the regenerated landscape is perceived to be unstable. The discussion has revealed the highly specific and unpredictable ways in which people living in post-industrial neighbourhoods are surviving, resisting and giving meaning to the particular challenges they face in contemporary times (see also, Edwards et al. 2012). Even though residents talk about social diversifications taking place, social ties remain resolute. Following on from this discussion, in the next chapter, I examine the ways in which older people, who live in precarious socioeconomic positions, engage in strategies to support and care for each other and sustain social ties. I argue that as well as narratives of the past being utilised to make community, material objects play an important role in stabilising social relations in a moment of transition.
Chapter 4

‘Next time you come, bring some cakes!’

During the first weeks of fieldwork I began to realise that in order to attend the coffee morning on a regular basis, I would need to make contributions to the group, to repay the women for their time and hospitality. At the end of one of my first meetings, as I put my coat on to leave, I asked tentatively whether the women would mind if I came back the following Tuesday. The organiser, Gail, told me that I would be welcome to come again, but as I walked towards the door to leave, Nora, one of the most outspoken members shouted across the room in a commanding tone:

Next time you come, bring some cakes! When you’re in Asda, pick some up. There’s some lovely iced squares that are a pound.

The other women laughed and pretended to be shocked by her forthright demand. Gail told Nora; ‘Oh don’t! She’s only a student’ but then relented and asked me to bring some Mr Kipling cakes the following week. She tells me that I should go to Asda as they often have a three for the price of two deal on trays of cake slices which the women all enjoy.

At a meeting a couple of weeks later, Gail asked everyone to bring something to share for lunch the following Tuesday to celebrate Edna’s birthday. Nora said that she would bring some pork pies and someone else chose to make sandwiches. Wanting to contribute, I asked what I should bring. Gail thanked me for my offer, but said that I should not worry. Noticing how I was trying to follow the other women’s example, Nora, said in a joking manner, ‘but she wants to fit in’. The other women smiled and Grace, a grandmother in her seventies said warmly, ‘she’s already part of the group’. Like the last chapter, this discussion explores how sociality is constructed in informal sites in East Manchester which are seen to be under threat. It describes how exchanging material objects
emphasises the continuation of ties and community in the face of feelings of uncertainty. During my time at the coffee morning and in other informal spaces, I had to learn the rules about gift giving which all members must adhere to.

The majority of the women I meet at the coffee morning are ‘from’ East Manchester, meaning that they have always lived in the area. They tell me that Mancunians are renowned for being friendly, accommodating and welcoming to newcomers. The women are proud that ‘the north’ is home to ordinary people who do not have much themselves but always make sure that everyone can ‘get by’. It is no wonder people ‘down south’ are wealthy, Nora tells me. It is because they are ‘tight fisted’ or ‘mean bastards.’ The women are pleased to extend their hospitality to me and to teach me how to participate in their informal groups. It has been argued that reciprocity in some form can be the anthropologist’s means of demonstrating her value, her importance, her membership in the community, and of counteracting the negative effects of her differences (Golde 1986). The point I wish to expand on here, is that material gifts were not only an important way for me to gain access to the field, but crucially, were instrumental in how the women with whom I worked maintained relationships in their day-to-day lives.

East Manchester is often labelled as ‘deprived’ (see Chapter Two) and in social settings, local people lament the perceived lack of community and social ties compared to those they associate with the past (see Chapter Three). Even though my older informants tend to have more money than in previous times of their lives, they often discuss the daily strain of living with limited financial resources. The women at the coffee morning spend a great deal of time talking about how they were much ‘poorer’ in the past. Even though they have more material wealth in the present day, they explain how they still find it difficult 'to
make ends meet’. Among the women, their families and neighbours, there is a constant circulation of objects, of varied monetary and emotional value, which ranges from cigarettes, or small items of food, to birthday and Christmas presents. Even though my informants argue that there is no longer any community in East Manchester, these examples demonstrate how individuals who find it difficult to ‘get by’ form intense social relationships through the exchange of small items. Contrary to dominant depictions of deprivation which hold that individual’s living with limited economic resources often have weak social ties, this discussion reflects how strong ties between residents are evident in East Manchester.

**Analysing the gift**

The tradition of thinking about gifts and reciprocity has a long history in anthropology. Writing in 1925, Marcel Mauss (2002) described how non-European parts of the world were characterised by systems of production and exchange, or what he described as ‘gift economies’. Mauss’ work revealed that gift-giving was dominant in clan-based societies in order to establish domination and control as the gift is part of a system of reciprocity in which the honour of giver and recipient are engaged. He described how the exchange of inalienable things between persons creates a system of reciprocal dependence (2002:62). The motivating force behind exchanging objects, therefore, is not only that they are a manifestation of the collective but that they are a physical extension of the person. Since the work of Mauss, practices of giving gifts have been central to anthropological analysis, as exploring the meaning of material objects forms part of telling us about what it means to be human (Sykes 2005). Here, I focus on one discussion which has emerged within the great range of debates on offer about the gift and consider what the exchange of objects can tell us about social relationships in East Manchester.
Scholars studying capitalist economies have been perplexed about the idea of the gift. For example, it has been described as an ‘enigma’ which is at odds with the ideologies of capitalist accumulation (Sykes 2005). Amiria Henare and colleagues (2007) describe how Mauss’s work showed the ‘hybridity’ of the concepts of ‘persons’ and ‘things’. They explain how two strands of inquiry have developed within anthropology to explore these concepts.

The epistemological approach maintains the division between concepts of ‘person’ and ‘things’ and, sees gifts as ‘inalienable objects’ (see for example, Gregory 1982). In contrast, the ontological approach regards the identification of ‘person’ and ‘thing’ as an act of concept production (Henare et al. 2007:18). Most notably, Marilyn Strathern’s (1988) *Gender of the Gift* explored questions about the nature of ‘persons’ in Papua New Guinea. She argues that epistemological approaches were insufficient to analyse the Melanesian case, as gifts are also regarded as ‘persons’. Strathern demonstrates that a gift represents a social relation rather than merely being a symbol of that relation. In Melanesia, she noted how ‘persons’ can no longer be conceived as existing prior to relations in which they subsequently become implicated through exchange (in Henare 2007:19). Strathern’s work transformed understandings of personhood in anthropology. Ideas about the ‘person’ in Strathern’s terms are contained in the relations that exchange entails. Therefore, material objects establish a dialogue with personhood, rather than being inalienable (in Drazin & Frohlich 2007:64).

Instead of using terms such as ‘objects’ and ‘gifts’, Henare and colleagues (2007) propose a more open, heuristic method which allows ‘things’ to offer their own theoretical possibilities. Taking their cue from Strathern, the authors suggest using an ontological approach in order to examine the meaning of gifts, from their informants’ perspectives. Similarly, in this chapter, rather than seeking to problematise the different meanings of gifts, my central concern is to explore how objects are used to constitute a variety of
relationships. This chapter asks why objects and gifts are instrumental in forming and maintaining ties among my informants in East Manchester.

To start, I describe how at the coffee morning and other social spaces in East Manchester, women exchange objects, cards and gifts as they rely upon one another for informal support. I also describe how, if gifts are thought to be inappropriate, they can also threaten social ties. Second, I explain how the subject of death and funerals is a popular topic of conversation. The women talk about what they would like their own funerals to be like. It is noticeable in these conversations, how objects are often discussed, as they are used to commemorate the dead and to cope with grief. Third, I consider a number of different approaches to analyse these findings further. I draw on anthropological studies of the gift and historical research on kinship and gender in Britain in order to examine how the exchange of material objects is central to defining, performing and maintaining social relationships in East Manchester. The aim of the discussion is to explore the ways in which women who live in precarious socioeconomic positions engage in strategies to support and care for each other and sustain social ties. I argue that material objects play an important role in stabilising social relations in a moment of transition and may also destabilise these relations if the rules of gift giving are challenged.

Talking about funerals

At the meetings the women take turns to ‘brew up’. The kettle is repeatedly boiled and mugs of tea are passed around the table to all of the members. The women who smoke usually nip outside to have a quick cigarette, while tea is being made. In his research in a prison in Papua New Guinea, Adam Reed (2007) describes how for male inmates smoking is the ‘constitutive form of sociability’. He notes that cigarettes are the things that allow
men to demonstrate who they know and how. Without them, Reed suggested that the inmates would have no way of making friends and the prisoners insist that cigarettes give their lives significance (2007:37). At the coffee morning, a similar analysis may be applied. Cups of tea constitute the women’s form of sociability. Endless cups of tea and cigarette breaks fuel the women’s appetite for chatting, gossip and telling jokes (Figures 19 & 20). If ‘brews’ are not made the members complain of feeling ‘parched’ and become listless.

Figures 19 & 20: Women at the coffee morning drinking tea

The women are all particular about the way they like their tea to be made and specify the quantity of milk and sugar which they like. Gail smokes twenty cigarettes a day and after each one, she makes a tea. She tells me that she would never drink out of a ‘silly cup’ and would rather have a decent sized mug. To the hilarity of the other women, Nora often jokes that she has drunk so much that she is ‘pissing pure tea’.

As well as talking about the past, the main topics of conversation among the women at the coffee mornings are their families, relationships, their neighbours day-to-day routines and experiences of growing old. They also discuss their physical ailments and ageing bodies. Sometimes they swap the names of medication which have been prescribed so they can
ask their doctor if the drug may help them with their ailments. The women often tell stories about their working and family lives which are particularly important as notions of the past signify older people’s notions of self (Degnen 2007). They enjoy having the chance to talk to each other as they have been widowed or separated and many live alone. Contrary to the commonplace perception that the subject of death is taboo or off limits, funerals are a regular topic of conversation at the coffee morning. For example, the women often discuss how they would like their funeral to be organised.

Edna, who is in her seventies is described as the ‘lady’ of the group. She owns her own house and is a regular member of her local Catholic church. Unlike the other women, she does not approve of swearing. Edna and her husband have already organised and paid for their funerals, so their children do not have to worry. They have chosen the flowers, type of coffin they will have and the hymns which will be sung at the service. For Edna, the funeral is an opportunity to demonstrate publicly the respectable status she has worked hard for in her life and also her organisational skills. She does not want her children to have to be burdened with any responsibility or to impose their own ideas on to the funeral proceedings. From these discussions it becomes clear that funerals and rituals at the time of death indicate one’s material wealth and kinship ties are reaffirmed or contested, as the following story indicates.

When Nora was in her forties, she worked at Beswick market on a bric-a-brac stall with her husband. She tells me how it was a great period of her life as she got to be with her husband everyday and spent time with the other stall holders who were close friends of hers. However, when her husband died, suddenly, she was shocked that none of the workers from the market got in touch with her. She tells me, ‘I didn’t get one flower, not
even a bloody petal’. Nora was so offended that she has never returned to the market. Her story indicates how social ties can be severed if the rules of gift giving are not followed. Nora also goes on to explain how there are often disputes at funerals between family members. She tells me about a story concerning one of her friends who was prevented from inheriting her partner’s possessions because she was not married.

I knew a couple who weren’t married and when the husband died, she was left with nothing. The children came and took his jewellery and then his pension which was a lot of money. At the funeral she was having to ask people if she could go in the car with them, it wasn’t right.

As this story shows, it is expected that close family members will travel in the funeral cars which directly follow the cortege carrying the coffin. Nora’s friend was not married to her partner and was excluded from this privilege. In these two anecdotes Nora explains how in moments of transition, such as death, if the rules of gift giving are challenged social relationships can be destabilised.

For Gail, planning the perfect funeral is important, because it will offer her the opportunity to be able to show off her exuberant personality. She tells the group that she is ‘skint’ as she had been made bankrupt and finds it difficult to pay her bills every week. Gail explains that she lives off incapacity benefits and says that she does not have any money to leave to her children. On the subject of funerals, she adds:

We talk about this [funerals] at home, we all know what each other wants. My daughter wants to have cardboard cut outs all the way down the church, of pictures of her! My Dad, who I loved, wore his glasses and had his newspaper [in the coffin]. When my Mum died we just made sure the coffin was nailed shut so she couldn’t escape! My children know that I want to be wearing a short red dress, so my legs are on show. And I want to have my fags, you’re not allowed a lighter [at a cremation], and some tea. So when I get up there I can brew up and have a cig.
don't like flowers, so my children know that I want a wreath made out of fag dimps [cigarette ends].

The other women shriek with laughter and Nora, responds: 'Oh my god! You've not got to be right in the brain'. These conversations demonstrate how death is regarded as an important moment of transition. According to Daniel Miller and Fiona Parrott (2009) contemporary English grave practices tend to be relatively similar compared to the major divisions in social status and success which occur during life. In contrast, the discussions at the coffee morning illustrate how funeral practices in East Manchester are thought to be quite diverse. The women plan their funerals to reflect their status and personality, after death. Gail prides herself on being 'down to earth' whereas, for Edna being a 'good Christian' and responsible family member is of upmost importance. Gail enjoys flouting the rules of respectability among her peers and injects humour to her story by suggesting that she would like to be seen in a short red dress, surrounded by cigarettes. She does not have the economic resources which are required to be respectable and draws ironically on symbols associated with excessive sexuality and vulgarity of working class women (Skeggs 1997). The coffee morning provides a space where women are able to openly reflect on personal issues and they use storytelling and humour to refer to, and sometimes challenge, wider social norms.

**Commemorating the dead**

Most of the women who attend the coffee morning live alone. A large proportion of them are widowed and they often talk about members of their family who have died. Quotidian objects offer a symbolic way to cope with grief and commemorate the dead. At one meeting, Grace feels 'out of sorts' as it would have been her late husband's birthday. While the women offer their condolences Nora remarks in a fairly upbeat tone, 'happy birthday up there‘ and asks whether she has written him a card. Grace replies that she had already
wished him happy birthday when she woke up and put a card for him on the mantelpiece to mark the day. The other women at the group explain how they also carry on some traditions like writing birthday cards for the deceased. They describe how these practices offer them a sense of comfort while they are grieving.

Grace explains how, even though her husband died twelve months before, it is difficult to come to terms with his death and how every time she leaves the house, she places her hand on his coat which still hangs next to the front door. She says that she knows that she should get rid of the coat and touching it is 'a bit silly,' but how it offers her reassurance. Grace also tells us that she has also noticed how one of her neighbours carries out a similar routine. He keeps his wife’s dressing gown hung across the banister and slippers at the bottom of the stairs, even though she died six months before. Objects which were once the possessions of deceased family members remain in the ‘ebb and flow’ of everyday life and take on new meanings (Layne 2003).

The way in which women talk about death suggests that it is not regarded as a moment when social relations cease to exist, but a time where relationships are reconfigured through certain everyday objects that gain a new importance. Nora, for example, tells us that she carries her late husband’s lighter in her purse, even though she does not smoke. The lighter is a possession which reminds Nora of her husband and contains concrete and symbolic meanings (see also, Moss & Moss 2001). Similarly, Denise from the market group, wears a heart-shaped necklace around her neck which is decorated with a small photograph of her son who was killed in a car accident. These objects are highly valued. They act as sensory reminders of the deceased and also keep the presence of the loved one ever present in daily life. I notice how many of the women I meet at the Sure Start
Children's Centre have the names of their children tattooed on their forearms or wrists. One mother has 'RIP Ella 2003-2007' written in large italic letters on her forearm. She tells me how she got the tattoo to commemorate her niece, so she will never be forgotten. While jewellery and tattoos are everyday and common objects, in these circumstances they also become public memorials to the dead and signify personal attempts to deal with grief.

After attending the coffee morning for a couple of weeks, I started to spend more time with Nora. She enjoyed having company and showing me around East Manchester. She is a dominant character and is well liked. Nora often leads the jokes and teasing and has a reputation for being divisive and outspoken. She invites me to come to her flat, which is in walking distance from the community centre in a complex of sheltered accommodation for the over 50s. In her lounge, there are a number of photographs of her family; including her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Nora often changes the pictures around and modifies the decorations which are on display which shows how the lounge is where the public and private domains of the household meet and where the self is presented through objects (Chevalier 2002).

Nora draws my attention to one wall where there is a display of framed pictures of her grandson, Junior, who died from leukaemia, aged four, two years earlier. In Nora's flat, photographs are not only reminders of the deceased but also maintain complex imaginaries of what her 'family' consists of as they combine images of both the living and the dead (Davies 2011). There are pictures of Junior's family on their last holiday together to Disney Land and arranged on the shelf behind the sofa there are some toys and figurines of Mickey Mouse which they bought on their trip. Nora tells me how she can
sometimes hear the Disney toys moving around on the shelf from her bedroom, which is next to the lounge when she is going to sleep. She believes that these noises are Junior coming back to her house to play with his toys. Rather than being scared or disturbed, the sounds which she hears bring her a sense of reassurance or comfort. She tells me that she will never move house because she wants Junior to know where she lives and be able to come and visit her. In some cases, objects of the deceased are thought to take on a special value, as they offer an opportunity to communicate with the dead.

One evening, I visit Nora at her flat. Her neighbour, Janine who also attends the coffee morning, calls round to see her. The women have only known each other for a short time but have developed a strong friendship. Nora and Janine live in the same sheltered accommodation complex and can see each other’s flats from their windows. They spend time together every day and when they are not together, they often phone each other to talk about what they are watching on television or to pass on news about their families. When Janine arrives, she walks straight into the kitchen and turns on the kettle. She tells us that she has brought over a present for Nora’s family and takes out a crumpled plastic bag. The present is a knitted urn cover made in pastel shades of blue and pink. It has Junior’s name embroidered on the front and is made in the shape of an item of clothing from soft wool. The gift brings about an emotional response. After looking inside the bag, Nora walks into the kitchen away from Janine and I. Fighting back tears she says, ‘don’t start me off crying, I’ve already been crying’. Looking up at a picture of her grandson on the wall and says, ‘look what you’re making us do!’ Nora speaks to the photograph of her grandson as though he can hear her. Photographic objects offer a means through which people deal with the remains of the deceased (Parrot 2010).
By giving Nora the gift, Janine is offering a gesture of support to her family. She explains that she decided to order the urn cover from a magazine, rather than making it herself, as the stitching was too delicate for her to do neatly. Janine explains how it has taken a while to arrive and adds, ‘it wasn't cheap, mind’. By stressing the monetary value of the present, Janine indicates how she had to make concessions in order to be able to afford the present. In America, Linda Layne (2003) interviewed a number of mothers who attempted to preserve the memory of stillborn children through physical objects. She found that consumer goods were routinely employed as ‘technologies of memory’ by these women and employed to address the problem of social pressure to forget (2003:209). Similarly, in East Manchester, material objects offer a means for family members to express a relationship with the deceased. By continuing to offer cards and gifts to dead relatives, my informants seemed to feel a sense of reassurance. They continue to hold attachments to the possessions of the deceased and celebrate birthdays and anniversaries of their late husbands and children in order to maintain, where possible, familiar routines. At the coffee morning talking about these practices also offers an opportunity for the women to be able to discuss their feelings of grief and loneliness. The exchange of material objects offers a way of dealing with transition and a means of coping with uncertainty.

**Exchanging presents: when are gifts appropriate?**

In day-to-day life, the women at the coffee mornings exchange greetings cards to celebrate Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, Christenings and Easter, and to extend sympathy at the time of a death. In these instances, gifts do not provide an ‘alternative’ reality but they give material form to, and thus indicate, some of the underlying realities of social relations (Searle-Chatterjee 1993). The women gain a great sense of enjoyment from making and exchanging cards as they are relatively inexpensive and mark celebrations throughout the
year. As I spend more time with the women, I learn that there are important rules about gift giving and receiving. As well as bringing people together and confirming relationships they can also test the limits of a friendship, as the following example demonstrates.

On the evening of the 17th November Nora invites me to her flat to help her wrap up her Christmas presents. Even though there are still over five weeks to go, she is anxious that everything needs to be organised in advance. Nora asks me to go through the presents so she can check that none of the women at the club have been missed out. I sit on the carpet surrounded by rolls of Christmas themed wrapping paper and labels. Nora has decorated her living room with a tree in the corner adorned with glittering gold lights (Figure 21).

![Figure 21: Christmas decorations in Nora's flat](image)

On the mantle piece there are two Father Christmas dolls with their legs dangling over the lintel, supporting large bellies which rest on their knees. One wears a light blue Manchester City coloured shirt and the other, a dark red Manchester United football strip.
Nora tells me that she has to have both teams’ shirts on display, to keep all the members of her family happy. Even though Nora lives alone, her decorations are all related to members of her family who she hopes will admire them when they visit over the Christmas period. Christmas decorations show how family tradition remains an important part of life (Mason & Muir 2011).

Nora hates wrapping presents as her fingers are arthritic and she feels clumsy when she uses them, so she asks me to help her out. Sitting on her comfortable chair, she gives me directions about which paper and gift tag to use for each present. While I am wrapping, Nora explains why she had chosen each gift. There is a present for each member of the coffee morning which are all quite different depending on her friendship with the recipient. Nora has chosen new handbags for Thelma and for Grace to replace their scruffy, faded leather ones. For her best friend and neighbour, Janine, Nora has bought a watch from the Avon catalogue which has a square face encrusted with diamantes. When the task is complete, Nora looks happy and says that she is pleased with her choices. It has taken her a number of months to save up money to buy the items and she is excited about seeing her friends’ reactions when they open their gifts.

