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**ALTERNATIVE CAPITAL, FRIENDSHIP AND EMOTIONAL  
WORK: WHAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO LIVE IN  
INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES INTO OLDER AGE**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL  
CARE**

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

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#### SUMMARY

This research explores what makes it possible for older members to live in intergenerational intentional communities in the South of England. These are uncommon entities within the UK; they are purposefully communally organised living arrangements adopting philosophies of mutual support. There is growing interest in intentional communities as potentially positive housing choices for later life, but no research has been undertaken exploring *ageing* in them.

I used a Bourdesian theoretical framework, exploring the economic, social and cultural capital that individuals commonly drew on in order to become members of their community (*habitus*) and to live day-to-day. I enhanced this approach by incorporating theorising from the fields of housing, cultural gerontology and care ethics, contributing to debates about the use of Bourdesian methods. I used qualitative research methods: a telephone survey of 22 communities and 23 interviews with members aged over 50, within 9 communities.

I found that half the communities had members aged over 60; all were intergenerational. I identified key economic differences between communities: individual-ownership models, which required individual financial investment upon entry (CoHousing) and social-ownership models, which did not (Housing Co-operatives and a squat); two were hybrid models.

The social-ownership intentional communities were more open to diverse potential new members. The cost of living was often very low, though this depended on the age of the community (*generational capital*) and the extent of sharing by members (*collaboration*). Long-standing housing Co-operatives had accumulated affordability capital and represented more radical transgression of the orthodoxies of UK housing and household formation under neo-liberal capitalist conditions (*practical utopias*). The cost of living in the CoHousing communities was individualised and similar to conventional homeownership. The CoHousing communities were more aligned with dominant property systems, gaining symbolic power through this.

Whilst participants from both types of communities shared certain dispositions and affinities (*habitus*), there was diversity based on traditional distinctions such as social or occupational class, or housing pathways. Bourdesian-type social and cultural capital were important, but in the form of *alternative capital* - constituted by critical thinking about conventional choices in life (reflexivity) and adoption of alternative, resistant hierarchies of cultural and social values. This enabled interviewees' agency and provided currency within the communities. It was sometimes linked to individual experiences of 1970s counter culture movements. Living in an intentional community at one point in life did not necessarily equate to a lifetime's commitment to this lifestyle - individual affiliation to a community could also be fleeting and ambivalent.

Emotional work made living in all communities possible, including tolerance and adaptability. Compromise was structured into all communities decision-making to varying degrees (consensus decision-making). Interviewees considered contributing to community life, friendships, commitment and consideration of the needs of others (informal ethics of reciprocal care) important.

Ageing and reciprocal relations of care were delicate matters, not spoken of explicitly in any community. Some interviewees were sure about staying in their community into older age. Most felt ambivalent. There were normative feelings about ageing, such as fears of dependency and determination to remain active (dominant discourses of successful ageing). Whilst intergenerational living was considered positive by all, some tensions were revealed. The ageing of established communities seemed to be challenging their informal and implicit value and mutual support systems. I argued intentional communities might benefit from greater acknowledgement and consideration of issues raised by ageing, to effectively support those moving into later life.

By shining a light on these unnoticed, often transgressive experiments in community living, I have shed light onto taken-for-granted housing choices in the UK and to show how limited those choices have become, particularly in older age.

## CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	12
How I came to be researching this topic and researcher identity	13
The social context of this research	13
The research questions	16
The structure of the thesis	17
CHAPTER 2 - A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE FIELD	21
Introduction	21
Definitions	24
Brief history of the literature relating to intentional communities	26
Contemporary literature - international	27
Contemporary literature - within the UK	34
Summary and contribution of this thesis to the existing literature	38
CHAPTER 3 - EPISTEMOLOGY, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY	40
Introduction	40
Epistemological journey	41
Theoretical underpinning for my research and methodological implications	42
Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field	43
The specific field of power and struggles between groups over capitals	45
Cultural and social capital and habitus	46
Symbolic violence and the doxa of contemporary housing choice	47
Bourdieu and empirical research	50