At the coffee morning at the beginning of December, Nora decides to give out the presents. Even though she will see the other women in the run up to Christmas, she wants to make sure that she can watch her friends open their gifts. She cannot hold back her excitement but after all of the preparations she has made, Nora is shocked by her friends’ responses. The women open the presents and thank her but put the items into their bags fairly quickly and carry on with the usual routine of the coffee morning. The following week, I
accompany Nora to her flat, after we have been for a Christmas meal with the other members of the club. Looking slightly tearful, she says:

I wasn’t very impressed by the reaction to the presents. All that Thelma said was, ‘I can’t afford to buy you a present’. There wasn’t even a ‘thank you’. Nothing, I thought they were really ungrateful. Gail said that she didn’t have time to open hers, I thought, well that’s not very nice. At the meal, Grace didn’t bring her new handbag. She bought her usual scratty [scruffy] one. I said to Thelma, ‘will you use yours’? She said, ‘my daughter would like it’. I thought, what a bloody waste. When she said her daughter would have it I was fuming. Janine was happy with her watch, she wore it to the meal. I was glad she liked it. I’m not going to do it again, Camilla, there’s no point.

Nora is upset by her friends’ underwhelming responses to the presents. Thelma and Grace thanked Nora for the handbags but said that they would not use them. They later told me that they thought the presents were ‘over the top’. They were felt to be inappropriate as the women could not reciprocate with such large presents. Also, Grace and Thelma seemed to be offended by the implication that their existing bags needed to be replaced. Caught up in the excitement of buying the presents, Nora had not anticipated that her presents might cause offence.

My observations at the coffee morning indicate how in some situations gifts may strengthen social ties and at other times may test the limits of friendship. If someone is thought to have acted without tact or to have ‘gone overboard’ the friendship can be challenged. As well as bringing a great sense of support and reassurance, friendships can be ‘ontologically unsettling’ (Smart et al. 2012). When an individual breaks the code of behaviour that has come to be expected, their actions can test a friendship. I have described above how contributing objects at the coffee morning and exchanging cards and gifts are an important way of socialising but may also challenge the limits of a friendship.
These incidents reveal how social spaces are delicately negotiated and how acts of giving and receiving are governed by strict rules, which become all the more apparent when they are broken. In what follows, I consider a number of different approaches to the gift and explore what they tell us about the way that relationships are formed when items are exchanged.

A number of scholars note how offering a gift is not merely giving a material object but is the giving of something identified with the giver. It is argued that gifts contain a message of identity from the giver (Carrier 1993, Chevalier 2002). Pnina Werbner has suggested that the recipient becomes the ‘compliant subject’ of the giver’s imaginative projections and says that modern gifting may be seen as an act of ‘dialogical reflexivity,’ a conscious attempt to define the other’s distinctiveness (2002:144). In a similar vein, Sophie Chevalier (2002) argues that by appropriating an inherited item or gift, we recognize our links to others and agree to maintain them. In contrast, Miller (2007) has written that gifts highlight internal contradictions within relationships. In this view, gifts do not reflect the personality of the giver, nor their idealised kinship but are used in order to bridge the discrepancy between the two. I explore these two theoretical approaches which offer contrasting views of the role of gifts in kinship or social relationships and examine the reasons why exchanges are a vital component of social relations in East Manchester.

**Kinship and gift giving**

The majority of the women at the coffee morning receive state benefits or pensions and tend to live alone. They use any extra money to help their families. Even though they often find it difficult to ‘make ends meet’, they explain how they have a greater sum of disposable income than they have ever had in their lives before and therefore, tell me how
they enjoy being able to distribute material resources among their families and friends. The women often lend their children and grandchildren money, and also offer to buy food or household items. For example, Nora gives her daughter money between pay days which means she has to be vigilant when spending her weekly state pension. She tells me that she is pleased to be able to be in a position where she can help her family out. As long as she is able to pay her bills and do her weekly shopping she is happy and finds it easy to go without some extra things, in order to do so. When we talk about this subject at the coffee morning, she is tentative and speaks in a whisper as she knows that some of the women are critical of her family relying on her for support. Also, Nora does not want the other women to know that she is able to lend money as they could then make demands on her.

According to Miller (2007) family relations continue to be defined by rigid rules in Britain. He argues that in recent studies there has been too much emphasis on the flexible performance of kinship roles (see for instance, Strathern 1982, Carsten 2000). Miller questions anthropological studies of kinship in Britain and suggests that they put too much emphasis on flexible practices and in so doing, forget the structures which also guide kin relations. He says that in Britain, we live in a society with clear normative expectations and argues that family roles ‘continue to matter a great deal’ (2007:551). Miller criticises the work of Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason (2000) in which it is argued that inheritance patterns are forms of ‘negotiated relationships’. Instead, Miller contests that despite the flexibility of laws and performance of kinship relationships, inheritance practices are almost entirely guided by fixed categories of kin relationships. His argument suggests that the meaning of kinship lies in its ‘highly formal and normative constituency’ (2007:541). For example, a typical gift, according to Miller does not reflect the personality of the person nor idealised role but is hoped to help bridge the discrepancy between those two. I explore his argument in relation to a number of incidents at the coffee morning.
Thelma, one of the members of the coffee morning, is in her late fifties. In March, she arrives at the coffee morning session looking upset and tells the group that she cannot sleep. Her children have fallen out, due to an incident in which some of her jewellery has gone missing. One of her adult sons regularly comes to her house and asks her to lend him cash, even when she tells him that she has no money of her own. The week before, Thelma noticed that some of her jewellery had gone missing from her bedroom. Since there was no sign of forced entry, she suspects that her son must have come to the house while she was out and taken it. At the coffee morning she sits quietly. It is evident that she is very distressed after spending two days looking round the pawnbroker shops in East Manchester to see if she can find the missing jewellery. Thelma tells us that she is exhausted. The situation is causing great tension within the family, as her other children have stopped speaking to the son who is suspected of the theft.

The women at the coffee morning often discuss how they feel lucky to be able to help their families. However, it is also clear that lending money can also place great strain on their relationships. Thelma cannot afford to lend her son money. Therefore, we see how giving or lending money does not always place the giver in a position of power. Material relations carry social implications and sometimes put older women in East Manchester in highly ambiguous and contested positions. Miller’s (2007) argument suggests that a typical gift does not reflect the personality of the person nor their idealised role, of for example, being a Mother, but is used to help bridge the discrepancy between those two. His analysis rightly draws attention to the ways in which expected roles define kinship practices. And yet, Miller’s work glosses over other characteristics of kinship, most especially in this case, social class and gender. His line of argument could lead to over-generalisations being made. The practices of gift giving which I observe at the coffee morning are delicately negotiated and depend on the economic resources which are available to the women, as
well as their wish to be supportive mothers or grandmothers. They go to great lengths to cope with feelings of insecurity and loneliness by offering each other gifts and presents. From their perspective, they maintain pivotal positions within their families to help their relations out and distribute resources where possible.

**Kinship and social class**

Anthropological and sociological accounts of kinship in Britain have revealed how duty and obligation define family relationships. In particular, they illustrate the role which women play in distributing material objects among kinship networks which shows how understandings of friendship are gendered and historically constructed. According to Janet Finch (1989) historically women relied on practical support so they could run the household and bring up children. They engaged in exchanges with female kin, in which they both gave and received day-to-day support. Finch describes how even in situations where there are less rigid gender divisions of labour, women often acted as the ‘kin keepers’ (1989:71). Women maintained regular contact with members of their wider kin group and were more likely to be able to secure informal contacts for employment than men. Finch argued that in addition to duty and obligation, reciprocity defines family relationships.

In a historical account of the West End of London, Ellen Ross’ (1983) provides a clear illustration of how women used to depend on reciprocal exchange in their neighbourhoods. She describes how women were instrumental in organising ties between households and also of facilitating the creation of working class values and identities.

*Wives’ dress, their sexual, drinking, and socializing habits, their housekeeping and supervision of children - all contributed to the establishment of their family’s (and
often their street's) reputation on the continuum between 'rough' and 'respectable' (1983:5).

Her work noted how it was vital for women to sustain kinship relationships so they were able to secure material support and social status. Husbands and wives occupied separate domains due to the division of labour between the sexes and men often had unstable incomes. Women had to rely on other female kin, neighbours or friends for material help. Ross (1983) argued that the skills of women were of equal importance to the husband's wages in determining how comfortable their families were and the types of relationships their households formed with neighbours. Some observers described London's working classes as 'generous' and depicted women sharing 'extensively and unsentimentally' whereas Ross's analysis convincingly illustrates how exchanges were based on strict rules. Since there was no state support, the 'safety net' for most families was other women in the neighbourhood (1983:8). A woman's reputation was determined by her participation in local systems of exchange. Being branded as untrustworthy was one of the worst accusations a woman could face as it could threaten a vital part of her family's livelihood.

Writing about the same area in London, Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957) explained how the relationship between the mother and the daughter was central to the organisation of the family. The authors described how in Bethnal Green, 'insecurities and kinship were inextricably bound together' (1957:159). Even though the economic position of working families had become more stable in the 1950s, the daughter's attachment to her mother was still paramount. Women had to 'cling' to the family into which they were born, in order to protect themselves from economic and social isolation. Women exchanged knowledge, advice and childcare duties in their neighbourhoods and kinship networks. These accounts shed light on the ways that relationships have historically been formed and maintained and are shaped by social class. At the coffee morning the women
rely on each other for friendship and support and the objects and gifts which they exchange play an important role in the way they organise their relationships. Also, outside this setting, the women are involved in organising family finances and have to make careful calculations about how much they can afford to offer in terms of gifts to their friends. Since they have their own money, usually from state pensions or benefits, they are often placed in a position of responsibility and offer loans or give money to their children and grandchildren. Like the working class women in the historical accounts, my informants are depended upon as ‘kin keepers’ to share resources and look after members of their families (Finch 1989).

Instructive here, is research conducted by Skegg’s (2011) amongst young working class women who rely on a system of ‘supportive sociality’ due to their position of economic precariousness. She explains how women have to learn how to ‘duck and dive’ as they try to protect each other against financial, physical and psychological depressions that regularly threaten their lives (2011:504). They pass on knowledge and useful items and look after each other and develop what Skeggs describes as, ‘localised spaces of protection’ (ibid.). My findings support this analysis. Material objects play an integral role in expressions of ‘supportive sociality’ at the coffee morning. The women share resources and knowledge to protect themselves and each other from being economically and socially isolated. They also make and share presents and food in order to pass the time enjoyably. When a gift is deemed to be inappropriate, they can challenge the rules on which sociality is constructed and therefore, unsettle friendships or kinship positions. This discussion has explored the ways in which older women from economically deprived areas create strong, supportive networks and make decisive and tactical decisions in their friendships. The kinship studies which I have referred to indicate how historically women have depended on each other for material support due to the unstable nature of men’s incomes. In 2010,
even though my informants tend to be financially independent, they still take on roles of distributing money within the family and carry a burden of responsibility for their kin members and friends. Social spaces like the coffee morning have become highly valued places where informal networks of friendship meet in the newly regenerated landscape. In these spaces, material objects play an important role in stabilising social relations in a moment of transition.

**Conclusion**

I started the chapter by describing an early moment during fieldwork in which Nora instructed me to bring cakes to the next coffee morning. This fairly mundane incident illustrates how individuals are expected to contribute small items in social settings. Moving to more generalised issues, I have described how my informants exchange gifts and other items in order to maintain and shape social ties. The coffee morning is a setting where women form strong relationships, support each other and have fun. They spend a great deal of time and money saving up to buy Christmas cards and gifts. By ‘thinking through things’ we can see how objects and persons are implicated in networks of social relations (Henare et al. 2007). The women’s exchanges form an essential element of everyday social life and objects are also deeply symbolic at poignant moments such as coping with death. Many of the women feel isolated and say that there is nothing for them to do in East Manchester. They often live alone and feel lonely, even though they are often deeply involved with their families. Also, they are anxious about the future of the coffee morning sessions. In this context, gifts are a way of regenerating relationships and ensuring the continuity of their friendships.
I have argued that practices of exchanging material objects are defined by gendered practices of ‘supportive sociality’ and wider understandings about kinship roles (Skeggs 2011). Older women in East Manchester look out for each other and offer each other support. At the same time, they are also conscious of protecting their own social standing and economic position. Miller (1998, 2007) has argued that offering gifts is evidence of how love is performed and the space which is constructed between actual and realised kinship. His analysis, however, does not acknowledge that kinship roles are specific and are shaped by social class. My ethnographic examples illustrate how sociality and kinship relations are formed through different material conditions (Skeggs 2011). Miller (2007) suggests that gifts demonstrate kinship norms but he does not really assess what these norms are. My discussion has illustrated how ‘normative’ values are not the same for all the women. They depend on notions of respectability, on what constitutes kinship and also, the economic resources which are available to the women. This leads to the conclusion that it is vital to bring an anthropological understanding of social class to this analysis, in order to show the multiple ways in which these women make relations. Also, it suggests that social networks have taken on new forms which extend beyond the family and include a broader set of social relations.

This discussion offers an alternative portrait of the way in which women live, with limited means. It shows how networks of people are involved in complex systems of sharing and exchanging material resources. This has important implications for the broader questions which are developed in the thesis regarding the formation of community in a context of radical change and regeneration. Adding to the work of Skeggs (2011), who has written about ‘supportive sociality’ in working class communities, this discussion has shown how practices of gift giving are used by women in order to cope with moments of transition, such as the death of their loved ones. More widely, material objects are used by individuals
in order to stabilise feelings of unpredictability which have come about due to wider social change. These examples also reveal how generosity has limits. I have described how gift giving cannot be attributed to a static working class culture but is a dynamic response to complex experiences of precarity that are experienced in locations like East Manchester. The women at the coffee morning feel that giving gifts and cards is particularly important in order to regenerate their own relationships. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the ways in which material objects play an important role in stabilising moments of transition, by exploring the meaning of housing in East Manchester.
Chapter Five

‘We’re like a little lost community here’

Grace, a woman in her early seventies who attends the coffee morning, lives on a street in Clayton where the houses are predominantly ‘canned up’. Metal sheets are fastened across the doors and the windows of the red brick terraced houses by the council to protect derelict properties being vandalised or squatted (Figure 22).

![Image of a semi-occupied street in Clayton]

Figure 22: Semi-occupied street in Clayton

There are only a few cars parked on the road and it is impossible to tell whether the remaining houses are inhabited, or not. At the end of the road, the green space which Grace refers to as ‘the croft’ has become wildly overgrown and covered in litter. She advises me not to leave my bicycle on the street, but to bring it behind the alley gates into her backyard, as her son has had three stolen from the side of the road in the past six months.
Stepping inside, I am struck by how warm and homely the house is compared to the uninviting feeling of the largely uninhabited road. I thank Grace for inviting me round and compliment her on the array of ornaments which are on display in the front room. She smiles and says, ‘people always like my house, they say it’s like a cottage’. There are rows of figurines and piles of knitted toys in the lounge and miniature daffodils peering in through the window from containers resting on the windowsills. Grace shows me photographs of her family which are hung on the wall and tells me about a collection of postcards pinned to a board. They are cartoons of an overweight woman in different poses, one gardening, one in a bathing costume and one lying on a deck chair on the beach. With a chuckle, she explains how she and her sister are both ‘big girls’ and how they send the postcards to each other whenever they go on a day trip. Everything in the house has sentimental value, the pictures and ornaments have been collected over many years and remind Grace of ‘good times’.

In this chapter, I explain how for people living in East Manchester, repeated phases of redevelopment are perceived to have disrupted social ties in ways that residents see as inherently unpredictable. It is said that rather than improving the conditions of social life, new houses have become symbolic of uncertainty, as persistent rumours prevail about what will happen in the future. Following on from the discussion presented in the previous chapter, I describe how material objects play an important role in stabilising moments of transition in East Manchester. In what follows, I examine some of the changes to housing which have occurred as part of East Manchester’s urban regeneration and explain how there have been diverse reactions to changes in the built environment and in particular, towards what is seen to constitute suitable housing.
In the last couple of years, Grace has been thinking about whether or not to move to a bungalow. She has started to struggle to walk up and down the stairs due to arthritis in her knees but tells me that she will probably ‘stay put’ as the house contains many happy memories. Grace moved to the road thirty years ago with her husband after her seven children had grown up and moved away to different parts of Manchester to start their own families. At first they rented the house from the council and then bought the house under the Right to Buy scheme. Grace has lived alone since he died the year before. Like other residents in Clayton, she is unsure about what is going to happen to her home and does not know what the future holds. While we are sitting in the lounge, she points to the carpet next to the sofa which has become thin and frayed under her feet and explains how she wants to buy new carpets and has saved up the money to do so but does not know whether she would be wasting her money as the house may end up being demolished.

Despite the insecurities of living in the semi-deserted area, Grace wants to live in Clayton as an independent home owner.

When they started all this work they sent us a big, thick pad of information. They asked us if we wanted to have refurbishment, demolition or do nothing. They gave us estimates for each one. They said that we would have to move out of the area and pay rent so we all voted ‘do nothing’. Every other way would have meant that we weren’t a home owner anymore. We would have to take another loan out or pay rent. It’s a catch phrase [catch 22]. Lots sold up and moved into rented accommodation but they soon popped their clogs. People just give up when they moved and I thought, ‘you shouldn’t have done it’.

She tells me how it was a difficult decision to buy the house from the council and that she and her husband worked hard for many years to buy their home. Since the 1970s, British planning policy has put great emphasis on residents owning their properties and houses have become the ‘organising principle’ of a morally acceptable society (Abram 2011:70).
Even though houses are inanimate objects, they are seen to be able to transform the behaviour of people simply by being owned (Abram 2011:73). However, for Grace, even though she is a home owner, her position feels uncertain. The neighbours who have moved away have died and Grace is worried that if she gives up her house she will lose her independence and her life may also end prematurely.

At the beginning of the New Deal for Community schemes in 2000, Grace became involved with the local Residents Association in Clayton where she lives. She tells me proudly how her neighbours managed to assemble a well-organised group of local residents, who subsequently became involved in a number of successful projects, including being awarded funding to turn one terraced house into a community meeting place and resource centre. However, in recent years, the group's regular meetings have stopped and the community house now lies empty. Grace attributes the breakup of the group to lack of funding and lack of people's energy for the project running out. She tells me that no one knows what is going to happen now and says, 'we're like a little lost community here'.

When Grace first moved to the street, all of the houses were occupied and a large proportion of them were privately owned. All of the families knew each other and tended to be from East Manchester. However, over the past fifteen years, there has been a great deal of change. Many long-standing residents left and the houses became unoccupied, one by one. Some of the remaining occupied properties were bought by private landlords and now there is a high turn-over of residents who rent these houses. Grace tells me that the private landlords will 'stick anyone' in their houses. She has observed how no one stays long because the properties are in such a state of disrepair and says that the composition of the residents is completely different to how it used to be.
The neighbours are ever so noisy, like the family I had next door here. I know lots of older people who have had enough, moved out and died quickly. Now, we've got Chinese opposite and Africans down the road. There's an Irish family at the end of the street. I don't like going round there because they make you have a drink. I always ask for a cup of tea but they make me have something stronger. I come out and my face is red as a beetroot. It's nice to have nice neighbours. Now, round here there are Africans, Polish, Algerians and Chinese facing me. They all say good morning to me. People have always known that they can come to me. There was one family who lived opposite and there were twenty-six people living in, they were foreign, not sure where they were from. In the end I had to phone the council because they were parking one of those massive lorries on the street. The Chinese man opposite makes me laugh. Every morning he comes outside onto the street and shakes his bedding, his little fitted sheet. It must be their way of life.

Even though Grace is anxious about what the future holds she feels that it is still important to be a good neighbour. For her, this not only means looking out for the other residents on the street but also making sure that the houses are secure and the communal areas, like the back alley, are kept tidy.

As long as the other residents on the street are quiet and courteous, Grace does not mind who lives alongside her. She tells me that she has five different sets of keys for other houses on the road and is happy to run errands for the remaining neighbours. For Grace, home not only refers to the house she lives in but also other spaces which surround it, like the back alley and the croft at the end of the road. In the early morning, she often has difficulty sleeping and walks up and down the back alley to exercise her sore knees (Figure 23). On a couple of occasions, she noticed how the door to one of the houses had been left open.

I think someone's using it as a den. There's an ash tray with fresh butts in it and an ironing board with a plate on it and a stool. It's never been cleared out properly, there are still eggs in the kitchen and all of the things in there. We've knocked the
handle off so no one can get in there. I phoned Northern Counties [the social landlords] and told them and they thanked me for doing it. It's not my job though. It's been five years, they should have sorted it before now. I gave the builder who is working on my kitchen some screws so he could go and board it all up. He told me, 'you're an old person, you shouldn't be having to do this'.

The caretaking role which Grace performs on her street is in one sense pragmatic. She keeps an eye on the neighbouring houses in order to make sure that her own home is safe from intruders. But her attachment to the houses goes further than this. Grace is defiant about continuing to look after the street in order to make it a good place to live and tells me that, in 'the old days', everyone used to help each other out. She thinks that it is important to continue this tradition. Amid the uncertainty caused by wider processes occurring around her, Grace feels that it is still her duty to be a good neighbour to the remaining tenants and houses on her street.

Figure 23: Back alley behind Grace’s house
Research about housing

In the 1950s Young and Willmott (1957) conducted a community study to examine the impact of the slum clearances and rebuilding of Bethnal Green in London. The authors found that few residents wanted to leave the East End, even when they were offered better housing elsewhere. The reason was because individuals relied on informal networks of support in their existing communities (see Chapter Four). Their study demonstrated how small neighbourhoods showed quite extraordinary close and complex social organisation based on kinship (Dench et al. 2006).

Young and Willmott suggested that belonging to an area cannot be explained purely by long residence but is also deeply rooted in lasting attachments to families and neighbours (1957:156). Their study stressed that strong connections between residents would quickly disappear if people were uprooted. The authors concluded their study with suggestions for future planners, noting:

The sense of loyalty to each other amongst the inhabitants of a place like Bethnal Green is not due to buildings. It is due far more to ties of kinship and friendship which connect the people of one household to the people of another. In such a district community spirit does not have to be fostered, it is already there. If the authorities regard that spirit as a social asset worth preserving, they will not uproot more people, but build the new houses around the social groups to which they already belong (1957:166).