Further critical engagement Bourdieu: feminism, reflexivity and identities	51
Further critical engagement Bourdieu: emotions	53
Summary of Implications of Theory for Methodology	54
Operationalising a Bourdesian approach	54
Descriptive assemblage, listening and life stories	55
Housing pathways	56
CHAPTER 4 - METHODS	58
Introduction	58
Delineating the scope of the 'population' and sampling communities	58
Survey Methods	60
Sampling potential interviewees within the 9 communities	61
Qualitative Interviews Methods	64
The craft of interviewing	66
Situating the life of the interviewee within the community	67
Data Organisation and Transcription: on Listening and Reading	68
Reflections & decisions regarding preparation of data for analysis	69
The resulting process of interview data preparation: transcripts versus recordings	70
Approach to Data Analysis - Thematic Analysis	73
Ethical Approach	74
Researcher Identity: power, minimising harm and sensitivity	74
Information, Consent and Participation	75
Insider/Outsider Status	77
CHAPTER 5 - A TYPOLOGY OF THE COMMUNITIES AND DISTINCTIONS BASED ON ECONOMIC CAPITAL	79
Introduction	79
The results of the preliminary survey of 22 communities in the South of England	79

Overview of the nine intentional communities in this study	80
Economic capital: the finances required to become a member	81
a) Profiles of individual-ownership model communities (requiring financial capital investment)	83
b) Profile of a hybrid individual and social-ownership model community	87
c) Profiles of social-ownership model communities (NOT requiring financial capital investment)	90
Overview of the cost of living in the communities	95
Individual member income and property wealth	97
Discussion of Chapter 5	99
Economic capital and distinctions of individual and social ownership	99
Inclusion and exclusion	100
Generational and affordability capital	102
Social-ownership communities as utopian	103
The doxa of ownership and the rise of CoHousing	105
CHAPTER 6 - CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL REVEALED IN HOUSING PATHWAYS	108
Introduction	108
Classificatory identity: the individuals and their backgrounds	110
Gender, ethnicity and marital status	110
Familial origins, class identification	110
Occupational background	111
Educational qualifications	112
Cultural capital	112
Travellers of the world	112
Relationship breakups and breakdowns	113
Having children, especially as single parents	114

Dissatisfactions with conventional life	116
Social capital	118
Family and friendship networks	120
Housing pathways in and out of community living	121
Becoming a member at different stages of life of the community	122
Discussion of Chapter 6	125
Alternative cultural capital	125
Alternative notions of family and friendships	128
Habitus and reflexivity and the realisation of agency	130
Changing communities over time	132
CHAPTER 7 - WHAT IT TAKES TO SUSTAIN EVERYDAY LIFE IN COMMUNITY	134
Introduction	134
Tolerance and compromise in everyday life	134
Consensus decision-making	136
Conflict management	138
Contribution and productivity	140
Commitment and resilience	143
Balancing sociability, privacy and change	145
Change and adaptation	149
Intimacy and familial relations in day-to-day life	150
Learning <i>through</i> community living	151
Discussion of Chapter 7	153
Alternative capital: commitment to the principles and practices of sharing	153
Resilience and resistance to the doxa	155
Physical capital and making a contribution	156
Emotional work	157



Hidden solidarities	160
CHAPTER 8 – MOVING INTO OLDER AGE IN INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITIES	161
Introduction	161
Not talking about ageing	161
Feelings about getting older	162
Talk of staying put – communities as good places to age	165
Ambivalence and talk of moving on	166
Fears of decline and dependency	169
Stories of care and support	171
The limits of care	173
Intergenerational living	174
Positive experiences	174
Age-related tensions and ageism	175
Attitudes towards senior-only communities	177
Discussion of Chapter 8	179
Unspoken dilemmas of ageing and habitus	179
Positive places of care and reciprocity	182
Intergenerational tensions and other challenges	183
Ageing as a general field?	184
CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS	186
Introduction	186
Is living in an intentional community possible for anyone?	186
Are intentional communities, good places to live in into later life?	189
Uncertainties and remaining questions	190
Reflections on the strengths and limitations of my methodology	191
Contribution to knowledge	195

My doctoral journey	196
Going Forward: impact and future research	196
BIBLIOGRAPHY	199
APPENDIX 1 - Literature Search Strategy	215
APPENDIX 2 - Individual Research Participant Information Sheet	218
APPENDIX 3 - Individual Research Participant Consent form	220
APPENDIX 4 - Classification Questions for Interviewees	221
APPENDIX 5 - Interview Topic Checklist	222
APPENDIX 6 – Detailed Processes for Interview Data Preparation	223
APPENDIX 7 - Emerging Themes from Interviews about Why And How	224
APPENDIX 8 - NVivo Coding Results	226
APPENDIX 9 – Ethics Approval Certificate July 2014	234
APPENDIX 10 – Example of a Profile of a Community (Anonymised)	235
APPENDIX 11 – Summary of the Interviewee’s Profiles, including Classificatory Identity	237
APPENDIX 12 – All Interviewees Housing Pathways	240
Appendix 13 – Summary of the Themes Relating to Chapter 7	264
APPENDIX 14 – Summary of the Themes Relating to Chapter 8	266

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about some remarkable communities and some remarkable individual stories set within them. Intentional communities are uncommon entities within the UK; they are purposefully communally organised and adopt philosophies of mutual support that transgress orthodox norms of housing and household formation to varying degrees. These communities are invisible in mainstream housing statistics; there is no central source of information about them in the UK and there are scant references in housing policy and practice literature. Yet popular media interest bubbles up from time to time and lately journalistic accounts have held these communities up as examples of innovative practice that UK housing and social policy-makers ought to pay attention to when trying to address contemporary housing problems (Jones, 2012; Moore, 2014; Morrison, 2011).