Their research provides a deeply significant understanding of the way in which we think about how community is fostered through the connections between kin members and residents which can be applied to East Manchester.
Residents like Grace, have a strong desire to remain in localities in which they feel they are part of a community. Even though the street where she lives appears to be inhospitable and desolate to outsiders, Grace is determined to live there. She wants to continue to be a home owner and a good neighbour because of her attachment to her house and the street where she lives. In order to push Young and Willmott’s analysis further, it is also vital to consider the way in which the materiality of places also shapes the identity of individuals who live there. Residents in East Manchester not only construct attachments to people but also to places. As Sharon Macdonald (2006) clearly describes:

...material culture is frequently a focus for people's sense of identity - of who they are. Material culture is both invested with meanings and in turn gives substance to those meanings. Material culture materializes: it gives tangible physical form to what might otherwise remain abstract and inchoate. It acts as a connector between different individuals, giving them a tangible common focus and representation of their shared identities (www.hrionline.ac.uk/matshef).

In this discussion, I explore one particular element of material culture, houses, which are an important part of the identity of urban neighbourhoods and play a defining role in regeneration. I ask how individuals form attachments to places, and more specifically, the homes which they occupy.

Instructive here is the work of Miller (2001a,b) whose work has examined the way in which the house is seen as a social organisation which has agency. Miller suggests that the materiality of the house can tell us about the fine-grained relationships between people and the material cultures of the home, which offers powerful insights into the societies in question (2001a:15). In this approach, the home provides a primary means of exploring the individual’s appropriation of the larger world, offering a representation of that world, within the private domain (2001a:1).
Once one acknowledges the degree to which the home itself is both a site of agency and a site of mobility, rather than simply a kind of symbolic system that acts as the backdrop or blueprint for practice and agency, then the rewards of this focus upon material culture in trying to understand the social relations that pertain to the home become apparent (2001a:12).

Rather than material culture being associated with the public realm and kinship being considered part of the private, Miller argues that both elements coalesce in the meanings surrounding the home so that the private is as much a reflection of the public as a driving force. In this chapter, following Miller (2001a, b), I explore the ways in which individuals construct attachments to one another and suggest that these relations are mediated by the built environment. By examining the role of material culture, I hope to extend the classic argument about community and belonging which was proposed by Young and Willmott (1957). I argue that attachments to East Manchester are fostered through connections between residents and, importantly, the built environment. I show that housing raises the question about the possibility of continuing social relations into the future and therefore, comes to mediate these relations.

Housing and regeneration

As I have described in Chapter Two, urban regeneration in East Manchester has followed a property-led strategy (Quilley 2000). This has involved the building of new developments and has been accompanied by a vast advertising campaign (Figure 24). Aspirations for the new housing are high. NEM's website states: 'Major improvements to housing in Openshaw plus a £40 million investment in a new district shopping centre are helping to create a new sense of community'. It describes how Beswick was once home to industrial workers but is being reinvented as a 'modern day residential location'.

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20 From NEM website http://www.eastmanchester.com/living/index.htm
During the 1980s and 1990s many of the houses in Beswick and Openshaw fell into negative equity. I was often told anecdotes about entire streets of terraced houses being bought up during this period, for as little as £1000. Many of these streets are owned by private landlords and are largely regarded as undesirable, as they have a high turnover of tenants. Also, a large number of terraced houses were demolished due to being in disrepair to make space for new dwellings. In their place, new developments have been built. These houses are often talked about because of their distinctive appearance. The buildings are constructed from a mixture of materials such as concrete, wood and iron and vary in shape. They have asymmetric windows and tend to be two or three storeys high (Figure 25).
In addition to these new developments, there have been a number of schemes to modify existing properties which are owned by social landlords. It is common to see scaffolding on housing and work being carried out on roofs (Figure 26).
Modernisations have also been made to the interiors of homes. A number of women at the coffee morning, for example, have had their bathrooms replaced. In Nora’s flat, the conventional bathroom has been transformed into a wet room, which means that she can shower more easily. She is delighted with the result and jokes that she now has the best plug hole in Manchester.

NEM’s aim is to bring investment and new residents to East Manchester. The property led approach is based on the logic that creating a more stable physical environment will support a more sustainable and cohesive community. As well as the redevelopments, there are still large sites which are awaiting redevelopment and areas which lie untouched with soil banked up at the side to prohibit the land being used (Figure 27). Subsequently, I explore some of the social implications of the transformation of the landscape and ask how new housing is regarded by local residents. Further, I ask how the changes to housing have impacted upon the status of tenants and homeowners living in East Manchester.

Figure 27: Cleared residential area in Openshaw

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21 The East Manchester NDC Final Evaluation states that between 2000-10 more than 2,800 housing association properties had improvements made to them, leading to significant reductions in vacancy and turnover rates (2010:1).


**Housing and tenants**

From the 1950s onwards, housing conditions throughout Britain have been radically transformed. This has included the widespread introduction of indoor bathrooms, heating and technological devices (Dench et al. 2006:13). These domestic improvements drastically changed living standards across Britain. Also, the relationship between tenants and landlords shifted during this period. From the 1960s onwards, tenants formed pressure groups in response to housing issues (Shapely 2006). Residents’ groups succeeded in raising awareness about the substandard housing available from the council (Shapely 2006:65). From the early 1970s, the language of participation and consumerism became increasingly influential in Britain in both the private and public sectors and was translated into issues about housing (Shapely 2006:61). These shifts acted as a precursor to the Right to Buy Act (1980) which was introduced in order to make Britain a nation of property owners. Council tenants were given the opportunity to buy the dwellings they were renting from the council at a reduced rate. The cost of these properties was calculated from the rent they had already paid as tenants. The Conservatives argued that the Right to Buy scheme would give residents more autonomy and security. However, it has been widely argued in East Manchester that while individual tenants enjoyed the benefits of the privatisation of housing stock, the sell-off of council housing has had a series of negative impacts. Gail, for example, argues that in general residents have less choice and are often stuck in houses which do not suit their needs.

Considering a number of sites across Europe, Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga (1999) have argued that families’ control over housing has diminished due to increasing government intervention and commodification. However, in East Manchester, regeneration schemes have promised to offer a greater choice and higher
quality housing to all residents. From 2000, NEM followed a ‘user-led’ ethos and established a number of Residents’ Steering Groups in order to increase the number of opportunities for residents to participate in their plans (Evans 2007). New Labour introduced a market-orientated social housing regime based on a system known as ‘choice-based lettings’ (Abbott 2005). Rather than social housing being allocated to individuals purely under an administrative system, the new method which was introduced enabled applicants to be able to see the full range of available properties and to apply for any home for which they were eligible (see Chapter Seven). Choice became a central rhetoric and political symbol as New Labour endeavoured to give tenants a stake in where they lived (Abram 2011).

By allowing residents to have more choice, Labour assumed that tenants would feel more satisfied and in turn, look after their homes and create more stable communities (Abbott 2005). The government argued that by giving social housing tenants the option to select the location of their home, they would feel less like the symbolic ‘other’ to the private sector residents (Abbott 2005:31). As my discussion with Grace reflects, however, houses symbolise more subtle distinctions of class than are available through the gross categories of housing tenure (Edwards 2000:123). In contrast to the political rhetoric, the privatisation of the housing market has contributed to producing instability for residents living in Clayton. In Grace’s opinion everyone has lost out. Homeowners now have limited choices because they are less financially secure and private tenants are also in a worse situation as the quality of housing which is available to them is poor.

**Responses to the new homes**

During the twelve-month period of fieldwork, I rented a house from a private landlord in a
new development called 'The Way' on Alan Turing Avenue in Beswick. The so-called 'mixed community' comprises of owner-occupied properties, private tenants and houses owned by social housing providers. Some of the houses were allocated to homeowners from the old estate while others were bought by incomers to the area. One of my neighbours, Anne, is critical about the price of the new houses. Her children all live in East Manchester and rent their homes from social landlord providers. On the old estate they lived close together but now they have been split up and live further afield in a number of different neighbourhoods in north and south Manchester. Anne would like her children and grandchildren to be with her on the new estate but knows that this is unlikely, as there are long waiting lists for the houses which are owned by the social landlords.\(^{22}\)

Anne also tells me that the houses do not really suit her ‘style’ as she prefers more conventionally designed properties. She has spent a great deal of time and money decorating her home. When she first moved into the house, four years ago, she was surprised how many design faults she found. In particular, the kitchen units are too high. Anne remarks how she finds cooking and washing up at the sink uncomfortable. Anne suggests that these mistakes indicate that the designer of the houses must have been a man and is further proof that the planners do not have any idea about how people want to live. In contrast, Matthew, one of the other neighbours living on the street, explains how his family ‘have never looked back’ after moving to their house when it was first built in 2006. Previously, they lived in a three bedroom terraced property in Openshaw but their house was demolished due to the building of a new Morrison’s supermarket. Matthew's family fell in love with the design of the new homes.

\(^{22}\) In 2007/08 the average waiting times for social housing ranges in Beswick is 22 months on average and in Openshaw it is 12 months. In the Bradford Ward residents are ‘well established’, with over half having lived in the area for over 11 years and the majority likely to stay in the neighbourhood for the next 3 years (Bradford Ward Profile 2011:18).
Every week Matthew and his wife would travel to the site to check on the building progress with excited anticipation. They wanted a house that looked 'different' and were one of the first couples to put down a deposit and to choose a plot. After living in Beswick for four years, Matthew tells me he is happy about their decision to buy a new house as they have made it their own and made a number of changes to the layout. For example, they have installed solid doors upstairs rather than a sliding partition door to make a private room for their son. Matthew tells me that they enjoy living on the road but they keep themselves to themselves. At the weekends they tend to socialise with their family and friends who still live in Openshaw which is five minutes away by car.

These discussions reflect how the kind of housing we have and its location are important to our lives and the way we categorise ourselves and others (Abram 2011:69). As Edwards has described, 'a house might refer to an entity - bricks and mortar - to the place in which a home is created, but homes require relations - relations between households as much as within' (2000:127). Matthew and his family enjoy living on the new estate because they are able to maintain their old relationships to their family in Openshaw. Also, they are very pleased about the modifications which they have made to their property. In contrast, for Anne, her new house challenges her ideas about what a family home should be like as she does not like its design and bitterly misses her family who used to live close by.

The family and household are mutually constitutive of the house which itself is often regarded as 'the mediating element' (Birdwell-Pheasant & Lawrence-Zúñiga 1999:1). In other words, the family and the house are neither congruent nor interchangeable, but are absolutely inseparable. It is evident how processes of regeneration which include the modification or rebuilding of housing physically reconfigure the basic units of a social
group which in turn create new meanings about the individual, family and community. As Abram (2006) has argued:

‘Buildings not only reflect the organisation of people and matter that lead to certain types of building in certain places, but they then have a role in shaping the lives of people within and around them.’ (www.hrionline.ac.uk/matshef/abram/MSabram.htm).

In East Manchester there are a range of opinions about the design of the new houses which not only refer to their appearance but also to the types of social relations which they facilitate or prevent.

In all of the different houses that I visited during fieldwork, it was evident that residents appropriated and interpreted the 'standardised spaces' of their dwellings in diverse ways (Clarke 2001). In recent years, there has been a proliferation of interest in home decoration in Britain, through which occupants make visions they have of themselves, visible to the eyes of others (Clarke 2001:42). Linda and her family live in a 1970s semi-detached house opposite the new development in Beswick. She and her husband have both lived in East Manchester all of their lives and tell me that they will never leave the area as they feel that their 'roots' are in Beswick. Linda detests the new houses which have been built. She says they look like sheds or rabbit hutches and are far too small for a family to live in as they do not have adequate storage.

Over the past six months Linda and her husband have built an extension to their home which comprises of two new bedrooms and a large living space beneath so they are able to give their two sons separate bedrooms. Linda proudly gives me a tour around the house. The living room is spacious and is covered with laminate wood flooring. There are two
large black leather sofas and a large flat screen television on the wall. Linda tells me that her favourite part of the new room is the chandelier-style light fitting which hangs over the dining room table. While we are looking at the new extension Linda shuts the door to the other part of the house and says that she is too embarrassed to show me the old living room as it is scruffy and filled with all the kid's rubbish and toys. As well as making structural alterations to the inside of their home, Linda’s family have also adorned their house with St. George’s flags to celebrate the football World Cup (Figure 28).

![Figure 28: Houses on Linda’s estate in Beswick](image)

Linda’s family are delighted by the modifications which they have made to their home. Her husband describes the house as his ‘Beswick ranch’ and says that the extra space they have will mean that they will no longer be ‘crammed together’. Linda tells me that it will take a long time for her and her husband to pay off the loan they borrowed to build the extension but it will all be worth it when she has the family round at weekends and especially at Christmas time.
It is argued that Europeans live with physical structures whose size and arrangement and very substance are the result of other’s choices and strategies which tells us about patriarchy and status or class differentiation and hierarchy within societies (Birdwell-Pheasant & 1999). While this may be the case, it is also important to note that creating a home is seen to be an important act of individual expression. It is a process in which past and future trajectories are negotiated through fantasy and action, projection and interiorisation (Clarke 2001). As these examples demonstrate, houses are not just entities; they are made through work into homes and the kind of home one creates is a reflection of the kind of person one might be. My informants’ remarks illustrate that the concept of the house is ambiguous as they refer to the home as both the place where one lives and where one comes from (Edwards 2000). In Linda’s case she is proud of the extension to the family house as it reflects both her roots, of coming from the area and also her aspirations of occupying a large ranch-like property. Although alterations may seem to be mundane they reflect the individuals' ideas about taste and status.

There is not space to discuss Bourdieu's ideas in great detail here, but the relevance of his work on taste and class in Distinction (1984) must be mentioned briefly. Bourdieu's (1984, 1989) notion of habitus offers a framework for understanding how people move through social spaces or fields of exchange (see Chapter One). His work explains that one of the key markers of class is the way in which people present themselves, in relation to others. For Bourdieu, habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification, and which are 'objectively differentiated' (1989:19). Habitus thus implies a 'sense of one’s place' and also a 'sense of the place of others' (ibid.). Bourdieu’s analysis may be applied to the way in which residents construct meanings about housing in East Manchester. As he argues, taste ‘classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, are classified by their classifications and distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make.
Bourdieu’s work has had a tremendous influence on understandings of the ways in which individual’s choices are informed by habitus or taste, but are not reducible to structural class positions. As I will elaborate in the discussion that follows, it is vital to explore the ways in which the redevelopment of the physical landscape is experienced by those people who are ‘being regenerated’ and examine the social relations which matter to residents themselves. These relations are often mediated by objects in order to reveal the way in which class underpins these choices.

**Nostalgia about terraced houses**

It is not only the aesthetic design and decor of houses which is seen to be symbolic in East Manchester. The materials which are used to construct dwellings are imbued with meanings. At the market, Nora talks to her friend Denise about one of her granddaughters who has recently moved house with her two young children. She has chosen to leave Clayton and live in a nearby residential neighbourhood in order to make a new start and get away from a violent ex-partner. Nora is worried about whether she will be able to manage alone, without her family close by. Denise assures her friend by saying:

> Oh she’ll be alright if it’s a terrace. She’ll get to know her neighbours. Terraces are friendly. Everyone sits around, she’ll get to know them quick.

Like Denise, many of my informants draw a distinction between the new dwellings and old style terraced housing. They tell me that terraces were built to last and formed the foundation of strong communities in the industrial past (see Chapter Three).

Today it is often said that terraced houses offer the best type of housing for families to live in. It is thought that they are sturdy, and seen to provide the necessary setting for family life to prosper. Also, terraced houses are thought to be friendly and welcoming as
neighbours can chat on their doorsteps and can look out for one another. Even though there are many different designs of houses in Beswick and Openshaw, older people often argue that none of them are better than terraced houses, which are reliable. The discussions presented in this chapter illustrate how changes to housing have provoked a range of responses in East Manchester. Most notably, local people discuss whether or not the designs of new properties are suitable for East Manchester and its residents. Some question whether the new houses were designed with profit or aesthetics first, rather than community life, while others argue that the new properties are attractive and eye catching in the new landscape. For example, Matthew and some of the other home owners on the new estate in Beswick decided to buy a property there because they offer something ‘different’. He suggests that the appearance of the new houses is refreshing and modern whereas Anne thinks that they are ‘style over substance’. These discussions have also illustrated how houses contain complex meanings about social class and kinship. In the next section, I explain how homes impinge on people’s lives in powerful ways; they make some things possible and others not and, have become a symbol of uncertainty in East Manchester.

Confusion about progress

Kathleen, a grandmother in her fifties who I meet at the cafe in Beswick, shows me proudly around her home opposite the City of Manchester Stadium which she has rented from the social landlord since the 1970s. She tells me that the house contains many happy memories, as she brought her five children up there. Since her children have grown up and moved away she has enjoyed spending time renovating the house and making it her own. In the living room she has recently put up new pink and black floral wallpaper with a matching lampshade. On one occasion, when I visit Kathleen, a neighbour, Diane, calls
round for a cup of tea. I introduce myself and tell her about my research project looking at community life in the area and how it has been affected by the regeneration. She responds:

Are you saying that we live in a regenerated area? I think that's rubbish. They've stuck some houses up, got rid of perfectly good ones and left us with nothing. Like those ones on Bell Crescent [where the new developments now stand], they're like shoe boxes. They're tall rather than big, so you can fit more on a block. You won't get them like this house any more. My daughter wants to live in one of those new houses but I've told her, it might be alright for you, you're young but I won't be able to manage three flights of stairs.

Diane dislikes the new houses because of their open plan design and their size, which she thinks is too small for a family. She says that she would not be able to live comfortably in the new homes and suggests that they are potentially a 'death trap' for children because of the number of stairs. When Diane went to visit a relation who lives in one of the new houses she noticed the smell of cooking wafting through the house due to the open plan design which she thought was unpleasant. Despite their connection to the area, Diane and Kathleen tell me that they would never live in one of the new houses. They do not like the design of the dwellings and they question whether there is much sense of community among residents living in the new developments. In their opinion, the council should have spent the money on making repairs to the existing buildings and built more houses of the same 'traditional' terrace design.

A similar view is held by Andrew, a Christian community worker, who I visit at his house in Openshaw (see Chapter Two). We talk in his study in the attic of his house. Two large windows look out onto the last remnants of the Toxteth Street estate which is part way through being demolished. The estate once comprised of back-to-back terraced properties. Andrew is glad that the houses are being pulled down, as most of the buildings were in a terrible state of disrepair, but says that seeing the bulldozers make him feel unsettled.
When houses are demolished not only the ‘bricks and mortar’ disappear but also their connotations of security and permanence are ruined, as the flow of everyday life is ruptured (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995:37). Andrew hates to see the places where his old friends lived being ‘ripped apart’ and points to the shell of a building where the outer wall has been removed. It is still possible to see fragments of the decorated blue walls. With sadness, he says, ‘I don’t like to see Eileen’s wallpaper flapping in the wind’. These remarks show how there is a blurred line between houses and their occupants. Rather than being entities of completely different kinds, houses are spoken about as if they were people and, at other times, people are likened to houses (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995:40).

Andrew is optimistic about the new developments which are going to be built near his home. But while he is looking forward to seeing the new houses in ‘new Openshaw’ being created, he is unsure about what will happen next. There have been severe delays to the rebuilding of the housing due to the collapse in the housing market. The ‘housing market’ is an ‘agglomeration of myriad transactions or exchanges between different people, where price is part of a set of negotiations’ (Abram 2006). In the context of regeneration the saleable or rentable value is precarious, precisely because it is not only subject to wider conditions, but because regeneration itself aims to alter the value of property in the regeneration area (Abram 2006). As a result of wider instability in the economy Andrew wonders whether the new estate will ever be built. Regeneration in the past ten years has brought about multidimensional changes. Terraced houses are associated with stability and community life. Their demolition is regarded as counterproductive to progress. Local residents are anxious that there are not going to be enough new properties to house existing occupants. However, my informants want the spaces in the physical landscape to be put to use and to see living standards for their neighbours improve. Local residents question whether the ‘regeneration’ of East Manchester is actively improving the area and
whether it is possible to renew a locality if a considerable proportion of what previously existed is removed.

**Rumour and uncertainty**

I meet Barbara, a woman in her seventies, who grew up in Beswick and retired to Droylsden which is an outlying suburb near Ashton-under-Lyne considered to be affluent and leafy. Barbara comes back to Beswick three times a week to volunteer in the church cafe. Reflecting on how the appearance of the neighbourhood has changed, she tells me that she does not like many of the ‘modern’ houses which have been built. They do not look as though they are friendly and are ‘too small’. Barbara hears that I have moved to one of these houses and says, ‘no offence to you, but the trouble is that people come into the area but they don’t live here.’ She goes on to explain how NEM organised consultation meetings with local people but they did not take residents’ opinions seriously. In her view, consultation took place in order to appease local people as the designers and planners had already made up their minds about what to build before even coming to Beswick or Openshaw.

It is argued more widely by some residents that the new houses are an imposition from the outside and at odds with the local identity. Some local residents argue that the houses were designed to be tall so that more could be fitted in to the space available. As I explained in Chapter Two, some of my informants feel as though regeneration has been ‘done’ to local residents. It is said that the new designs are have been imposed on people living in East Manchester who feel as though they are the ones who are being ‘regenerated’. In this view, it is debatable whether it is the housing or the people who are being changed as buildings, particularly houses, can determine the activities of others (Abram 2011:83).
The new housing is often said to look incongruous in the physical landscape. Further, these new developments are perceived to disrupt previous ways of life. These discussions indicate how housing raises questions about the possibilities of continuing social relationships into the future.

Feelings of uncertainty about the future dominate local discussions in East Manchester. Kathleen tells me that she has heard a rumour that the land on which her house stands has been earmarked for development. She has heard that the estate is going to be sold to the owners of the stadium as they want to acquire more land to build a new MCFC leisure park. Kathleen is greatly concerned about these stories and explains that they are 'more than a rumour'. She suspects that the club wants to expand so they are able to bid to host the World Cup in England in 2018. Kathleen is fretful about what will happen to her house and the other people on her estate and explains how she does not want to have to move away. She has invested a great deal of effort into her home and enjoys living in Beswick where she is close to her family.

In research about Venezuela, Charles Briggs (2004) noted that we must keep in mind the political and economic parameters that shape how some narratives are admitted to official regimes of truth and how others become conspiracy theories. He examined the way that public health officials reported on a cholera epidemic and explained how it was reported as a cultural problem, caused by the eating of shellfish by indigenous people, which subsequently removed responsibility from government agencies and corporations (2004:181). For Briggs, the stories told by members of communities who face structural violence on a daily basis, highlight the need to think about the broader political-economic conditions that shape both the production, and the routes of circulation that particular
stories take. Brigg's analysis is helpful for exploring the reason why rumours which circulate amongst residents in East Manchester carry such weight.

A couple of days after our initial conversation, I meet a woman who works for NEM at a local community centre in Beswick. With Kathleen's permission I ask the employee whether or not the plans for the new MCFC development are true. She tells me, flatly, that the houses will not be demolished as the club have not obtained permission to buy the land. I relay the news to Kathleen but it does not allay her fears. She says that rumours were widespread and explains how she cannot rest easy as the regeneration agency has 'lied before'. This incident reflects how issues about housing are deeply emotive and how residents living in East Manchester conceptualise the processes occurring around them in personal ways. It also shows that it is vital to consider the broader political-economic conditions which shape rumours (Briggs 2004). Kathleen feels vulnerable in the face of the power of the football club. The stories amount to more than a rumour for her because of the seriousness of what could happen and because she does not trust NEM. Feelings of uncertainty shape the way that individuals think about the future of Beswick and Openshaw.

Who is regeneration for?

Regeneration is defined by local people as uneven because its effects have had partial consequences across the different localities within East Manchester. Residents like Grace feel as though they have been overlooked and left behind. She describes Clayton as a 'little lost community'. Other local people in Beswick are annoyed about the design of the new homes and are worried about whether their houses will be demolished in the future. Despite these feelings of uncertainty, overwhelmingly residents want to stay living in East
Manchester. They explain how they have ‘roots’ in these places and often their relatives live close by. This is evident in a conversation with Danielle, Linda’s daughter, who lives in Beswick. She and her husband Mike rent a new three-bedroom house from one the social housing providers, Eastlands Homes. She grew up in Beswick and met Mike, who is from north Manchester, at her job working in Tesco supermarket in the city centre. When the couple first got together they lived in a one bedroom flat in Beswick before being offered a terraced house nearby. After five years the house was demolished, to make room for the new Academy school. Danielle tells me that they were given priority for one of the new houses being built nearby as they had proved that they were good tenants by always paying their rent on time and they also had family living close by.

The couple are pleased with their new house and know all of their neighbours who moved from the old estate, as they did. Eastlands Homes have informed the couple that since they have been reliable tenants for a number of years, it is possible for them to buy their house. Mike tells me that they are tempted but do not feel that it is the right time to take up the offer. He has recently started a new job but is worried about taking out a mortgage because of the unstable economic climate. Also, Danielle adds, that if they did buy a house, they would also probably think about getting a semi-detached one so they could have the option to build an extension, as her parents have done. Mike adds, ‘if we won the lottery, I’d be out of here.’ With shock, Danielle protests, ‘ohh no!’ to which Mike responds by asking her what she would do with unlimited money. She looks out of the window across the road to a square of empty land opposite their house and says that she would build a big house there (Figure 29).
Danielle insists that no amount of money would change her feelings about living in Beswick. Her opinion counters the dominant assumption that individuals live in geographical areas which reflect their economic wealth. She says with sadness, ‘I’m the only one who loves Beswick, even though we’ve got nothing’.

A follow up study by Geoff Dench and colleagues (2006) of the research conducted in the 1950s (Young & Willmott 1957) found a number of dramatic social changes had taken place in the East End. In the 1950s, the community was made up of an ‘extraordinarily homogenous and stable but also remarkably contained’ population (2006:23-24). Belonging to the East End was rooted in lasting attachments to families and neighbours (Young & Willmott 1957:156). The follow up study found that the population and ideas about community were radically different. The authors noted that the East End was far more complex than the earlier study accounted for, with a fragmented population which included remnants of the old working class, new and transient ‘yuppies’ and Bangladeshis (Dench et al. 2006). Also, residents’ social lives stretched over considerable distances and
'the territory’ no longer contained the lives of its residents because the neighbourhood had become the interface for a collection of overlapping universes (Dench et al. 2006:24).

In East Manchester, there has also been a considerable shift in population. From the 1970s, deindustrialisation resulted in a large number of workers moving elsewhere in search of work (see Chapter One). Despite these changes, however, my findings suggest that kinship continues to define the way that residents assert a sense of belonging to East Manchester. Dench and colleagues have argued that family ties compete with rather than reinforce neighbourliness (2006:23) whereas, in my conversations with Danielle and other local residents, it is evident that kinship ties are closely associated to feelings of attachment to Beswick. Family members who no longer live in close proximity with one another still argue that having ‘roots’ in an area defines their sense of connection to the locality. In turn, these ideas about kinship influence my informants’ views about housing.

My findings resonate strongly with the themes presented in Young’s and Willmott’s research in 1950s East London (1957) outlined at the start of the chapter. Kinship relations were of great importance to residents because they were attached to their district which resulted in a ‘deep’ sense of belonging. This cannot be explained simply by length of residence but is rooted in attachments within families, focused on the relationship between mothers and their daughters (1957:157). Similarly, in East Manchester, family connections continue to be important. My ethnography supports the argument that community is underpinned by ideas about informal networks and kinship. However, my ethnographic examples also reveal that houses contain a myriad of different meanings which illustrate that it is important to examine what houses ‘do with us’ (Miller 2001a:12). Individuals hold attachments to neighbours and kin members but also, to the
landscape and buildings in East Manchester. Material objects are important means in which people cope with uncertainty.

The last point which is important to focus on is the subject of time which is evident in these narratives. Like Miller (2001a,b), Tim Ingold (1993) has written about the way in which material culture influences individuals. His work specifically focuses on the role of temporality. For Ingold, the landscape is an enduring record of, and testimony to, the lives and works of past generations, who leave something of themselves (1993:153). His work resonates with my informants' views about the changing built environment. For example, Andrew remarks that when he sees the houses in Openshaw being demolished, he is reminded of the people who used to live there. Even though he is supportive of the redevelopment taking place he feels unsettled by the demolition taking place as the houses contained many happy memories. Following Ingold we can conclude that the experience of a landscape around individuals and groups forms the relational context of people's engagement with the world. Therefore, the meanings which are attached to the world are constructed in a two way relationship (Ingold 1993:157). As my informants reflect, houses are deeply significant as they are not only sites of social interaction but places in which relationships are formed over many years. Our relationships with the landscape are built up over time. As Grace's story at the beginning of the chapter illustrates, these attachments can be deeply emotional. Ingold (1993) has suggested that from the process of dwelling, the landscape is always in the nature of 'work in progress'. His way of thinking about the physical landscape differs radically from the logic of regeneration which follows that new design and buildings will invoke change. The regeneration rhetoric proposes a linear idea of development whereas the way that residents interact with the landscape and construct ideas of belonging, occurs through time.
Conclusion

This chapter has explored the reasons why housing is associated with uncertainty in local discourse in East Manchester. It has described how the persistence of rumours and confusion about developments prevail and the future of the area is seen to be unclear. Local people question whether or not their community can be ‘regenerated’ as large numbers of buildings have been demolished. Some residents are highly critical of the new developments which have been built as they are thought to look incongruous in the landscape and have been imposed on the physical environment by outsiders. Following the discussion in Chapter Four, this analysis has shown how material objects are integrated into social relations in unexpected ways. These examples demonstrate how things, such as houses, can determine the activities of others (Abram 2011). Also, supporting Bourdieu (1984), we see how taste is influenced not only by class positions but also subjectivity experienced.

Local people hold deep attachments to other residents and in some cases continue with neighbourly practices such as taking care of each other’s homes, like Grace who keeps an eye on the houses on her street. Also, local residents hold strong attachments to the built environment. Relationships are made over time, through the process of dwelling in place (Ingold 1993). Individuals modify existing buildings to suit their needs and explain how houses contain important memories of ‘good times’. Housing, therefore, is not only an economic investment but more importantly, shapes social relations which are developed over time. NEM has attempted to revive the housing market in East Manchester with a range of new developments and incentives to bring investment into the area and create a better standard of living for all residents. Their logic states that creating suitable and productive housing will stimulate economic growth and build a more sustainable future for all residents. However, my ethnographic examples show that choices behind housing
are not only predicated on economic logic but are also intimately connected to historical and emotional attachments, to places and to people. The household is seen to be a defining element of the neighbourhood. Attachments to East Manchester are mediated by the physical environment and therefore, houses are invested with meaning about belonging to the area. Danielle says that she would never leave her Beswick. Even if she won the lottery she would build a new, larger house right opposite her old one. This example powerfully highlights how for Danielle, living in Beswick forms an integral part of her identity. I have argued that in order to understand attachments to dwellings, it is necessary to understand the ways in which homes impinge on people's lives in powerful ways; they make some things possible and others not.

In these conditions, repeated phases of redevelopment have been less about creating the conditions of social life to improve or even to continue. Rather, the demolition and rebuilding of new houses has been interpreted as disrupting social ties, in ways that people see to be inherently unpredictable. Consequently, there is considerable confusion surrounding the future of East Manchester which is said to add to the growing sense of uncertainty and unpredictability among residents. In the next chapter, I describe how as a result of this confusion there is a dominant narrative which holds that the neighbourhood in East Manchester is unsafe. Local residents argue that even though there has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of devices, experts, agencies and places employed to promote safe living, East Manchester is felt to be more dangerous than ever before because there has been a decline in communal values.
Chapter 6

'It's not worth taking the risk'

In 1966, Ian Brady and Myra Hindley were arrested, and subsequently given life sentences, for the sexual abuse and murder of five children. The children were abducted from sites around East Manchester and their bodies were disposed of on Saddleworth Moor, a site which is visible from certain places in Beswick and Openshaw. Even though over fifty years have passed, the memories of the murders are still very much alive, embedded in both the imagination of local people, as well as the locality of East Manchester itself. Just like the moors, the stories of these murders are ever present. Accounts of the incidents and the judicial process that followed the crimes were the subject of many discussions I heard during fieldwork. The enormity of what Hindley and Brady did continues to evoke revulsion and intrigue. An elderly woman I met on the fruit and vegetable van tells me how the murders caused a terrific shock to the community. In her words:

Hindley and Brady met at the Cotton mill and lived in Gorton, he was a jock [Scottish]. Lesley Anne Downey [one of their victims] was from Miles Platting. No one could believe it. I was 15 at the time. It was all the places that we knew, like one of the lads was taken from Ashton Market which was where we went on a Saturday. In those days, no one could believe it was a woman. It was the brother-in-law that grassed them up [to the police]. That was how they got caught. The one they never found went to my school, I didn't know him well but you knew everyone that went to your school.23 He was always quiet, a loner, poor sod.

The woman went on to explain that the house where the couple lived in Hattersley, an overspill estate which was built in the 1960s between Manchester and the Peak District, had to be demolished and the road was renamed because of the public reaction to the crimes. During this conversation and others like it, I become aware that these murders are

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23 The body of one of the victims, Keith Bennett, who was murdered in 1964 has never been found.
often discussed and the events are vividly recollected. As Degnen (2005) notes, memories become ‘lodged’ into places. People do not ‘layer’ meaning onto the otherwise changing physical forms of the environment, but rather they construct relationships with place. Individuals create a depth of knowledge and feelings about particular places which accumulates over time (2005:737). In this chapter, I ask why memories about the Moors Murders and feelings of danger which are associated with these crimes are often spoken about, over fifty years after the crimes have taken place.

One morning at the market group, the assembled members discuss a televised drama of the trial of the Moors Murderers which was shown the night before. The programme depicted the court case concerning the murders and stimulated new discussions about the motivations of the killers. Denise tells the group that the programme suggested that in the court case Hindley was led astray by Brady, but that in fact, ‘she was evil that woman’. Nora adds in agreement:

She was evil that woman. There are terrible, terrible women as well. I lived two streets away from that Lesley Ann Downey [one of the victims]. She would come up the stairs in her mum’s high heels and lipstick and ask if anyone wanted any errands doing. She thought she was all grown up. That Myra Hindley was so evil. They have got the tapes where she [Lesley] is asking to go home and she is telling her to shut up or else she’d smack her. She stood by while he [Hindley] raped that little girl. They got her in the van by saying that her Mum was ill and she needed to go with them to see.

Denise’s husband Stan explains how the couple escaped the death penalty by months, to which Nora adds: ‘We’d have bloody done it for them.’ Denise goes on to describe how Hindley and Brady were taken from the courtroom in decoy cars, as it was feared that the

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crowds of people gathered outside would ambush and lynch them. As these quotations show, gruesome and painful stories about the murders captivate the thoughts of the group at the market.

The Moors Murders were a defining moment not least, because of the way that sexual murders are most commonly represented in the British media. As Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1994) argue, our understanding of these crimes is often automatically rooted in modern patriarchy, with it being taken for granted that some men kill for sexual gratification. However, the authors note that Myra Hindley provides a counter example to the male stereotype. She has been represented in contradictory ways in the media, either depicted as ‘Brady’s dupe, a woman but not a killer, or else as his evil genius, the killer who abdicated her womanhood’ (Cameron & Frazer 1994:170). In contrast to media representations, my informants in East Manchester recognise the potential of any woman, including themselves, to be likened to Hindley. Overwhelmingly, it was said that in the past, authority and discipline were respected in the community, but how the shock of the murders in the 1960s brought an end to neighbourhood security. East Manchester was transformed from a safe community made up of families who were connected by networks of trust, into a place characterised by suspicion and danger. After the murders, children could no longer stray too far from their homes and the intentions of men and more surprisingly, women, who lived in the community were questioned. The Murders are continually referred to by local residents as a watershed moment, the point at which East Manchester was transformed from a community of safety, to one shaped by danger.

As I have described in previous chapters in this thesis, long-standing residents in East Manchester argue that compared to the past, community in its current formation is
unstable and the future remains uncertain. In this chapter, I explore some of the complex reasons people give for their world being more dangerous and risky and how they respond to the perception of heightened risk as they navigate their relations with one another. First, I explain how it is said that fighting has always occurred in East Manchester but how there is a strong perception that the widespread prevalence and use of guns by gangs has turned violence into an issue that negatively impacts on the entire community. Second, I reflect on the impact of the installation of new surveillance technologies in the physical environment which have been accompanied by a range of police initiatives. These new provisions have formed part of the area's regeneration plans which aim to create an attractive and safe environment in East Manchester. I explain how despite their introduction (which has brought about a material reduction in crime rates) local residents nonetheless feel that Beswick and Openshaw have become more dangerous.25

Third, I explain how there have been a number of new initiatives introduced in East Manchester which encourage individuals to police their own behaviour. I assess some of the implications of these policies on ideas about parenting (Parton 2006, James & James 2008). Fourth, I focus on lengthy conversations I had with Ruth and Kathleen who attend the Mother’s Union group in Beswick and speak publicly about domestic abuse in their family. I explore these narratives in relation to risk, a term which is used by my informants and a concept which has gained a great deal of scholarly attention in the social sciences (see for instance, Beck 1992, 1994 and Douglas 1983, 1994). I suggest that in order to shed light on the sense of uncertainty which is said to characterise East Manchester, it is necessary to examine the multiple dangers or risk which are thought to threaten the

25 In the East Manchester NDC Final Evaluation crime levels are reported to have reduced dramatically in East Manchester. For example, reports about burglary have reduced by 40% (2010:1).
stability of social ties. Building on findings from previous chapters, I explain how long-standing residents put huge amounts of time and effort into shoring up appropriate forms of sociability by sharing stories about neighbourhood risk. These observations lend further support to the argument made in Chapter Four which suggests that women have developed ‘localised spaces of protection’ (Skeggs 2011) in the regenerated landscape in to protect themselves and each other from being economically and socially isolated. I describe how social networks have taken on new forms which extend beyond the family and include a broader set of social relations.

**Narratives about the past**

According to my informants, East Manchester used to be a safe place to live because people ‘looked out for one another’ when it was needed (see Introduction). Residents commonly lived in close proximity, usually in terraced housing and knew their neighbours, some of whom may have been kin (see Chapter Three). Overall, the neighbourhood in the past is described as peaceful and stable but I am also told that there were occasional incidents of fighting and domestic violence. For example, when Nora was growing up in Beswick, sixty years ago, she could often hear one of her neighbours being beaten by her alcoholic husband. She tells me how although it was a ‘nice street’ no one intervened to help the woman or to reprimand her husband. Nora’s older sister and mother prohibited her from becoming involved, saying that it was none of their business. Nora describes how she wanted to intervene and to help the woman who was being assaulted but there was no one she could reach out to for help. Despite recalling these troubling memories, however, Nora says that on the whole, the community was harmonious and much safer than today.
As well as domestic violence, fighting was said to be a common part of everyday life. It offered a way for men and women to display their strength and bravery but more importantly, physical exchanges were seen as a fair way to settle disputes. My informants explain how violence occurred, but it was always kept in control. For example, Denise explains how the woman who ran her local pub forty years ago could ‘handle herself’.

When she’d said you’d ‘had enough’, that was it, you just left. There wasn’t dirty fighting with all these weapons then, like knives and razors. The men would go outside the pub, they would take off their jackets and fight with their fists. Then when one went down that was it. They would make friends after.

Overall, these narratives about the past hold that people abided by social rules which meant that the community remained peaceful. In the present day, it is argued that rules and common values have disappeared which has resulted in the neighbourhood becoming a place which is beset by risk, as the following two examples indicate.

It is a hot July day. I am talking to Clive, a man in his late fifties, at the allotments in Openshaw. He often cycles up the canal from his home in Beswick to tend to his neat rectangular plot which is planted with lines of vegetables. Clive also comes to the allotments in order to relax. He has a sofa and comfortable chair positioned under the awning of his shed. As we talk, he lies back and sunbathes on a deck chair, wearing only a pair of shorts and a faded basketball cap. Clive tells me that on summer evenings he likes to come to the allotment, light a fire and sit under the stars with a couple of beers. He explains how the allotments are one of the only places in East Manchester which have not changed very much since he was a child, compared to the housing estates which have become dangerous places. I ask him whether he feels safe in Beswick. He tells me:
I know for a fact, and I'm not being big headed here, that if there was any trouble I'd have a lot of people who would come out for me. I don't think anyone will touch me because they know that there'd be trouble. If you've lived here for a long time then you're ok. It's only if you're new that you might get trouble. I feel at home here.

Clive continues by explaining that he has gained a good reputation in his neighbourhood because he has lived there for a long time. When he was young he was a boxer so people who live on the estate know not to 'mess' with him.

Clive says that even if he won the lottery he would not move away because there is something special about Beswick. I ask him if he can explain what this special character is like.

I couldn't say apart from a story which happened a while ago. A couple came into our local [pub], they were strangers, not from the area. I think they'd been shopping in Manchester for the day and just called in on their way home. It was Saturday night and some of the lads [in the bar] were getting a bit rowdy. They'd been drinking all day and some of them had their shirts off, they were doing that sumo wrestling where they run into each other with their bellies out, you know. There was beer flying round everywhere, it was a right laugh. I think the woman was from Bramhall [an affluent suburb in south Manchester] she was chatting to me, her husband was a bit quiet and she said, 'you're all really easy-going here and nice people'. I think she's right. Everyone twenty years ago was really easy-going here and friendly. But now, there's a bad atmosphere 'cos of the drugs and the gangs. You can't see it but you can feel it. I think that element has taken over. At night there are lots of young lads around, they are all doing the dirty work for the bigger lads.

Clive's story illustrates how some types of rowdy behaviour are regarded as humorous and light-hearted, like those in the pub. He says that in the past people who lived in Beswick were well known by outsiders as laid back people who had fun and looked out for
each other. However, over the past twenty years, violence has escalated and taken on a much more sinister character. Today, residents are wary of one another and East Manchester has gained a negative reputation for outsiders. The locality has become associated with crime and is thought to be a dangerous place to live, even by local residents. Clive attributes this shift to the prevalence of guns which are used among gang members who live on his estate. He tells me that he is not involved with the illegal behaviour, but says that most residents are aware of what is going on around them.

The perceived increase in neighbourhood violence and demise of community values which Clive refers to resonates with Evans’ (2012b) findings in Bermondsey, London. Her work suggests that each area, or Borough, has a long-standing historical precedent of territorial conflicts but for some young men, violence has taken on a renewed importance in contemporary times. She argues that fighting gives some young men a chance to claim a place in the world ‘against the background of generations of poverty and societal disrespect, a reputation worth fighting for’ (2012b:316). According to Clive, there are fewer opportunities for young people to make something of themselves than when he was growing up. He says that increasingly teenagers turn to crime as a way to make money and a name for themselves among their peers. As Evans notes, being able to ‘handle yourself’ on the street where territories are mapped out, is what counts, for some young people in post-industrial life (2012b:317).