In addition, there is evidence of a current surge of practical interest in setting up CoHousing intentional communities in the UK, particularly amongst people aged over 50 (UK CoHousing Network), who have been referred to as post-war 'baby boomers' or the 'boomer generation' (King, 2015; McNeil, 2014). This surge of interest is part of a perceived crisis in how we manage the 'problem' of the growing numbers of older people within UK society (Brignall, 2009; Bynorth, 2015). The media coverage of this perceived crisis is plentiful: 'Financial time bomb' created by ageing population' (Duncan, 2012); 'only one in four have faith in system to care for them in old age' (Bingham, 2014); 'how society can support the growing number of older people?' (Adams, 2012; Duncan, 2012; Magnus, 2009; Monbiot, 2012) and; 'the brand of residential care is fatally damaged' (Demos, 2014). There is a contemporary, media-fuelled moral panic underway relating to ageing and housing and care systems.

Located behind this media hype is a small subterranean seam of enduring and more measured academic interest in these communities, which has a long history which connects to the writings of Aristotle and Thomas More. In the last half-century this interest has been focused on particular waves of development from the 1970s 'hippie communes' to the 1990s eco-villages, or particular questions about community living which I outline in more detail in the literature review (Chapter 2). This thesis builds on and contributes to this small but growing academic field of interest in developing a deep understanding of these communities and what can be learned from them. I have applied a Bourdesian theoretical

lens to explore the phenomenon of intentional communities and the perceptions of older members about what it takes to become a member of and to live successfully in them.

## **How I came to be researching this topic and researcher identity**

In December 2010 I sat down with a close friend, who had also worked for many years in health and social care a dozen friends to discuss how we might live together and support each other moving into older age. I was in my late 40s and working as a project manager in the NHS and he was in his late 50s, working as a social worker in palliative care. In addition to the many reflective conversations we had had about the strengths and weaknesses of the UK welfare state for older people, we had both learnt from being involved in community projects, from community self-build, to allotments for people with learning difficulties. I was also drawing on my early academic interest in self-build as escape attempts enacted through architecture (Cohen & Taylor, 1992 (1976)). He was also drawing on his experiences in mental health nursing and his 1970s counter-culture influences.

We talked mainly as individuals about why we had come and what we hoped for in terms of our quality of life as we became older. Some drew pictures of their ideal home and community. We came out of the session with a long and daunting list of questions. These eventually became distilled into a few key questions: What kinds of community living work well for what kinds of people, especially those starting out on this pathway later in life? What is gained by living in an intentional community and what is lost? How are boundaries best drawn between what space is individual and what is communal? What were our expectations of each other as we aged? What levels of support could we expect to provide for each other? Finally, *how* might such a project be taken forward and what kinds of obstacles would have to be overcome and what would the key enablers be? This is where my interest in this topic grew.

## **The social context of this research**

There are three key contextual landscapes in which this research is set:

- 1) Changing demographics within the UK, specifically 'older people' constituting an increasing proportion of the UK population;

- 2) The changing living arrangements of households that include older people over recent decades, including changes in housing;
- 3) The policies and responses of the state to these changes, including shifting responsibilities for managing the wellbeing and care of older people.

The first is the changing demographic profile of the UK. Older people are growing as a proportion of the population, living longer being economically inactive for longer (ONS, 2013b). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the UK provides the data and conceptual categories that form the basis of the UK's 'social facts' about older people. The ONS projects that the number of people aged 65 years and older (one of the key institutional categories defining 'older people') will increase from 17% of the population in 2010 to 23% in 2035 (ONS, 2012). It also describes the effect of the 'baby booms' – such as the peak in the numbers of births following the end of the second world war – that will occur in the UK. Like all population bulges, these social facts raise questions about how society will need to change and about how housing and social care resources will be affected.