In a conversation I have with Colin, the fruit and vegetable van driver, similar themes arise. He tells me how fighting is nothing new, but the form it takes has made it more threatening on a community-wide level. Colin has a keen interest in local history and
suggests that I may like to read *The Gangs of Manchester* (2008) by Andrew Davies which is a popular historical book about the scuttling gangs of the late nineteenth century. The book describes how groups of young men between the ages of 14-19 from working class neighbourhoods in Manchester and Salford formed scuttling gangs. Scuttlers usually fought in groups, with weapons such as belts, stones and knives (Davies 2008). They wore distinctive clothing, to denote which gang they were affiliated to. As we drive around on the van, Colin points out Bengal Street in Ancoats where one of the gangs, the Bengal Tigers, came from. He says that in his ‘old Fella’s’ day there were ‘corner boys’, groups of young men who spent time on the streets. When Colin was a young man he had been ‘a mod’ and there were often violent encounters between the ‘mods’ and the ‘rockers’ who were a rival subcultural youth group in the 1960s. The ‘mods’ dressed in distinctive clothes, drove scooters and listened to particular types of music.

For Colin, what makes youth violence in contemporary life different is the prevalence of knives and guns compared to the past when ‘schoolboy’ fighting was a normal part of growing up:

If it all kicked off, you'd all take your belts off but I'd say that's schoolboy violence. You'd never mug an old lady or anything like that. Now, you're forever seeing old people on the news who've been terrorised by kids.

Fighting used to be just lads or girls ‘messing around’ which did not affect the rest of the community, but now the actions of young people have a negative influence on everyone. This is a shift that has wider currency. As Gary Armstrong and James Rosbrook-Thompson (2012) observe, ‘street violence’ is now often regarded as a threat to the entire populace as its randomness and unpredictability have become a source of fear and hysteria. Growing alarm about violence is evident in the conversations which I have with Colin and
Clive outlined above. Both men agree that fighting is nothing new but stress that Beswick and Openshaw are today more dangerous than ever before. They are concerned that young people no longer have any respect for other residents and are worried that they will target anyone, including vulnerable people living in their own community. In the next section, I explain how despite the intensive regeneration interventions which have been introduced to reduce crime in East Manchester the locality is thought to be unsettled and more dangerous than ever before. Rather than bringing about greater security, residents question the introduction of CCTV cameras and new policing initiatives.

**New technologies**

Regeneration schemes often take place in localities which are associated with high crime rates. With regards to urban planning, it is increasingly recognised that in order to create a ‘sustainable community’ a reduction in crime is required (Low 2001, Cozens 2011). It is hoped by planners that creating an aesthetically pleasing landscape will attract people to move into the area and will bring about a more cohesive and safe environment for all residents. In this light, urban regeneration is seen as a ‘panacea for urban problems’ in post-industrial communities (Raco 2003:1869). In contrast, my informants argue that no matter how many technologies are introduced in East Manchester the area will still be characterised by suspicion and danger as social values have disintegrated and the rules of engagement on the street have changed. Long-standing residents suggest that over the past twenty years the rise of weapons on the streets has led to a strong feeling that Beswick and Openshaw are neighbourhoods ruled by criminal activity.
A key element to ensure the success of these sites is to transform not only actual, but also perceived levels of security (Raco 2003:1870). In an Interim Evaluation of NEM, Parkinson and colleagues (2006) explain how crime reduction strategies lie at the heart of the regeneration in East Manchester.

One of the fundamental problems facing East Manchester when NEM was created was the poor quality of recreational, retail and health facilities. Population decline was reinforcing the downward spiral. To reverse this process and underpin new economic and residential investment, improvements in community services, community safety initiatives and enhanced leisure and health facilities have been a key element in NEM’s programme (Parkinson et al. 2006:6).

A number of different technological devices are visible in residential parts of Beswick and Openshaw. For instance, electric gates have been installed in new build housing developments in order to create secure residential and parking spaces at the back of properties (Figure 30). New street lights and CCTV cameras are evident in all residential areas. Also, alley gates have been attached to existing homes (Figure 31) in order to make passage ways between houses into ‘attractive communal spaces’ (NDC Final Evaluation 2010:62). These devices are often discussed by local residents, yet here, I describe how not all my informants are convinced that the new technologies which have been installed have made the environment safer.
At an art class I attend at the community centre in Openshaw, a woman in her fifties called Emily tells me that she feels uneasy walking around Clayton where she lives as it does not feel safe. There is a ‘kind of atmosphere around’ that she cannot quite describe. Emily remarks that if you go to a place like Alderley Edge, a wealthy village in rural Cheshire, ‘the atmosphere’ is completely different because it feels much safer. Her comments resonate...
with dominant depictions of rural life in Britain as peaceful and harmonious, in contrast to urban life which is commonly represented as chaotic and dangerous (Frankenberg 1957, Tyler 2008). Emily tells me that there have been a number of new CCTV cameras installed on the main street in Clayton but rather than feeling safer, they make her feel more nervous. She thinks that the cameras have been installed so the authorities can watch ordinary people, even though they are said to be used for crime prevention. This conversation sheds light on the ways in which certain forms of surveillance are felt to have exacerbated feelings of suspicion among some residents.

My findings support Steven Flusty's (2001) work in Los Angeles, USA which argues that ‘securitisation technologies’ have a pervasive effect. He describes how surveillance, control and social polarization are becoming ubiquitous features of urban landscapes. Heavily securitised gated communities, guarded homes, shopping centres and car parks with cameras have all become expected features of the urban environment (Flusty 2001). Flusty argues that the security technologies ‘continue to penetrate deeper, even more intimately, and ever more prettily into our daily lives’ (2001:664). My conversation with Emily reflects this trend. Far from making the area safer, Emily feels as though these devices signal an increase in surveillance on ordinary people in East Manchester. Rather than deterring criminals from committing crimes or bringing them to justice, Emily argues that cameras criminalize law abiding residents and make them feel less safe than before.

As well as installing devices to make the physical environment a safer place, there have also been a number of institutional changes and crime prevention strategies introduced as part of the regeneration efforts in East Manchester. Responsibility for crime prevention is
shared among a number of agencies and relies upon the involvement of residents themselves. In recent years there has been increasing awareness and application of place-based crime-prevention initiatives as part of the planning and development process of particular localities (Cozens 2011). In the discussion that follows, I address some of the implications of these policy changes in East Manchester on ideas about parenting, childhood and safety. Since the Moors Murders, it is often said that East Manchester is a dangerous place for all local people, but it is children in particular, who are thought to be vulnerable members of the community and who are believed to be the most at risk. Leading on from the discussions so far about the perceived escalation of violence in East Manchester, I describe how children or young people are thought of in contradictory ways. They are described both as potential perpetrators of crime and as vulnerable members of the community who are in need of protection. I argue that these findings tell us about the ways in which local people respond to the perception of heightened risk as they navigate their relations with one another.

Childhood and violence

Nigel Parton (2006) describes ‘early intervention’ as a defining factor in New Labour’s policies for crime and delinquency reduction. Tony Blair campaigned for ‘better and safer communities’ using the rhetoric of responsibility and obligation in which crime was to become a ‘people’s issue’ (Parton 2006:86). A number of different community partnerships with police and other agencies have since been set up, in order to encourage citizens to participate in crime prevention (Lupton 1999). In East Manchester for example, social landlords are involved in crime prevention strategies which require parents and young people to police themselves. Eastlands Homes employ a group of wardens who travel around residential areas. They respond to complaints about their tenants causing
nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Wardens disperse groups of young people who are perceived to be intimidating and potentially threatening. A housing officer who works for Eastlands tells me how they rely on their tenants to be their ‘ears and our eyes in the environment’:

We're not around after 5pm so we need the[tenants] help to know what is going on locally. We try and take preventative actions. With their help, it makes our life easier. We are proactive rather than reactive. If we are informed well in advance of what is going on, then we can do something about it.

Social housing associations are required to provide information to the police and assist them with proactive crime strategies. Eastlands work closely with their tenants to learn about criminal behaviour rather than waiting for trouble to escalate. An effort has been made within regeneration areas to encourage subjects to conduct themselves in non-deviant ways (Raco 2003). The police have deployed a number of different strategies within the community to encourage residents to work alongside them to fight crime, as the following example illustrates.

I meet Gavin, a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), at an open day in a community centre in Beswick. As we talk, I learn more about the new policing strategies which have been introduced across Beswick and Openshaw called the Residents Together Network which is part of the anti-social behaviour agenda (hereafter, RTN). The network enables local residents to inform the police of criminal activity in confidence, through a third party. Gavin explains how RTN has had a positive effect as it has opened up avenues of

26 The Bradford Ward Profile describes New East Manchester's crime and disorder strategy. They have a network of people from neighbourhoods that can be contacted about community safety issues. Members live and work in that neighbourhood and have an in depth knowledge of issues of concern. Officers from the Safer Neighbourhood Team talk to them to find where and when problems are occurring so they can take action (2011:20)
communication between the police and local residents. Previously there has been a long history of suspicion and ill feeling between them. Gavin says that the RTN has provided an invaluable way for the police to gather information and to improve their reputation with local residents. For example, they have arrested a number of high-profile criminals who were well known locally in Beswick and Openshaw.

One of the women at the coffee morning Gail, has become a member of the RTN. She explains:

Well I’d always had a lot of trouble. People thought I was a grass [an informer] cos I’ve always been friends with police. So it made me safer in a way. I’ve had my windows smashed and all sorts. The police come to my house, even in their uniforms, if they want to say ‘hello’.

Being part of the network has made Gail feel more confident about contacting the police. She remarks that the new system has encouraged residents to communicate with each other and to report crime. Gail adds, however, that the RTN has not solved all of the problems in Beswick. She says that some of new policing measures go too far and victimise all young people. When I ask Gail whether or not Beswick has become safer since the new scheme was introduced she responds:

Well, kids are always gonna be kids aren't they? That's how they grow up. When we were young, we always used to hang about. It annoys me when people say, 'oh there's a group of kids, they must be up to no good'. Not all of them are, it's just what kids do.

She explains how teenagers should not be blamed for spending time on the streets, as they have nowhere else to go. Gail tells me how no matter what crime prevention strategies are introduced, young people will always want to spend time hanging around with their mates.
and not all of them will necessarily be causing trouble. In her view, lots of local residents in Beswick overreact when they see groups of young people on the streets and confuse them with real troublemakers, like the ones who purposefully intimidated her and smashed her windows.

Gavin also suggests how there is a lack of distinction made between young people at an institutional level too. In addition to the RTN network, the police are involved in other Neighbourhood Nuisance Schemes. Gavin describes how their strategies are most effective when they involve parents and other agencies working in East Manchester. If a young person is caught causing trouble in the first instance, they may be issued with an Acceptable Behaviour Contract. The contract is an official warning drawn up between the police, the young person and their parent or guardian. If they are caught committing a similar crime, they may be issued with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) which will prohibit them from spending time in certain areas. In extreme cases the family of the young person could have their social housing contact terminated and be forced to live in another neighbourhood in Manchester. These policy changes are an example of the way in which children and the idea of childhood have become objects of concern in their own right. As Parton (2006) argues, 'parenting' has come to be seen as very much a public concern and therefore, a legitimate site for state intervention. As a result of these institutional changes, the relationship between the state, the child and their parents has shifted.

My findings here undoubtedly support a wider analysis proposed by Adrian and Allison James (2008) which described how there is a 'moral panic' which surrounds childhood in
the UK more generally. The majority of my informants are extremely concerned about young people causing trouble in their neighbourhoods. They are seen to be a great risk to the community. Yet at the same time, it is thought that young people themselves need to be protected. James and James (2008) explain how understandings of parenting have shifted, in part, because of legislative changes. In New Labour’s policies, children are deemed to need protection in order to fulfil their potential as adults (James & James 2008:111). Under the Child Protection Act, the relationship between the state and the family has been altered. Parton (2006) notes, that the family was considered to be responsible for young people but, under Labour, the family was regarded as a central building block of society and a key instrument of government. Therefore, under the principle of giving children more protection, ‘parenting’ has become a public concern and a legitimate site for state intervention (Parton 2006:99). In a context in which there is growing anxiety about how parenting is conducted, adults are expected increasingly to regulate the lives of children. These legislative changes are important as we consider the some of the discussions around parenting which emerged in East Manchester. Parents who have children living at home explain how they go to great lengths to protect them from becoming targeted in the street or involved in criminal behaviour. These discussions reflect that the women are also concerned about being seen as ‘bad parents’ if any harm comes to their children, as the following example illustrates.

I often talk to Kathleen who volunteers in a church cafe in a community centre in Beswick twice a week (see Chapter Two). She has lived in the area for forty years and knows lots of the regular customers through her affiliation to the church. In the cafe I stand by the hatch to the kitchen and chat to Kathleen as she makes fried breakfasts and hot drinks. Kathleen refers to all the customers by name and chats to them about their families and local news. Many of the people who come to the cafe are older residents who live alone. She says that
she is lucky to have a big family and always has a busy house but explains how many of the regualrs come to the community centre in order to seek company. Kathleen brought up her five children in Beswick and now her eight grandchildren all go to the local Church of England Primary School. She invites me to come to her house so we can have a proper conversation after she has finished her duties at the cafe. When I arrive, Kathleen's three adult daughters Melanie, Sarah and Dawn are sitting around the kitchen table chatting to their mother. The sisters have made a quick stop off on their way to collect their children from school.

While we are having a cup of tea, Melanie takes from her handbag a letter sent home by her daughter's head teacher the day before. This letter was written to all parents, following a number of criminal offences which have occurred in the area. The crimes involve a young girl found crying on the street. When strangers approached the girl to see if they could help, she asked to be taken to a local address. At the house which the child had indicated, a gang were waiting and attacked and robbed the person who brought her. The letter from the school instructs parents, especially mothers, to be vigilant and to contact the police if something like this happens to them. Melanie puts the folded letter into her pocket and remarks how the story offers yet more evidence of how unsafe their neighbourhood is becoming. Kathleen says that something does not 'ring true' about the story and asks why the perpetrators have not been caught if they were hiding out in a house. She is less willing to accept the story than her daughters, who do not dwell on their mother's concerns. Instead, they agree that the story is not surprising and say that it is indicative of the neighbourhood becoming a dangerous place.
As Melanie, Sarah and Dawn put on their coats and get ready to collect their children from school they tell me how they loved to play out together when they were children with their two older brothers and neighbours. At tea time, Kathleen would send out the dog to come and collect them so they knew it was time to go home. Now that they are mothers they do not let their children spend time outside after school on the estate apart from the eldest, Dawn’s son, who is allowed to play football. She insists that he must carry a mobile phone with him so they can keep in contact at all times. The women prefer to bring their younger children to Kathleen’s house after school to play together, where they can supervise them, rather than allowing them to be out on their own on the street or in the park alone. The sisters tell me that ‘it’s not worth taking the risk’. They are anxious that their children could be in danger in the neighbourhood from other young people who are causing trouble. As well as being concerned about the welfare of their children the women also explain how they would also be perceived to be bad parents by others on the estate if they allowed their children to play out unsupervised. As discussed above, in the New Labour era, policies focused on childhood vulnerability and well-being and also, emphasised upholding parental responsibility (Parton 2006). The sisters laugh when they recall stories of their childhood. They explain how they always looked out for one another and had a great time playing on the street but suggest that if they gave their children as much freedom as they enjoyed, they could be accused of being neglectful.

In what follows, I explore some of the complex reasons people give for their world being more dangerous and risky and how they respond to the perception of heightened risk as they navigate their relations with one another. I focus particularly on the work of Ulrich Beck (1992, 1994) and Mary Douglas (1983, 1994) who have both written about risk in ‘modern’ societies from different perspectives. Their work shares common ground as they both reflect on the way in which public awareness of risk has been influenced by the
extension of mass media and the growth of new information technologies. They offer contrasting explanations for the ways that risk manifests itself and is managed. The aim of this discussion is not carry out a detailed comparison of Beck and Douglas but to ask whether the sense of neighbourhood danger which my informants speak about can be explained in relation to these authors’ differing contributions to theories of risk. I explore whether the risk of danger associated with crime or violence is a product of modernisation as Beck argues, or whether, following Douglas, it would be more appropriate to see risk as a form of pollution and a way to organise social relations.

Discourses about risk

According to Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky (1983) there is a popular view that in the past societies were dominated by superstition, whereas ‘modern man’ is now intellectually free. The authors describe how public perceptions of risk are collective constructs and dangers are a form of pollution, or a conceptual category apparent in continuing political debate (1983:36). Their work suggests that dangers in society are politicised rather than rational, because moral judgments are involved in assessments of what is, or is not, an acceptable risk. Accordingly, the evaluation of risk is a broad social process and a cultural approach is required to examine its manifestation in particular contexts. Douglas and Wildavsky argue that risk taking and risk aversion, as well as shared confidence and shared fears, are part of a dialogue on how best to organise social relations (1983:8). Beck’s (1992) analysis is rather different. He argues that risk must be explained in relation to individuals’ responses to modernisation:

Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself. Risks as opposed to older
dangers, are consequences which relate to the threatening force of modernisation and to its globalisation of doubt. They are politically reflexive (1992:21).

The notion of risk, Beck goes on to explain, impacts in a significant way upon personal relationships, even those which are most intimate. As a result, individuals are increasingly conscious of their responsibility to manage risk in the context of our own lives (Beck 1994:10). From their perspective, however, Douglas and Wildavksy (1983) describe how the perception of risk is a social process, and will differ in each cultural context. I explore these differing perspectives in relation to conversations I have with Kathleen and her sister, Ruth, about sexual violence. They infer that, as well as there being a rise in the perceived level of violence in the community, it is also argued that women are increasingly at risk from domestic violence.

Kathleen, who I first meet at the cafe, invites me to come to her Mother's Union group which is an organisation affiliated to the Church of England. Their meetings are held every fortnight in a community centre in Beswick between seven and nine in the evening. The group is attended by between eight to fifteen women who are all in their fifties to eighties. They gather in a large meeting room, where the chairs are arranged in a circle. Every session begins with the Mother's Union prayer and concludes with tea and biscuits which are served in an adjoining room. Usually an invited guest or member of the group presents a talk. At one session, Ruth who is in her early fifties, leads the discussion. She holds a tattered notebook as she speaks. I notice that her hands are trembling slightly and she giggles nervously as she recounts early memories of her life and growing up in north Manchester. At first, the account appears to be a familiar, nostalgic narrative of the past which I have heard many times before (see Chapter Three). She tells us about her early childhood memories of life in Manchester in a humble but loving family home. The style of the story changes abruptly, however, as Ruth goes on to explain how she was married for
thirteen years to a 'controlling man' called Sean. Taking a deep breath she says that from start to finish her life has been a 'complete joke' as it has been fraught with difficulties. At school, Ruth faced daily taunts about her physical appearance and as an adult she was subjected to years of violent abuse. The best way to protect herself was to be nice to everyone, which marked the beginning of her Christian faith. During Ruth's talk, the women in at the meeting gasp at her candid portrayal. They murmur sympathetic noises as she speaks and one woman reaches across to stroke her arm in a reassuring manner.

The following week I visit Ruth at her home where she continues the story about her life. She tells me how her husband, Sean, subjected her to mental and physical abuse throughout their marriage. Sean was paranoid, always imagining that she was seeing other men behind his back. The 'silliest things' would 'trigger him off'. Ruth tells me that she hoped that he would 'mellow' after the birth of their daughter, Sophie, but it did not happen:

He was really mean, but it was when he was drunk mainly. I wanted to get Sophie christened before her first birthday and I wanted Kathleen to be her godmother. He didn't want her to be 'cos he didn't like my family. He saw them as a threat. Sean strangled me on the floor, I must have lost consciousness. There was lots of bruising on my neck. I had to wear a polo neck top to cover it the next day. Another time when I was pregnant, he'd had a drink and he started being angry. I was never abusive to him. I tried to just put up with his behaviour. If I was being placid, I thought it would calm him down. Sometimes it did, sometimes it didn't work.

Ruth continues by explaining how she tried to 'contain' Sean's violence. Despite considering divorce, she went back to her husband on a number of occasions as she felt compelled to work on their marriage for the sake of their daughter. The violence got progressively worse and Sean's behaviour became even more erratic. Their relationship
ended not long after, when allegations of sexual abuse were made against him. Looking back on her relationship with Sean, Ruth says with great sadness that there were some 'signs' in his behaviour which made her suspicious. For instance, after going on a family holiday, she found photographs of her twelve year old niece taken in her underwear. Everything came to a head when allegations were made against Sean by two girls in their family. Ruth says that it was an utter shock as she 'couldn't comprehend sexual abuse' but after some time, when the news had 'sunk in' she saw how 'everything fitted together'.

In reference to Beck's (1992) work on the 'risk society' it could be argued that Ruth and Kathleen spoke about their experiences of abuse in their family in public in order to alleviate their guilt for what happened to their daughters. Their stories could be conceived of, in Beck's (1992) terms, as an attempt to cope with 'personal failings'. According to Beck, an individual must learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of him or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to her own biography, abilities, orientations and relationships (1992:135). For Beck, a consequence of the individualization of society is 'each person's biography is removed from the given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions' (1992:135). He asserts that there is a link between processes of individualisation and modernisation. Individuals have become increasingly conscious of the responsibility to manage risk they perceive in the contexts of their own lives and, in this, create their own biographies (in James & James 2008:113). In relation to the incident at the Mother's Union, it would appear, on the surface, that Beck's argument holds weight. Ruth talked about her relationship with Sean and what had happened in her family in order to take responsibility for the abuse which had occurred. However, Beck's work does not shed light on why these narratives hold wider social value, or why, if risk is an individual preoccupation, it is discussed so commonly in everyday discourse.
During the talk at the Mother’s Union, Ruth drew together turbulent moments of her past into an ordered narrative. She spoke in a clear and calm manner, as though she had spoken about these incidents many times before. Catherine Kohler Reissman (1992) has written about the healing effects of creating a narrative about experiences of domestic violence.

Creating a narrative about one's life is an imaginative enterprise, too, in which an individual links disruptive events in a biography to heal discontinuities - what should have been with what was (1992:232).

In addition to this analysis, it appears as though by sharing her experiences at the Mother’s Union and then during our conversation at her home, Ruth recounted the story in order to gain support and understanding about what happened. The sisters are devastated that Sean has never been convicted, but say that their family has ‘moved on’ and is closer than ever before. Ten years after these events, they reflect that they are a ‘close family' and say that they are 'blessed' to have healthy children and friends around them. The women explain how it is important to share these stories so nothing like this will happen again. They feel as though they were let down by the police and the criminal justice system but have learned to cope with what happened to them through the support of their family and friends.

Ruth tells me that Sean was like no one she has ever met but how unfortunately there are others like him, who abuse children in their care. In Kathleen's opinion, despite the sophisticated technological devices and new institutional measures which have been implemented in East Manchester potential risk will always have to be managed by women who tend to be primarily responsible the care of children in the family. On listening to her account I was taken aback by Ruth's willingness to share intimate recollections of her family life in a public setting. I was surprised that she was being encouraged by the group.
to talk about a sensitive subject like domestic abuse. On further consideration, however, I began to realise that the stories which Ruth recounted were consistent with other accounts which are often discussed in East Manchester. Throughout fieldwork I encountered numerous settings in which women discussed anecdotes or experiences about violence and sexual abuse. On a daily basis I heard conversations among residents about keeping children safe in the neighbourhood. As Douglas and Wildavsky (1983) aptly suggest, risk taking and risk aversion, shared confidence and shared fears, are part of a dialogue on how best to organise social relations. Rather than the women sharing their stories solely as a means through which to alleviate their guilt (as Beck's analysis would suggest) these women speak publically about their experiences in order to articulate their shared concern about risk.

My ethnographic findings suggest that a discursive space has opened up in which individuals are supported to discuss stories of abuse publicly. Legislative changes have alerted us to the prevalence of domestic abuse and there are new ways to report on crime, which encourage individuals to come forward to the authorities with information (for example, the RTN). Even though there may be more opportunities for individuals to contact the authorities about crime, my female informants feel as though they have been burdened with an increased sense of responsibility for children. The introduction of new technological devices and policing strategies has not eradicated the importance of informal support, but, rather, sharing information and looking out for one another continue to be highly valued in this context. These discussions reflect how long-standing residents of East Manchester put huge amounts of time and effort into shoring up appropriate forms of sociability. Further, the discussions at the Mother’s Union meeting reflect how social networks have taken on new forms which extend beyond the family and include a broader set of social relations.
Kathleen describes how she often hears ‘horrific’ stories about crimes against children. She does not believe that there has been an escalation in such crimes but says that they are more widely reported.

I always believe that people can change but I’ve heard that some men are predatory. They take time to groom girls. It’s worse with women, like those ones in the paper at the moment, there was a man behind that. Myra Hindley was the same. The thing now is there’s more knowledge.

The increase in information or ‘knowledge’ about crimes has brought about a dramatic transformation in the way that childhood, and therefore, parenting, is conceived of. Since women often take primary responsibility for all types of child-care, Jenny Kitzinger (1997) argues that the fate of children and women are always related. She says that we cannot construct and reconstruct childhood without altering what it means to be a mother or other type of carer (1997:175). Kitzinger notes that there is a type of ‘siege mentality’ placed on mothers which places a huge strain on parents and particularly mothers who are expected to take up the chaperoning duties (1997:174). Anyone who does not moralise, condemn outright or openly display emotions of indignation can be accused of being ‘on the wrong side’ (Meyer 2007:103). Women are encouraged to talk to one another in family and public settings about how best to protect children. Even though they often discuss how no one in the community can be trusted anymore, these instances clearly reflect how the women rely on one another in order to make sense of and protect against the perceived dangers to children. These observations lend further support to the general argument of this thesis that women share resources (Chapter Four) and knowledge to protect themselves and each other from being economically and socially isolated.
The accounts of violence reported in this chapter support Beck’s (1994) work which argues that societal ideas about risk impact in a significant way upon personal relationships, even those which are of the greatest intimacy. In addition, my ethnographic material reveals some of the complex reasons why people perceive their worlds as risky and describes how local residents then respond to that perception of risk as they navigate relations with one another. My informants spent a great deal of time thinking about how best to protect themselves and their children. I did not get the sense that they felt they were less at risk than before, because the dangers around them were seen to be out of their control. In my conversations with Ruth and Kathleen, danger came from within the most intimate and therefore supposedly protective sphere of the home. Here Douglas and Wildavsky’s (1983) analysis is helpful. They suggested that risks are collective constructs which cannot be protected against in a systematic manner as they are constantly being negotiated within the social groups. Rather than being new, and emerging in the face of modern living, risks are a part of the way that social groups organise themselves. Understandings of risk are selected and politicised as part of this process (Douglas 1994:29).

As my conversation with Kathleen’s daughters shows, these changes feed back into the everyday lives and experiences of children (James & James 2008:107). My findings also strongly support the work of Anneke Meyer (2007) who has noted that since dangers to children are seen to be ever present and constant protection is required, being a child has become synonymous with risk. When talking about the past, my informants depict childhood as a time of innocence and exploration. In this chapter I have explained how in the past, risk-taking was an enjoyable and inevitable part of growing up. Young people may have got involved in fights but this did not pose any threat to other people living in the community or to their safety. In contrast, the contemporary street is perceived to be
beset by danger and too risky for children to play out. As a result, ideas about parenting and understandings of childhood have shifted.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which local residents respond to the securitisation of public space in East Manchester, which is an integral component of urban regeneration. Urban planners have incorporated new surveillance and technological devices and also new policing initiatives have been introduced in Openshaw and Beswick in order to create a more sustainable and safe environment. Even though there has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of devices, experts and agencies employed to promote safe living, contemporary society is perceived to be more dangerous than ever before. The discussions presented here also illustrate how long-standing residents put huge amounts of time and effort into shoring up appropriate forms of sociability by sharing stories about neighbourhood risk and rely upon one another for informal support. This discussion brings to light the ways in which relationships among residents have been reconfigured in the light of significant urban change.

Following on from the discussions presented in previous chapters, I have argued that perceptions of risk are evidence of the strong sense of uncertainty which is thought to characterise East Manchester by the residents that I meet and talk to. In addition, I have explained how even though it is often suggested that there is no community any more, social ties remain resolute. The discussion presented here supports the analysis presented in Chapter Three, which suggests that long-standing residents make community, paradoxically, by sharing narratives about the loss of social ties. In social spaces in East
Manchester, like the Mother’s Union, people argue that they are more at risk than ever before and suggest that they can no longer trust anyone in the community. But in sharing their concerns about potential dangers and discussing stories about their past experiences they strengthen their relationships and build networks of support.

The material presented in this chapter echoes previous studies in the anthropology of Britain that describe how kinship ties in urban settings remain the focal point of individuals’ social lives amidst social change (Firth 1956, Young & Willmott 1957, Bott 1957). In addition, it suggests that social networks also take on new forms which extend beyond the family and include a broader set of social relations. My findings show how societal ideas about risk impact in a significant way upon personal relationships, even those which are of the greatest intimacy (Beck 1994). Risks are a part of the way that social groups organise themselves and understandings of risk are selected and politicised (Douglas 1994:29). In the next chapter, following on from the themes presented here, I explain how uncertainty, which is said to characterise East Manchester is also evident in relation to political alienation. My informants argue they are excluded from mainstream political discussions which further exacerbate their sense of precarity, as no one looks out for their interests.
During the build up to the general election in 2010, the campaigns by the national parties permeated the mainstream media, through the televised debates, newspaper reports, local radio and daytime television. The election was discussed at the market, cafes and homes throughout East Manchester. At the coffee morning, on the 6th April 2010, I overhear the radio playing in the adjoining kitchen of the community centre where the group congregate. The newsreader announces that the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, has called a general election to be held the following month. I repeat the news to the women. Gail and Ellen respond by saying:

**Gail:** None of it will make a difference, whichever party you vote for. I've always known that the Conservatives are not for the working class. My Dad always told us that we voted Labour. But I'm not happy with Labour. I think they are targeting the older ones and they should be making all the young ones get out to work, and out of the pubs. But it's all baloney. They are all the same. And now, less and less people vote, they don't know about politics.

**Ellen:** Now, I think we're treated like second class citizens. I don't know anything about politics really. But I think the expenses scandal was awful.\(^\text{27}\) It's made everyone disheartened.

**Gail:** We all knew that they were on the fiddle. We all knew what they were doing. But it makes you think, what else are they doing? It does annoy me. They are supposed to be our representatives and I'm not a bleeding thief! I think the big change came with Tony Blair. My Dad would try and explain things to me. He said that politicians were working men, like Michael Foot.\(^\text{28}\) Now, they are money men. They send their children to private

\(^{27}\) The scandal involved a number of high profile cases in 2009 and 2010 when the expenses claimed by some MPs were published, resulting in a number of resignations and mass public outrage.

\(^{28}\) Michael Foot was a Labour MP from 1945-55 and from 1960-92. He was leader of the opposition between 1980-1983.
schools. And Labour are telling me that I've got to go back to work, after I've worked all my life! And they can get their wives' hair done every week because they're in the public eye. Well if I went back to work I'd be in the public eye and I don't think I'd be getting any money for the hairdressers.

These pessimistic reactions to the announcement of the election are indicative of a broader response to politics among my informants. Both Labour and the Conservatives are regarded as power crazed, greedy and corrupt. The overwhelming feeling among local people in East Manchester suggests that the government has let local residents down. As a result, they feel suspicious of politicians and political processes.

Following on from the discussions which have been presented in this thesis so far, this chapter explores how long-standing residents living in East Manchester perceive the future as precarious and unpredictable. Here, I explain how political alienation is said to have exacerbated feelings of uncertainty. In order to explain the strong sense of disillusionment which was evident in East Manchester, I engage with a recent set of debates about the white working classes in Britain from the anthropology of Britain (Edwards et al. 2012, Evans 2010, 2012a, Smith 2012a, b). First, I describe how the relationship between the Labour party and their traditional voters, the working classes, has diminished. Following Evans (2010, 2012a) I explain how the emergence of the category of ‘white working class’ is the product of a combination of different factors which can be traced back to thirty years of British political and socio-economic history. Second, I describe how there is a strong sense of contestation around entitlement to housing in East Manchester among some people living in East Manchester. Equality politics are thought to be racialised and to favour non-white people. Long-standing residents often argue that ‘local’ people are being unfavourably treated which is making them feel resentful.
Third, I argue that it is not necessarily helpful to read these statements simply in racial terms or as a matter of only ‘looking after your own’. Instead, it is more useful to analyse the growing sense of frustration in relation to wider feelings of uncertainty. While my informants’ views about race often appear to be exclusionary and intolerant, they also tell us about their desires and aspirations for equality and for being treated fairly (Smith 2012a,b). Research in post-industrial settings has illustrated how there have been dramatic shifts in people’s sense of place, personhood, collective belonging and local politics in post-industrial sites (see for instance, Hart 2005, Evans 2006, 2010, 2012a, Mollona 2009a). In addition to these studies, I explain how for long-standing residents in an ideal world the locality would ‘belong’ to them so they could protect themselves from social isolation and political disenfranchisement.

**Disillusionment with politics**

After the general election, Nora and her friends, Stan and Denise, discuss the newly formed coalition between the Conservative party and the Liberal Democrats. We sit together in the spring sunshine next to the portacabin at the market where they meet twice a week. Stan, who is in his eighties, orders a ‘belly buster’ breakfast from the cafe which includes sausage, egg, bacon, baked beans, black pudding and tomatoes which he asks to be served without bread. While he eats, his wife Denise drinks a mug of coffee and draws deeply on her cigarette. She seems downhearted by the result of the election and says that the Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg has ‘held the country to ransom’ over his decision to join with the Conservatives rather than Labour. Denise tells me that having the Conservatives in power will be disastrous. The three friends explain how they have voted Labour throughout their lives. They tell me:
Stan: My Grandfather always told me that it was Labour who were for the working man.

Camilla: Do you think that Labour are still for working people?

Denise: I didn't like Blair. I thought he was more Conservative, in it for the money but that was New Labour. Thatcher was awful. She took the milk away and all those valleys in Wales where she closed the mines.

Camilla: When I've talked to people about Thatcher it's difficult to get an idea of who voted for her.

Nora: People with a bit of that [rubbed her forefinger and thumb together to indicate having money].

Denise: When we go on holiday we meet a Welsh couple. One night they played that song, 'I am a working man' and they both had tears rolling down their faces. All the Welsh [people] around them were the same. There were men who killed themselves when the mines closed because of the shame of not working.

Nora: Thatcher thought she was the bloody queen. Apparently she's got Alzheimer's now.

Denise: Well I hope she suffers, I hope she lingers and I wouldn't say that about anyone else.

There is an overwhelming sense of resentment and anger amongst the people who gather at the market. In this discussion, Thatcher is likened to Blair. Both politicians are thought to be motivated by money and power, rather than looking out for the needs of ordinary people. Nora, Stan and Denise have lost faith in politicians, as they feel that they do not speak up for their interests, or acknowledge the sacrifices which working people have made in Britain.

In conversations with older residents in the area, I was often told that the Labour party used to represent the interests of working class people. But now, it is thought that they are
out of touch. Many older people argue that Labour MPs used to be working class and honourable. They understood the lives of their constituents and could speak for the views of the people they represented. In contrast, today, politicians are thought to be careerist and corrupt. There is an overwhelming sense of disappointment with politicians, especially with Labour MPs who were fraudulently claiming expenses. My informants argue that the differences between the main political parties are almost indistinguishable. As Evans (2010) notes, a ‘political vacuum’ has been created in Britain due to the mainstream parties moving to the centre ground. Since the Thatcher government came to power (1979), strong links between local people and politicians deteriorated due to the weakening of industrial politics. These shifts indicate how predominantly white working class neighbourhoods have been politically, economically and culturally dispossessed by processes of de-industrialisation (Evans 2012a).

At the time of the general election in 2010, there was a plethora of commentary in the national media about the perceived threat of far right politicians gaining votes. It was forecast that far right parties would gain support from disaffected voters from both mainstream parties. The rise of far right groups is not specific to Britain but part of a wider pattern across Europe (Gingrich & Banks 2006). Two central characteristics of these neo-nationalist parties are their policies of ‘cultural pessimism’ and ‘economic chauvinism’ (Gingrich 2006:37). In Britain, the rise of the far right parties has been attributed to disaffected white working class voters (Rhodes 2010, Smith 2010). The British National Party [BNP from now on], gained influence in some northern areas of the country where predominantly working class people struggled to accommodate the growing influence of non-white immigrant communities. The New Labour government was also seen to be abandoning their interests (Evans 2010:129). For example, in Burnley in the North-West, the BNP managed to capitalise on the ‘spiralling socioeconomic deprivation’ and ‘political
disaffection’ with Labour councils who were attacked on the grounds that whites were losing out as a result of implicit ‘positive discrimination’ (Rhodes 2010:78). With these debates in mind, I ask my informants whether they would consider voting for a far right candidate.

At the coffee morning, the women often talk about their hatred of the Conservatives and their dislike for New Labour. I ask them whether they have considered voting for any of the other parties. Ellen tells me, ‘I really don’t like the BNP. But round here foreigners is a big issue.’ Similarly, the other women tell me that they do not see the BNP as a legitimate party to vote for because Manchester ‘is Labour’, but again reiterate that ‘local’ people are ignored by politicians. Colin, the fruit and vegetable driver, takes a much firmer view. He is outraged by the policies which the far right advocate and says:

The BNP, National Front whatever they are, are all Nazis if you ask me no matter what they are called. I think they should all be made to visit Auschwitz. Have you been? Me and the wife went last year. It's an awful place. It happened because one group of people felt threatened by another, taking their jobs and wanted to get rid of them. It's just what is happening now, it's not new. You watch, next they'll be against the Poles. At the moment, it's about race but soon they'll move on. The worst thing is that they have taken our flag, my flag, the St. George’s flag. How dare they! That's ours, I had it up in the van for a while. I knew black lads that I grew up with that thought of that flag as theirs.

Colin is worried about political groups like the BNP monopolising on a growing sense of disquiet among disaffected voters. He is upset that the far right parties are using the St. George’s flag as a symbol of exclusionary politics and feels deeply concerned that they will exploit divisions between residents living in East Manchester. Throughout my time in Beswick and Openshaw, I did not meet anyone who publically supported any far right political groups. Nevertheless, what is significant about these narratives is that they all
indicate a strong sense of disillusionment with the mainstream parties, and particularly
with Labour. A common sentiment among long-standing residents holds that fewer people
are choosing to vote because they do not see that there is any point.29

Frustration with mainstream politics has wider currency. Karen Wells and Sophie Watson
(2005) conducted research among a number of shopkeepers in a borough of London.
Their work describes how there was a shared perception among this group that their
economic position was precarious and under constant threat. The shopkeepers harboured
feelings of resentment against asylum seekers and ‘corporate capital’ (2005:275). Wells
and Watson suggest that the ‘politics of resentment finds fertile grounds’ in the people
they interviewed due to their social and economic positions, but they also point out that
there is no simple, causal relationship between class location and politics (2005:262). In
East Manchester, however, individuals articulate their resentment against politicians
precisely in terms of social class. My informants who gather at the coffee morning feel
resentful and betrayed by politicians. They argue that ‘ordinary’ or working class people
have been let down and abandoned. As Edwards and colleagues (2012) suggest, in
England, New Labour failed to address the growing sense of crisis among working class
people whose political, economic and social standing has been systematically eroded by
the economic policies and political strategies of previous governments.

29 In 2010 there was a lower than average turnout overall with 44% from a possible 90,000
electorate. Labour won with 52% clear majority, the Liberal Democrats 26%, Conservatives 11%
and British National Party 4%. This is a higher than average vote compared to their overall figure
of 1% nationally. It could be deduced that people did not wish for me to know if they were going to
vote for the BNP. However, the voting figures show that in the General Election they received only 4%
of the vote in the constituency of Central Manchester (manchester.gov.uk).
In order to explain some of the reasons behind contemporary disillusionment with politics, I refer to a number of sociological and anthropological studies, which explain some of the historical reasons behind the growing sense of disenfranchisement among some working class people in Britain. Owen Jones (2011) traces political disenchantment of working classes people back to the policies brought about by the Thatcher government. In the 1980s, the Conservative government attempted to ‘rub out’ the working class as a political and economic force in society. Thatcher attempted to eradicate the idea that people could better their lives through collective action, trade union or community politics. Following on from this ethos, New Labour embraced the notion of individualism. They promoted policies of equality through multiculturalism, rather than class based politics. Rather than bringing about a greater sense of equality, however, my informants at the market feel a strong sense of betrayal from the Labour party’s move away from their traditional voters. As Denise explains, older people feel deeply upset that the historical struggles of working class people, have been forgotten.

As Edwards and colleagues (2012) note, the influence of the Labour movement gradually diminished in Britain and weakened the ability of white working class people to fight for their rights. In multicultural politics, black and Asian people have been able to struggle for equality and harness economic resources from the state through self-organising ethnic collectives (Edwards et al. 2012:5). As a result, the only inequalities which were discussed by politicians and the media were racial ones. A common theme in this literature is that white working class people became presented ‘as a lost tribe on the wrong side of history, disorientated by multiculturalism and obsessed with defending their identity from the cultural ravages of mass immigration’ (Jones 2011:8). Consequently:

Not only did their whiteness not matter in multiculturalism, but also their working class self-identification no longer mattered to New Labour. Rather than being
renowned as the primary movers against unfair hierarchies in Britain, working class white people became perceived, ironically, as a block to equality (Edwards et al. 2012:7).

For long-standing residents in East Manchester, these observations hold true. Older people feel confused about political calls for equality.

Dench and colleagues (2006) note that politicians and political calls for equality are incompatible with ordinary people’s understanding of what the good society is like and how it should work. This argument squares with my informants’ analyses of their current circumstances. They describe that, rather than bringing about equality, political processes are perceived to exacerbate further the divisions between people and heighten the competition for resources. The conversation at the coffee morning, like many I have at the time of the election, illustrates how people who had previously felt as though their interests were represented by one political movement have become disillusioned. For example, Ellen describes herself as a ‘second class citizen’. New Labour put social mobility and meritocracy at the centre of their political campaigns and as a result, social class became a ‘taboo subject’ (Evans 2012a:25). My informants’ views reflect that individuals feel that they have not been rewarded by the promise of economic growth. They perceive meritocratic, yet ‘equality’ driven principles to be nonsensical and to be at odds with one another. I am often told that no matter how hard ‘local’ people work their needs will always be put behind those of non-white people.

After the election results, I meet with Colin while he is on his fruit and vegetable van and discuss the news that David Cameron has become Prime Minister. With sadness his says:
They reckon there’s eighty millionaires in the government. They’ve all got millions in the bank. ‘We’re all in this together’! They talk about being ‘fair’. It’s the new buzz-word. The only fair way they know is the bleeding golf course. I hate ‘em.

Colin believes that the new government will further alienate people in East Manchester from politics. He says that politicians who have privileged lives cannot relate to working class people and do not care about the needs of ‘ordinary’ people. These findings support Katherine Smith’s (2012a, b) research which suggests that we must make a distinction between the political calls for equality and local expectations of fairness. As Smith’s work suggests, fairness is a morally evaluative term which has different meanings for different individuals (2012b). Following her approach, I explore long-standing residents’ opinions that the ‘local’ or white people are being unfairly treated in relation to the allocation of housing and jobs in East Manchester. I argue that it is not necessarily helpful to read these statements simply in racial terms or as a matter of only ‘looking after your own’. Instead, it is more useful to analyse such narratives with regards to the way in which they explain a deep sense of inequality.