The second landscape is the changing housing market and the living arrangements of households that include older people. The UK Census defines older people as over 65 years and reported in 2011 the vast majority of over 65s lived in homes they owned (75%), with only 19% in social housing, 6% in private rented, 6% in sheltered housing only 2% in care homes (residential or nursing homes) (ONS, 2013b). So the overwhelming majority of older people are now homeowners. It's a significant increase compared to the 1980 census, which reported that just over half (53%) of over 65s were owner occupiers (Centre for Policy on Ageing, 1986). The 2011 census also reported that of the over 65s, over half (54%) lived in a couple household, a third (31%) lived in a single person household, with the remaining 15% categorised as living in some kind of communal establishments. Therefore, another significant change is the increase in the proportion of older people living alone – an increase of 8% in the last decade alone, to 3.6 million people (ONS, 2013a).

These social changes are part of a seismic shift in the balance of housing tenure over the last century, from the majority of the population renting to the majority of the UK population owning. Home ownership rates peaked in 2001 at 69% and have declined in the last 10 years but with intergenerational differences: increasing numbers of renters are younger people whilst home ownership continues to increase amongst older people (ONS, 2013a). This

recent trend has been described as a ‘perfect storm’ for young people and those on low incomes, who are ‘paying for Britain’s broken housing market’ (Grice, 2015).

The ideological dominance of individual home ownership and its dependence on the commercial housing market in the UK (Gurney, 1999a) forms the societal context in which intentional communities exist. It dictates norms of housing and household formation and shapes, and is shaped by, the policy responses of the state and changing political priorities about where the responsibility lies for managing the housing and wellbeing of older people.

Concerns about these changing demographics have fuelled significant governmental focus on how to manage impacts of increasing longevity (including longer periods of dependency in later life), whilst maintaining quality of life and managing increasing welfare costs (House of Commons, 2010). The Treasury has forecast significant increases in the care burden and care costs, depending on how well different ameliorating policies and practices are implemented (Wanless, 2006; Wanless, 2002). These forecasts have spawned a raft of government and other institutional policies and practices designed to reduce the financial burdens of increased numbers of older people, for example, increasing the age threshold for receiving the state pension from 65 to 68 years (Gov.uk, 2013). Policies have been targeted at older people achieving ‘active ageing’ or ‘Ageing Better’ (<http://www.cpa.org.uk/index.html>), with investment in research exploring what this would mean and how it can best be achieved (University of Sheffield, 2013; ESRC, 2013). There has been interest in how older people can be encouraged to use equity in their homes to pay for their care (House of Commons, 2010: 31). State sponsored public health campaigns have enjoined older people to keep fit and stay healthy; the headline Big Society initiative of 2010 attempted to articulate a vision of self-help as the new orthodoxy, reducing dependency on the state and replacing it with helpful neighbours and empowered citizens (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10680062>).

There has been extensive criticism of the Big Society concept and related policies (Jacobs, 2014; Manzi, 2014; McKee, 2015) which I will not duplicate here, except to emphasise a key argument that such policies are ‘unduly motivated by an instinctive and absolute distrust of the state reflect a faulty assumption that grassroots involvement is always progressive’ (Carolan, 2013: 240) and contain many unspoken assumptions (Such, 2013). There has also been support for such policies, as a better-late-than-never development needed to enable

older citizens and service users to retain control of their lives to maximise their chances of maintaining dignity and respect in relation to care (In Control, 2014).

Existing and emerging intentional communities of mutual support can, therefore, be situated within these competing discourses of self-help versus dependency within UK society and within the institutions of the state. Intentional communities could represent a potential example of proactive self-help, or, alternatively, a response to the failure of the UK state to provide adequate housing and social support choices for older people. Questions about the structural conditions constraining housing and household formation are highly relevant in this context. Critical exploration of notions of *choice* and questions of agency in relation to home and community for older people in the context of these communities is timely. In times of state-managed austerity, opportunities for growth are afforded by private developers moving into the residential care market, building USA-style retirement homes and retirement communities (Ball et al., 2011). Such opportunities need to be critically evaluated and contrasted with alternatives.

In addition, as older people become a more significant as voters and as a growing property market segment, so is it important to consider the potential for increased power and agency in older age – an age historically associated with vulnerability. If some boomers are showing increasing interest in new ways of living, such as CoHousing, then it is important to research why and how such interest is engendered and by what kinds of older people, what makes such developments possible and with what benefits for older people. It is also timely to consider the potential impacts in terms of future policy and practice in housing development.

Questions about why some individuals came to be involved in these intentional community developments and what resources they drew on to make their choices possible, are key to understanding their significance. Questions about what elements of the specific life histories of the participants enabled them to act outside of normative expectations can contribute to understanding what forms of agency are involved. Questions about whether or not these communities work for their older members to provide them care and support as they age are highly pertinent. In this context, the research questions that have driven the present study address a significant gap in what is known.