Entitlement

At the coffee morning the women often discuss how local values and traditional ways of life are diminishing (see Chapter Three). The women are concerned about the future because they are anxious that there are not enough houses or jobs for their families to be able to live in Beswick and Openshaw. There is a general perception that there has been a dramatic rise in the number of people moving into the area which has had a detrimental effect on ‘local people’. Long waiting lists for social housing and fierce competition for jobs are blamed on incomers who have moved to these localities. I ask the members who are gathered together at one session whether there are more immigrants living in East Manchester than there used to be.
Ellen: On my street there is only one white family, everyone else is an immigrant.

Grace: Yes there are and it means that quite a lot of people are moving out of the area.

Gail: I’m quite lucky, on my road there’s none.

Thelma: When houses become empty up my end they put asylum seekers in them.

Ellen: They are top of the list.

Camilla: Why do you think that is?

Ellen: Because technically they are homeless. They take priority over medical [cases] as well, which is disgusting.

Gail: My son has been on the list [for social housing] for ten years!

Ellen: The housing officers are black, so they put black families in them.

As this discussion demonstrates, certain racial groups are thought to be given priority to resources such as housing. As Nigel Rapport (1997) describes, when local people defend their area, land becomes a moral subject. In his research about a village in Cumbria, he found that there was not one single, position held by the ‘local’ people but a common symbolic discourse in which individuals came together to ‘face the outside world’ (1997:76). Rapport suggests, when ‘local’ people defend their rights, land becomes a moral issue. In East Manchester, rather than land, housing is a symbolic issue. The issue of social housing tends to unify the interests of my informants who identify themselves as ‘local’ on account of living in the area for some time.

Equality politics are described as racialised and perceived to favour non-white people. Kathryn Ray, Maria Hudson and Joan Phillips (2008) conducted research in two multiethnic neighbourhoods in Manchester and London. Their comparative study
examines how individuals struggle over resources and recognition. The authors found that, a ‘majority discourse’ was articulated in both contexts by white residents and other ethnic minority groups towards new migrants which expressed concern about local resources such as housing and employment, as well as concerns about moral decline and loss of community (2008:115). Their findings suggest that race is not the defining factor for ideas about entitlement but length of residence in a particular area and ideas about work ethic were also important factors.

Ray and colleagues (2008) conclude by suggesting that resentment over ideas about entitlement was not uniformly racialised as ideas about who is ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ were used flexibly to differentiate between existing residents and those who were new to the area. In contrast, the opinions which I encounter in East Manchester point to a different analysis. At the market place and coffee morning, my informants commonly argue that non-white people are ‘undeserving’ and do not mention the length of time they have lived in the area or whether or not they work. This is evident in the following conversation between Gail and Ellen:

Gail: My son has been on the waiting list for nine years. In that time he’s had three kids and still hasn’t got a house. It makes you prejudiced and resentful.

Ellen: And racist.

Gail: These people have a couple of kids and get put up on the waiting list. The private landlords charge extortionate amounts. It never used to be as bad. My kids have always worked, they’ve never been on the social and they can’t get a house. People used to think that if you have kids you’d get a house, so now, there’s none left. Even if they’re not working they’ll get a house, and my son doesn’t get anything.

In contrast to Ray and colleagues’ (2008) findings, the overriding message in these narratives is that ‘local’ or white people are being ignored. In the contemporary moment,
in which feelings of political alienation are thought to be pronounced, these narratives appear to offer my informants a chance to speak out against their perceived sense of unfairness and inequality. In order to understand the contestation around housing further, I visit one of the social housing providers.

I call into Eastlands Homes headquarters on Ashton New Road to talk to one of their employees, Mark, about the way in which housing is allocated to prospective tenants. I meet Mark in the reception area. He provides me with a housing application form and explains how anyone who is over the age of sixteen is eligible to apply. Mark explains how all applications are processed through a centralised system. They are assessed in a ‘choice based letting system’ in which all applications are awarded a certain number of points, based on a variety of criteria. Prospective tenants are then matched to accommodation which is available according to the choices which they have made. On the form, applicants are asked whether they have any preference about which neighbourhood they would like to live in. Priority is given to those who have a ‘community-connection’ in their desired locality. This may include being employed locally or having a family member who has lived in the area for more than three years.

Mark goes on to explain how all applications are considered through a centralised system which is run online but tells me how local residents call into the office to ask for advice. Social landlords like Eastlands are keen to work closely with their tenants in order to find them properties which will match their needs. However, there are long waiting times for homes in certain areas and Mark often has to deal with unsatisfied customers.30

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30 In 2007/08 the average waiting times for social housing ranges in Beswick is 22 months on average and in Openshaw it is 12 months. In the Bradford Ward residents are ‘well established’,
discussion with Mark reveals how the process of applying for social housing is rather more complex than the women at the coffee morning suggest. Unoccupied properties are allocated to tenants who are assessed as 'being in need', according to a complex bureaucratic system. Mark’s explanation stands in contrast to my informants’ view that particular racial groups are given preferential treatment to housing. The women at the coffee morning argue that the housing officers are allowed to choose which families to allocate dwellings to in Manchester, which is why the system is biased. On the contrary, Mark argues that each application is judged objectively which makes the system as fair as possible. Mark explains that social housing across Manchester is highly sought after and must suit the needs of all. In this context of heightened competition around housing, my informants argue that properties in East Manchester should be allocated first and foremost to people who are ‘local’. They are anxious about the future as they feel that the interests of their families, and other people like themselves, are ignored.

The contestation around entitlement which is evident in East Manchester resonates with Evans’ (2010) research in Bermondsey. As well as a reduction in the availability of social housing, Evans found that residents had competing claims and different opinions about how the housing stock should be allocated. As a result, Evans suggests that a strong sense of ‘place-ism’ has emerged among some white working-class residents in Bermondsey. She describes how discrimination against, and suspicion of, outsiders is evident alongside a strong sense of territorial belonging. White working class residents never owned the land but argued that by right it should belong to them (Evans 2010:125). My findings echo this analysis. In East Manchester, it is argued that the interests of ‘local’ or white people should be protected. My informants suggest that they have a greater entitlement to local houses with over half having lived in the area for over 11 years and the majority likely to stay in the neighbourhood for the next 3 years (Bradford Ward Profile 2011:18).
than newer residents. In both contexts, we see how people are acutely anxious that they no longer have control over who lives in their area. In East Manchester, long-standing residents stress their attachment to the locality to which they belong and which in an ideal world would also ‘belong’ to them, in order to protect themselves from social isolation and political disenfranchisement.

These findings also support wider observations in the anthropology of Britain which explain how there have been dramatic shifts in people’s sense of place, personhood, collective belonging and local politics in post-industrial sites (see for instance, Hart 2005, Evans 2006, Mollona 2009a). As I have explained throughout the thesis, notions of community across various social settings have shifted dramatically due to wider social, economic and political changes. To briefly recap. In the 1950s, in urban areas families and neighbours formed strong bonds with one another for mutual support against the difficulties of living with limited economic resources (Firth 1956, x & Willmott 1957, Bott 1957). For working class women, the mother-centred kinship system offered a sense of security, against isolation. The connectedness of kinship networks was found to be strengthened when members found each other jobs and housing (Bott 1957). These studies illustrated how communal life was richly shared through families (Dench et al. 2006).

A sense of belonging in working class communities was defined along ‘born and bred’ criteria which is inseparable from an individual’s sense of place (see also, Strathern 1982, Edwards 2000, Evans 2006). These ethnographies reflected how individuals protected themselves against social isolation and economic insecurity by maintaining strong kinship and neighbourly networks and subsequently they formed a deep sense of belonging to the
localities in which they lived. These studies are important to refer to as they support the common narrative about community in East Manchester in the past. The industrial period is described as strong and stable. I was often told how the community was ‘self-sufficient’ and people were proud to belong to the area. Even though people had fewer material goods and a poorer standard of living, the past is described in positive terms (see Chapter Three). Older people at the market explained how they felt a great sense of pride of coming from specific areas within East Manchester. They felt protected by strong networks of kin and neighbours and believing that the interests of workers were being looked out for by the unions and by Labour MPs which gave them a great sense of security.

In contrast, contemporary life is said to be divided and precarious as employment opportunities are scarce to come by in East Manchester (see Chapter One). A common theme which runs throughout post-industrial ethnographies holds that social ties have weakened as individuals no longer articulate a sense of community with one another (Hart 2005, 2008, Evans 2006, 2010, 2012b, Degnen2005, Mollona 2009a). For example, research carried out in the East End of London illustrates how competition and hostility between residents is pronounced. Dench and colleagues (2006) note that community relations have become characterised by ‘ethnic conflict’ between white and Bangladeshi residents. Their work illustrates how dramatic historical changes reshaped the East End and describes how historical changes to the welfare state after the Second World War brought about feelings of hostility between residents, which have endured to this day. This study is important to consider here, as it adds further historical detail to the discussion above about political disenfranchisement.
Dench and colleagues (2006) trace community tensions in the East End back to the 1950s. In pre-War London the community was homogenous and stable (Young & Willmott 1957). However, after the War many Bethnal Greeners felt cheated as they did not benefit from the promised rewards of war service and blamed migration for it (Dench et al. 2006:4). From the 1960s, feelings of betrayal were exacerbated by the way in which the administration of welfare had been modified. New welfare principles were seen to serve the interests of new Bangladeshi migrants rather than long-standing residents, as they were based on a system of need which meant that newer residents took priority. The white working classes in the East End felt that ‘their welfare state’ had been adapted to suit migrants which morally undermined fairness in the process (2006:5). This research reflects how contestation around entitlement has a long history in Britain. Changes to the welfare state brought about in the 1950s caused a deep sense of frustration among some white working class people who felt as though their needs were being ignored. The Thatcher government’s policies in the 1980s and then New Labour’s ethos of individualism, only added to the growing sense of disenfranchisement. From my lengthy discussions with individuals in informal groups, I agree with Dench and colleagues’ (2006) suggestion that simply dismissing the behaviour of white people as irrational would be too simple and would not offer a sufficiently thorough analysis. In the following section, I explore a number of different incidents where the subject of race and inequality arise in everyday conversations. I explain how these narratives tell us less about race but indicate how social life in East Manchester is perceived to be uncertain and precarious.
Everyday discussions about race

In everyday discussions in East Manchester the subject of race often arises. For example, at the coffee morning when the women are talking about housing, Gail recites the following anecdote:

My friend, this is no word of a lie, left his job. He’s got three kids. So he went to the job centre to try and get the dole and they said that he couldn’t have anything for six weeks. So he went back in, with black shoe polish on his face and then straight away they were trying to help him with all the forms and whatever. At the end, he took his hand out of his pocket and said, ‘this is my colour’ and he ripped up the forms in front of them. He said, ‘why wouldn’t you give me any help last week’!

In response, the women at the meeting tut and sigh in resignation at the perceived injustice. It appears to me that the story sounds far-fetched but the other women do not seem to be surprised about the treatment of the protagonist in Gail’s narrative. On hearing this story and others like it, I am unsure how to react. It seems improbable that the incident at the job centre with the shoe polish really occurred. I worry that if I do not voice my discomfort about the anecdote, the women may assume that I am in agreement with their views. As Tyler (2004) notes, the whiteness of the ethnographer can be assumed as a sign that she will agree with racist sentiments. However, I am also concerned about questioning the women’s stories. I notice how none of the other women raise any opposition or ask any further questions and I am worried about being perceived to be judgemental which could further intensify the feeling of injustice that the women often allude to. Gail’s anecdote appears to support a commonly held discourse of frustration among the group which holds that non-white people are always given more attention, and opportunities in the welfare system, than their white counterparts. Taking my cue from the other women, I decide not to voice my opinion in this instance but to examine these narratives more closely.
In this discussion, my intention is not to define, or defend views which could be described as ‘racist’ but to understand from my informants’ point of view why there is so much at stake in these discussions. Instructive here is the work of Saba Mahmood (2005). Her work suggests that researchers should not be blinkered by their own support for progressive politics but should attempt to understand their informants’ desires. She says:

If we recognise that the desire for freedom from, or subversion of, norms is not an innate desire that motivates all being at all times, it is also profoundly mediated by cultural historical conditions, then the question arises: how do we analyse the operations of power that construct different kinds of bodies, knowledges and subjectivities whose trajectories do not follow the entelechy [the potential] of liberatory politics? (2005:14).

Rather than having a fixed understanding of the meaning of freedom or progression in advance, Mahmood proposes that people’s views should be explored through ethnography (2005:34). She describes how research conducted in non-western contexts, offer a means to ‘speak back’ to the normative liberal assumptions about freedom and human nature. Adding to this, my findings in East Manchester, a Western, supposedly progressive context, also challenge us to think about our liberal assumptions. In order to understand why there is so much at stake in discussions about political alienation, it is vital to understand my informants’ views about fairness and equality, from their point of view.

In this last section, I explain how my informants’ comments could be superficially read as normative, stereotypical racist comments which are often associated with white working class people in dominant media depictions (Tyler 2004, Jones 2011). However, on closer examination, there is a lot more to be said about these statements. I follow Kirsch’s (2006) approach and examine ‘indigenous modes of analysis’ in order to explore how local people in East Manchester interpret political relationships and historical events. My informants’ views, which often appear to be exclusionary and intolerant, in fact, tell us about their
desires for equality more than their ideas about other ethnic groups and further, point to their strong sense of political disenfranchisement. Here, I consider a number of different conversations where the subject of race arose in the field. I explain how my informants’ views about race and equality often appear to be confusing as they shift from one moment to another.

From time to time I call round to see Danielle in the early afternoon while her two older children are at the local primary school. When I visit, we play with her nine-month old son and Danielle talks about what it is like bringing up three young children. Danielle’s husband works long hours in recruitment. She says that she often misses having a job and explains how being a mum is immensely rewarding but on a day-to-day basis it can feel monotonous, as there are so many chores to keep on top of. Most days, Danielle’s parents, who live a five minute walk away, call around round to help out. Since Danielle does not have a car, she relies on her parents for lifts to Asda supermarket or to pick up the children from school. She tells me that she is thankful for their help but explains how her relationship with her mum, Linda, is often tense. Danielle does not feel as though she is understanding or sympathetic and is too quick to judge. They disagree about how her three children should be brought up as they have different ideas about parenting. The women, for example, often quarrel about the untidiness of Danielle’s house or the way that her children are dressed or ‘turned out’. Linda expects her daughter to keep the house and children spotless, but Danielle argues that there are more important things to worry about. She feels that her mother is fussy and old fashioned.

One afternoon, Linda calls round to the house while I am visiting Danielle. After a short time, a disagreement breaks out between the women. Danielle tells her mum that she
wants to buy a new buggy for her son from a shop in the city centre in Manchester. Linda responds by saying that this is not a good idea as the buggy has a silly design and is overpriced. Danielle quickly becomes exasperated. In an appeal for sympathy, she turns to me and says ‘See, I told you, my Mum only likes people who are like herself’. To which Linda replies: ‘What are you on about? That’s not true!’ The conversation changes abruptly from the subject of the buggy and Danielle asks her mother; ‘What would you have done if I’d have had children with a black man?’ Linda thinks for a moment and responds, ‘Alright, I wouldn’t have been too happy cos I don’t think it’s fair on the kids. I think people should stick to their own’. Her answer satisfies Danielle, who says to me in frustrated tone, ‘I told you this is what she is like!’ Linda ignores their disagreement and continues to play with her grandson.

The exchange between the two women is illustrative of the way in which the subject of race often emerges, unexpectedly, in everyday conversations. As is evident here, the reason why the topic is alluded to is often unclear. This conversation illustrates how views about race differ from one generation to another (Tyler 2004). Danielle says that Linda’s generation tends to be old fashioned and intolerant, whereas younger people like herself attended multicultural schools and have grown up seeing inter-racial relationships as the norm. What is interesting here is how the subject of race is brought up unexpectedly. The discussion between Danielle and her mother is about buying a buggy, at one moment and then at another, the subject of inter-racial relationships is brought up. The connection between the two topics seems puzzling.
On another visit to see Danielle, we watch the news together on her large flat screen television. The first item to be shown is a report about students protesting in London against the proposal from the government to raise tuition fees. Danielle says:

They're [the government] trying to make sure that kids from round here will never be able to go to university. It's not like you'd ever get a kid from round here turning out to be a politician or anything.

Her comments reveal a sense of disenchantment with the actions of the government and a feeling of stigma due to living in East Manchester. Danielle tells me that the views she holds are ignored in mainstream debates. She is frustrated with equality politics as she feels that she cannot express her opinions without being seen to be intolerant of others.

I'm all for diversity but you do feel sometimes that you're the odd one out. All of this which is ‘racism,’ is not. Like there are loads of things you can't say any more. Like blackboard but it's stupid cos you can still say whiteboard.

In the conversation with Danielle and Linda and then when I talked to Danielle alone, the subject of race differed from one situation to the next. But in both cases, they refer to the subject of inequality.

Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) research focuses on the way in which race shapes the lives of white people. Her work suggests that it is vital to explore the ways that race privilege might be crosscut by other axes of difference and inequality such as class, culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Frankenberg says that the category of white is ‘a colour and, at once, not a colour’ as race is socially constructed (1993:236). The conversations I had with Danielle and Linda reflect how individuals actively negotiate race which means that ‘whiteness changes over time and space and is in no way a transhistorical essence’ (Frankenberg 1993:236). In a similar analysis, Anoop Nayak describes that whiteness is a mobile, contextually contingent identification which is enacted, displaced or resisted.
(2003:320). He suggests that whiteness is constituted in relation not only to blackness but is also fashioned through and against other versions of whiteness. Nayak (2011) argues that the way we think about race is imaginary, a projection of fear and desire and a ‘floating signifier’. In this perspective, race is not simply ‘a fiction’ but is a ‘dividing practice’ or way that difference is constituted between people, in late modern societies (Nayak 2011:554).

The work of these authors provides a useful explanation of the reasons why Danielle talks about race in conflicting ways. We see how race, like gender, is ‘real’ in the sense that it has ‘real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on on individuals’ sense of self, experiences and life chances’ (Frankenberg 1993:11). People are ‘reflexive actors’ and the meanings and values surrounding race are fluid (Tyler 2004). However, if we try to make sense of these narratives purely in terms of race they appear to be contradictory. My informants express their desires for equality for all ’ordinary people’ no matter what race they are. However, at the same time, they suggest that as a result of equality politics, the wishes of certain groups of people are ignored and they argue that for this reason, race has become deeply significant. I argue, therefore, that we must seek to understand why there is a perceived sense of injustice against ‘white’ people living in East Manchester. What is common in all of the discussions which I took part in or overheard, is that one group of people are being favoured, compared to others.

Here, Mahmood’s (2005) work offers a useful approach. Rather than trying to make sense of the meaning of race in these narratives, following her work, I look again at the reasons why people are talking about race in these accounts. Mahmood’s research examines the urban women’s mosque movement in Cairo where a piety revival is reshaping Egyptian
society. The Islamic movement in Egypt poses a dilemma for feminist theories. While it has allowed women to enter previously male-dominant domains in mosques across Egypt, the movement’s focus on piety also upholds and supports idioms which have been used to subordinate women to patriarchal authority (2005:6). From these observations, Mahmood questions the assumption that agency should be understood within a dichotomy between freedom and subordination which has characterised western feminist approaches. Her work states that feminist analyses have been confined and limited by conforming to the western, liberal agenda and have not, therefore, explored other meanings of freedom in different contexts. Her argument holds that trying to understand power through that lens of liberal politics does not always work in non-western contexts. In Egypt, the women Mahmood worked with embodied supposedly subordinating patriarchal norms which paradoxically operated as a locus of agency.

Even though they are from a radically different context, my ethnographic examples offer parallels to Mahmood’s work. In both cases, people do not comply with the norms of liberal politics and question how to make sense of unequal relations. In East Manchester, my participants’ comments appear, on the surface, to be normative and racist. But, on closer inspection, they are an important means of trying to understand unequal relations. The way in which race is invoked in discussions about inequality bears a striking resemblance to the ways in which my informants talk about politicians. Both are concerned with the allocation of resources and people looking after their own interests. These incidents exemplify wider disenfranchisement from mainstream politics which is dominant in East Manchester. They support Evans’ argument that rather than working people stressing their similarities to one another, multiculturalism ‘teaches people to trade their difference’ leading white working class people to feel their only option is now
to compete against black and Asian people for resources and recognition (Evans 2010:129).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained how my informants feel as though their interests are ignored by politicians and articulate a strong sense of frustration with equality politics which they perceive to be illogical, nonsensical and further deepening unequal relations in East Manchester. There is a common perception that 'local' people are being unfairly treated compared to other groups. This is often explained in terms of race, particularly in relation to entitlement to housing and employment. I have argued that there are striking similarities between the way in which race is invoked in these accounts and in discussions about politicians. In both cases, my informants question who is getting resources such as housing and jobs. Local people feel a sense of affiliation with the 'ordinary man' and a collective understanding of fairness in contrast to what they perceive to be selfish actions taken by politicians who are self-interested and money orientated. It is felt that politicians are out of touch and not interested in representing the views of residents living in East Manchester. This discussion has examined the changing relationship between social class and politics. Even though the Labour Party was once thought to be representative of working people, it is said that they have distanced themselves from their voters. For many of my informants, there is no point in voting at all.

The discussions in this chapter have built on debates within the anthropology of Britain about the shifting contours of community within a changing political context. I have described how during industrial times, ethnographies described how families and neighbours formed strong bonds with one another for mutual support against the
difficulties of living with limited economic resources (Firth 1956, Young and Willmott 1957, Bott 1957, Frankenberg 1957). In contrast, recent anthropologists have stressed how social and economic change has brought about a sense of neighbourhood fragmentation and social isolation in post-industrial communities (Hart 2005, 2008, Evans 2006, Mollona 2009a). The discussion in this chapter adds to these observations. Social change is regarded as inherently unpredictable in Beswick and Openshaw. Long-standing residents feel as though there is no one to protect their interests and equality politics are thought to be illogical, nonsensical and likely to further deepen unequal relations. There is a growing sense of resentment against politicians by people who do not feel as though they have been rewarded by the promise of economic growth and social cohesion (Jones 2011, Evans 2012a). Also, there is a growing sense of frustration against newer residents who are perceived to be encroaching on the limited resources which are available.

Adding to existing debates, my informants’ views about race, which often appear to be exclusionary and intolerant, tell us about their desires for equality. East Manchester is a place where it is commonly argued that ‘there is no community any more’ as solidarity between residents is thought to have weakened (see Chapter Three). Here, residents are concerned about their own position vis-à-vis that of others who seem to have a better capacity for self-representation. Superficially, my informants’ views could be read as stereotypical racist sentiments and what would be expected of ‘white working class’ people. However, following Mahmood, I have argued that we must not only examine moments where individuals resist dominant discourses but, critically, explore incidents where individuals ‘inhabit norms’ (2005:15). In order words, we must examine the moments in which, on the surface, it appears as though people continue to articulate discourses which reproduce their own domination. In East Manchester, local people challenge liberal policies by articulating their frustration towards politicians. These
instances illustrate a unique perspective on the way in which politics are understood as restrictive and unfair. Long-standing residents stress their attachment to the locality to which they belong and which, in an ideal world, would also 'belong' to them, in order to protect themselves from social isolation and political disenfranchisement. This discussion further demonstrates how understanding power through the lens of liberal politics works neither in some non-western contexts nor in some supposedly progressive political settings, like East Manchester. In the conclusion to the thesis, which follows, I explore these issues further by examining how community is understood by my informants in terms of unpredictability and inequality.
Conclusion

Rethinking notions of community in relation to uncertainty

This thesis has presented an anthropological study of the social lives of a group of long-standing residents living in East Manchester in 2010, a locality which has been reshaped by numerous waves of regeneration. Despite the material transformations which have taken place, which were aimed to create a stable and progressive future, many local residents argue that the future is defined by uncertainty. Rather than assessing whether or not regeneration has succeeded or failed, the thesis has highlighted how sociality is constructed in this context and explained some of the tensions which have emerged. I have described how compared to the rich social life of the past, residents argue that today, people are divided and often isolated due to high rates of unemployment and welfare dependency. The locality is said to be more dangerous than ever before, due to a deterioration of social ties and a perceived rise in levels of violence which is thought to be perpetrated by both outsiders and people living in the community. A strong sense of disenfranchisement was evident, particularly at the time of the General Election when many of my informants told me that there was no point in voting. They argued that politicians did not look out for the interests of ‘ordinary’ working class people and suggested that the views of people living in Beswick and Openshaw were totally ignored in mainstream debates.

From these observations, it would appear, as Mollona (2009a) has suggested, that processes of deindustrialisation and social change have neither turned the working class into the middle class nor wiped class off the political map, but rather have increased fragmentation and division between individuals. However, the thesis has illustrated that social life among long-standing residents in East Manchester is rather more complex than
Mollona’s analysis gives credit to. Even though residents with whom I worked often argued that their community was deteriorating, social ties remained resolute in groups like those at the market (see Chapter Three), the coffee morning (see Chapter Four) and the Mothers’ Union (Chapter Six). In Chapter Three, I pointed out that the discourse of societal decay was often articulated as a means of consolidating social ties.

In order to explain long-standing resident’s seemingly contradictory descriptions of their social circumstances, it is necessary to extend existing theoretical understandings of community that have been presented in the literature on the anthropology of Britain. In this conclusion, I argue that narratives about the decline of the area cannot simply be understood as a matter of class transformation or in terms of social fragmentation, as Mollona’s (2009a) analysis would suggest. Rather than an increase in fragmentation between individuals, there is a strong sense of uncertainty and unpredictability among long-standing residents. I suggest that existing understandings of community would benefit from being examined in relation to a number of interrelated factors, which include narratives of the past and, locality, material objects, risk, ethnicity and social class. Examining unpredictability and uncertainty in East Manchester offers a unique vantage point to understand the reasons why, for some people, the contemporary political moment feels like a ‘crisis of belonging’ (Edwards et al. 2012). More broadly, I explore what the analysis presented in this thesis contributes to anthropological understandings of contemporary British life in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

**Narratives of the past**

Discussions about the richness of social life in the industrial past were dominant in social settings across East Manchester in 2010. I was struck by how often people reminisced
about such things as their previous places of work, coal fires, terraced houses, the Whit parade and home remedies. It was often remarked that the 'old fashioned' community was strong, held together by a shared work ethic in which families and neighbours lived in close proximity and were connected to one another by communal values: the evaporation of which puts people today in greater danger. Residents remarked that even though people had less material wealth, life was 'stable' and 'secure'. It was said that local people used to occupy similar economic positions, would look after one another, by passing on news of employment, or by taking care of each other’s children, or by offering social support, such as giving advice on health and remedies for illnesses. By contrast, in contemporary life, East Manchester is to be divided, partly due to high levels of unemployment and a broader deterioration in social values. In different social settings, I was frequently told that residents no longer look out for one another, because now they are only interested in themselves.

It could be reasoned that such ethnographic insights into contemporary life in this locality are evidence of how older people are alienated from life in the post-industrial present due to the fragmentation and deterioration of community. These findings could be taken to explain how East Manchester has become a somewhat ‘unreal place’ due to the effects of political and redevelopment strategies which reflect the imaginations of local and regional polices, rather than of the communities themselves (Ward 2003:124). For critics of entrepreneurial urbanism, such as Ward (2003), the interests of the community and the developers are at odds with each other (see also, Mellor 2002, Peck & Ward 2002). However, I want to argue that the picture is more complicated than this and an alternative analysis is needed which prompts us to think again about the ways in which notions of community are constructed in this urban area. Rather than assuming that the interests of ‘the planners’ and ‘the residents’ are distinct (Scott 1998), this ethnography has illustrated
how the interests of local residents and redevelopers are sometimes in opposition but are also just as often interrelated. In Chapter Two, I explained how it is vital to examine the multiplicity of place naming and the ambiguity over the parameters of different places, rather than assuming that local residents have a uniform response to change as the many critical urban researchers suggest. The way that my informants constructed ideas about place, were shaped by contrasting and contested historical ideas about East Manchester, including former place names, as the later section on place discusses.

In order to examine the multiple and sometimes contradictory responses to change, I have argued that it is necessary to explain individuals’ relationships to place and to one another in relation to the theoretical work on community that is presented in the literature of the anthropology of Britain. To recap briefly. The period after the Second World War has been marked by a number of ‘considerable and dislocating social changes’ in which the conceptions of time, space and identities have been transformed (Macdonald 2002:97). Anthropological research in social settings across Britain has illustrated that these social changes have brought about radical changes to notions of community. For example, in the 1950s people living in an isolated village on the border between England and Wales drew on narratives of a common history in order to stress their sense of cohesion (Frankenberg 1957). In urban settings, individuals drew a sense of connection to one another through intense kinship networks (Firth 1956, Young & Willmott 1957, Bott 1957). With the onset of deindustrialisation in Britain, shifts in employment impacted upon identity and on individuals’ connections to place and community. It has been widely observed that in sites which have undergone rapid economic and social change, there has been a reconfiguration in social ties and for some working class people the contemporary political moment feels like a ‘crisis of belonging’ (Edwards et al. 2012).
Echoing these analyses, I have shown how individuals in East Manchester reflected on the loss of both informal sites of sociality and former values of community in order to form relations with one another in the present. In Chapter Three, following Cohen, I suggested that individuals create an ‘attachment or commitment to a common body of symbols’ in order to develop a sense of similarity to one another and to make sense of change (1985:16). Long-standing residents, paradoxically, form and strengthened social ties, by lamenting the loss of community and sharing narratives about the lost past. Community in the past is described in terms of ‘stability and communication’, and its ‘breakdown’ is linked to the loss of these things (Edwards & Strathern 2000:151). As Christian Giordano (2005) notes, the way in which people talk about history is not a faithful reconstruction of the past; rather it always contains something invented. Writing about the way in which anthropologists should examine their informants’ understandings of history, Giordano argues that the mobilisation of the past is usually carried out with specific aims in mind – ‘finding one’s bearings in everyday life, signalling a sense of belonging or identity, transmitting a symbolic or metaphorical message to other social actors, stabilising relations of power or of social disparity, rebelling against conditions that are considered to be unacceptable’ (2005:56). Following Giordano, we can conclude that in the contemporary moment, romanticised images of community in the past are seized upon by people living in East Manchester who are trying to make sense of radical social change and who question their place in the contemporary world (see also, Jones 2010).

By analysing the way in which the past is referred to in these narratives it is possible to add to Cohen’s (1982) argument about the ways in which community is made. In post-industrial life, older people use images of community in the past as an anchor which stabilises them in defence against what they envisage as a shifting and unstable present (Dawson 2002a, 2002b, Degnen 2005, 2007, Blokland 2001). The consciousness of community emerges in the perception of its boundaries which are largely constituted by
people in interaction (Cohen 1985:13). In East Manchester, narratives about the past offer an important means for individuals to share their feelings of uncertainty and to protect themselves against what they see as their own social marginalisation. Images of the past are drawn upon in order to create relationships in the present. In order to shed further light on why these narratives have become highly valued in East Manchester, it is necessary to look closely at the ways in which residents understand their relationships with place.

Place

After spending time in a number of localities in East Manchester, I learned that we cannot assume that concepts of community are synonymous with place. Local residents did not describe attachments to particular localities in Beswick or Openshaw in a uniform manner. Rather, notions of community were referred to in complex and seemingly contradictory ways and the relationship between place and identity was often contested. My research supports previous studies which show how people's identity is related to their sense of place. Anthropologists working in social settings across Britain have demonstrated that individuals draw a sense of identity from both the localities in which they live and the social relationships they form (Young & Willmott 1957, Frankenberg 1957, Cohen 1982, Strathern 1982, Rapport 1993, Edwards 2000, Evans 2006). These studies illustrate that place and locality matter not just because they are where people reside but also because they are where community, belonging and character are invested (Macdonald et al. 2005:597). My research contributes to this literature by showing that it is also important to examine the ways in which residents reconfigure relationships in localities which have undergone repeated phases of redevelopment. I have shown that in East Manchester, the parameters and identities of particular places are changed, ambiguous and contested. While residents draw a sense of identity from the localities in which they live, they also question and sometimes reject the new identities which are associated with the
redeveloped landscape. In light of these findings, we need to extend earlier anthropological understandings of the relationship between place and identity to encompass notions of uncertainty and unpredictability.

My findings support the work of other anthropologists who argue that there are serious political implications in assigning or denying the existence of 'community' to a group of people (see for instance, Cohen 1985, Rapport 2002, Amit 2002). They show that if we do not account for the complex ways in which individuals draw on intricate notions of community, we could end up 'tribalising' people as 'belonging to', or 'speaking for' a pre-defined community (Baumann 1996:8). Anthropologists have noted that people belong to different, overlapping, communities which sometimes exert contrasting pulls (Hall 2000). In addition, I have also argued that it is important to note that individuals may also deny belonging to a community in order to stress a sense of similarity to one another.

Instructive here is geographer Doreen Massey’s (1995, 1996, 2001) nuanced analysis of place. She suggests that places are always constructed out of articulations of social relations and always informed by politics. My findings resonate with her argument. Massey’s approach helps explain why ambiguity and contradiction surrounded key developments in East Manchester such as the stadium in Beswick (see Chapter Two).

While many local residents were proud that Beswick has become a popular sporting venue, they also felt that the interests of football fans were being put before those of local people. Even though there was general support for MCFC investing in East Manchester, there was also concern. Many informants felt that the club could play a positive role in the area by encouraging economic investment and bringing visitors to the area, while others were anxious that the interests of local people were being sidelined and not protected. The variety of opinions which I heard reflect how understandings of the ‘public’ are ‘multiple and differentiated’ and have different demands on localities as well as giving localities
different meanings (Massey 2001:467). It is possible to conclude that it is necessary to examine the way in which people form relations to both one another and the built environment and to employ a nuanced understanding of place which is sensitive to the ways in which new place names and rebranding of localities produce ambiguity. In order to understand how individuals stabilise relations, in such a context of uncertainty, I also argue that it is necessary to examine the ways in which gifts are exchanged.

Material objects

Even though my informants frequently suggested that social ties in East Manchester have deteriorated, my ethnography reflects the multiple ways in which they developed supportive networks with new acquaintances and old friends. In the reconfigured landscape, long-standing residents shore up appropriate forms of sociability through the frequent exchange of gifts. My observations echo earlier findings from the anthropology of Britain that illustrated how female-centred kin networks held renewed importance in moves to urban settings (Firth 1956, Young & Willmott 1957, Bott 1957, Finch 1989, Ross 1983). In East Manchester social networks have also taken on new forms. They often extend beyond the family and include a broader set of social relations. In the coffee morning and the market place, both objects and persons are implicated in social networks of relatedness (Henare et al. 2007). As I explained in Chapter Four, older women distribute small objects and money to family members and carry a burden of responsibility for their friends.

Social spaces like the coffee morning and the market have become focal points where informal networks of friendship develop in the newly regenerated landscape. These observations support Miller’s (2001a, b) call for a greater focus on questions of material culture in the anthropology of Britain, in order to supplement existing understandings of
kinship and community. Exploring the ways in which attachments to localities are fostered through connections between residents and, importantly, the built environment helps to shed light on the ways in which individuals cope with feelings of unpredictability (see Chapter Five). These observations demonstrate how social networks are formed and strengthened in the regenerated landscape and suggest that community takes on new dynamic forms. Residents pass on knowledge and useful items, 'look out' for each other and develop 'localised spaces of protection' (Skeggs2011:504). As I argued in Chapter Six, women not only exchange objects to strengthen relations but also to pass on information and news about neighbourhood safety and well being.

**Risk**

As I have shown, despite the intensive regeneration efforts that have been introduced to reduce crime in East Manchester, many residents feel the locality to be unsettled and more dangerous than ever before. They argue that in the past, the crucial and constant 'looking out for one another' kept each other safe. Even though there has been a material reduction in crime, long-standing residents perceive East Manchester to be more risky than ever before because there are fewer obvious examples of these community-wide practices. Residents question the introduction of CCTV cameras and new policing initiatives. They suggest that rather than bringing about greater security, danger has multiplied. In Chapter Six, I explored some of the complex reasons people give for their world being more dangerous and risky and how they responded to the perception of heightened risk as they navigate their relations with one another. I was told frequently that, in the past, authority and discipline were respected in the community, but the Moors Murders in the 1960s changed everything. East Manchester was transformed from a safe community made up of families who were connected by networks of trust, into a place characterised by suspicion.
and danger. After the murders, children could no longer stray too far from their homes and the intentions of local men and, more surprisingly for residents, women, were questioned.

These findings show how societal ideas about risk impact in a significant way upon personal relationships, even those which are the most intimate (Beck 1994). Following Bott (1957), I argue that social networks are fluid and dynamic as they are always mediated by a number of different factors. By sharing stories about intimate violence in East Manchester, a discursive space was created by women in which they constructed themselves as protectors and guardians in order to counter the perception that all women are capable of abuse. Notions of risk are reflective of how social groups organise themselves and understandings of risk are always selected and politicised (Douglas 1994), and this is also the case in East Manchester. Women feel as though they have been burdened with an increased sense of responsibility for children. They put huge amounts of time and effort into maintaining informal networks of support in social spaces across the regenerated landscape.

Ethnicity

In the context of uncertainty and unpredictability that I have described as endemic in East Manchester, as well as within the current hostile economic climate, residents argue that they must protect their own interests. My informants pointed out that ‘local’ or white people are being unfavourably treated in East Manchester as they perceived equality politics to be racialised and to favour non-white people. These findings support Evans’ (2010, 2012a) research in Bermondsey. She suggests that ‘place-ism’ has emerged among white working-class residents in some post-industrial settings. Discrimination against, and
suspicion of, outsiders is evident, alongside a strong sense of territorial belonging. Similarly, in East Manchester, long-standing residents argued that they had a greater entitlement to local housing and jobs than newer residents. Many expressed a strong sense of frustration with politics as they felt that they were ignored by politicians who do not act on their behalf. It was often argued that equality politics were illogical, nonsensical and further deepened unequal relations. I argued that it is a mistake to read statements simply in racial terms or as a matter of only 'looking after your own'.

My findings support other research in the UK which has also shown a growing sense of resentment against politicians by working class people who do not feel that they have benefitted from the promises of economic growth and social cohesion (Jones 2011, Evans 2012a). In Chapter Seven I argued, that instead we need to analyse such narratives with regard to the way in which they express a deep sense of inequality and injustice. My informants felt as though their interests are ignored and they are frustrated about being silenced in mainstream discussions. While their views about race often appear to be exclusionary and intolerant, they also tell us about their desires and aspirations for equality and for being treated fairly (Smith 2012a,b, Mahmood 2006). Residents stressed their attachment to the locality to which they belong and which in an ideal world would also 'belong' to them, in order to protect themselves from social isolation and political disenfranchisement. The thesis supports the call by Edwards and colleagues (2012) to explore the highly specific and unpredictable ways in which people living in post-industrial neighbourhoods are surviving, resisting and giving meaning to the particular challenges they face in contemporary times.
Social class

I have described how class distinctions in East Manchester emerged ethnographically in a number of different ways. My informants suggested that in recent years, the gap between the political classes and the people who they are supposed to represent has widened. Even though class has become a taboo subject in many political discussions (Evans 2012a), long-standing residents argued that inequality is pronounced in Britain and divisions between residents are deepening. New Labour hoped to undermine the restrictions that class brings about their policies skirted around this issue. They put social mobility and meritocracy at the centre of their political campaigns (Jones 2011, Evans 2012a) but a strong sense of disenfranchisement was evident in East Manchester, particularly at the time of the General Election. It was argued that the Labour Party had abandoned its traditional supporters, the working classes and many residents said there was no point in voting. My informants argued that ‘local’ people were missing out in favour of non-white residents and argued that hostility towards newer residents threatened to bring about divisions in the community. At the same time, they made smaller fine-grained distinctions about other residents who they described as ‘rough’ or ‘respectable’ depending on a number of different factors, including the type of house in which they live, the social interactions they engage in, places where they socialise and so on (see Introduction).

In many sites of deindustrialisation across the world, anthropologists have suggested that the restructuring of work and labour has created sharper ideas about difference between people who may, at one time, have worked together in similar industries (Howe 1998, Dunk 2008, Bourgois 2003). In Britain, shifts in labour practices have brought about a perception that people are more divided than ever with the attendant perception that community is fragmenting (Dawson 2002, Hart 2005, 2008, Degnen 2005, Mollona 2009a).
In East Manchester, long-standing residents argue that the values which once held working class people together have disappeared. The future of the locality is experienced as uncertain as social relations have been reconfigured by economic transformation and social change. But even though it is often said that community has diminished, long-standing residents nevertheless shore up what counts as appropriate sociability and they make sense of their position in wider processes of change in a variety of ways. These findings indicate the importance of the analyst guarding herself against presenting a romanticised notion of what it means 'to be working class'. For example, in Chapter One, I described how understandings about work are often much more diverse and ambiguous than Marxist analyses give credit for (Mollona 2009a, Skeggs 2011). At the jobs club, I found a variety of views about employment. Some people were desperate to retrain so they could find work in the new service sectors, others felt that their skills were obsolete while some were wary about the types of job that were being created. From the perspective of people in East Manchester, there are a range of explanations for why unemployment continues to persist and there are contrasting opinions about what constitutes suitable work.

I have argued that in this context, we must focus on uncertainty and unpredictability, rather than fragmentation or class erosion. In this way we can analyse what it is, for specific kinds of people, in a particular time and place, to be working class in Britain, at the beginning of the 21st Century. My analysis supports Edwards and colleagues’ (2012) call to use ethnography to redress a sociological tendency to depict class as a fixed category of social relations (see for example Bennett et al. 2008). Even with the recent 'cultural turn' in sociology that has attempted to re-describe class as a more fluid category, we still find that even though classes 'move, morph, blend and mutate', persons are fixed in class categories not of their own making (Edwards et al. 2012:12). Whilst such sociological
studies are capable of producing class-based descriptions of British society, I suggest that they tell us little about the relations out of which such classed distinctions emerge. By focusing on the ways in which class comes to light in different social contexts, it is possible to see how being working class is less about income or consumption or cultural taste, as some sociological accounts would point to, and more about how people define what counts as appropriate sociality under conditions of radical uncertainty. Individuals are the outcome of ‘complex collective histories, rather than being defined by the specificities of class’ (Edwards et al. 2012:4). As Strathern notes, see that class is not simply of a person’s making as an individual ‘is a mixture of what he is and what he does, both moulded by background and created afresh by his unique achievements’ (1982:272). If we think about class in terms of a rational and economic model, we cannot account for the unexpected ways in which individuals respond to change, nor does it allow us to think about the small and almost imperceptible ways in which social relations and notions of community are constructed and stabilised.

Examining class ethnographically enables us to extend understandings of community in the anthropology of Britain. Rather than all residents articulating a shared class position, individuals share a sense of solidarity and articulate a sense of difference to others as they make sense of change by articulating their sense of uncertainty and precarity. In East Manchester there are multiple ways in which residents make sense of their position in wider processes of social and economic change. In order to examine how sociality is constituted in these circumstances, it is vital to re-examine social class, as divisions and inequalities continue to shape individual’s lives and impact on notions of community. My ethnography of East Manchester illustrates some of the ways in which individuals recreate and renew community and social relationships. I conclude that in this context of radical change and uncertainty, community must be understood in relation to different
interrelated factors, which include narratives of the past, place, material objects, risk and, ethnicity, as well as social class.
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