## **The research questions**



This thesis therefore addresses four principal and interrelated questions that have emerged through several iterations between my reading of the literature, conversations with people immersed in the world of intentional communities and my research data:

1. What do intentional communities share in common and what differentiates them (habitus) within the field of housing?
2. How do older individuals come to live in intentional communities and what kinds of resources, or capitals, do they draw on along the pathways into this form of housing?
3. What every day work is involved in sustaining life as an older member of an intentional community and what does this reveal about the habitus of intentional communities?
4. How are current members thinking about living within their intentional community into older age and what do their perspectives suggest about whether or not they are good places to get older?

The approach and methods I used to answer these questions were qualitative. I undertook a telephone survey of a population of intentional communities in the South of England to find out how many had older members informal and open-ended interviews with individual older members of the sampled communities. The interviews were designed to draw out individual housing life histories, information about the current criteria for acceptance into their community, their current reflections what it takes to live in their community successfully their thoughts about the future.

## **The structure of the thesis**

The next chapter (2) provides a review of the relevant literature. It offers a systematic appraisal of what is known about intentional communities internationally and in the UK and is necessarily interdisciplinary. It draws on relevant research into the interrelationship of utopian thinking, home, housing and ageing. Each of these subject areas represents a field of academic interest in its own right, which I could not systematically review within the space available within this thesis. Therefore, the systematic review is limited to what is known already about intentional communities.

In Chapter 3, I describe my epistemological stance, the theoretical underpinning for my research my methodological approach. In Chapter 4, I outline the resulting methods that were used to conduct the research. I provide a rationale for using qualitative methods (the survey and face-to-face interviews) in order to investigate the intentional communities and to elicit the views and stories of individual research participants living in them. I include my sampling logic and a full discussion of how I approached data analysis. This chapter also describes my ethical approach to the research.

The first of my empirical findings are presented in Chapter 5, in which I use the data from both the survey and the interviews. I apply Bourdieu's theoretical framing of *the field* as housing and explore the habitus of the communities, formed, as Bourdieu suggests, along the key axis of economic capital. At the end of each chapter I analyse my findings, relating them to existing literature and using relevant theoretical perspectives to illuminate and interrogate what I found. I integrate my theoretical framework with my data to provide an integrated analysis that answers my research questions and interpret what my research means.

In Chapter 5, I answer the following questions:

1. How many intentional communities in the South of England had older members?
2. What did these intentional communities with older members have in common and what differentiated them (typology)?
3. What kinds of economic 'capital' were required by individuals to become part of these communities and how did the nine communities differ from each other in this respect?
4. How much did it cost to live in the different types of community?
5. How inclusive or exclusive were the communities on the basis of economic capital?
6. How, therefore, could these communities be placed economically within the field of housing in the UK?

In Chapter 6, I present further empirical findings and continue to explore the habitus of the communities by drawing out the cultural and social capital involved in the interviewees becoming members. I answer the following questions:

7. What did individual members have in common more *structurally*: were there

affinities in terms of occupational class, gender ethnicity?

8. What other kinds of cultural and social capital were suggested by each interviewee's accounts of becoming a member of their community and was it possible to see in these stories how individual agency was enabled or constrained?
9. What else was revealed in the interviewees' stories of becoming members and how had experiences changed over time?

What existing members considered it took to live successfully in their community on a day-to-day basis forms the subject matter of Chapter 7, as a further route into understanding the degree of shared habitus of their way of life. I consider:

10. What did it take to live successfully in their community on a day-to-day basis?
11. What other kinds of work were being undertaken by these older members day-to-day and did these represent other forms of capital (other than cultural and social capital)?
12. How much of this was learnt *through* community living?

Chapter 8 addresses my final key questions and brings out interviewees perspectives on moving into older age in their communities. It explores current feelings about ageing and imaginings of the future. Specifically, I outline the main findings responding to these questions:

13. How did individual older members feel about ageing in general?
14. What were their individual expectations in relation to living in their community as they aged and what did these tell us about the communities' realisation of mutual support?
15. What was spoken of and what was not in relation to ageing?
16. What did existing members' perspectives on ageing add to understanding what made living in communities possible into the future?

At the end of each chapter, I use my theoretical framework to illuminate and interrogate what I found and draw on the existing literature to discuss and analyse what my findings mean.

My conclusions are drawn together in chapter 9. I draw out the main answers and messages from my research and try to distil my main arguments based on my research findings. I also point to remaining questions and uncertainties. I make the case for my contribution to knowledge based on this research and discuss its importance for past and future research and policy and practice in the field of housing and ageing.

## CHAPTER 2 - A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE FIELD

### Introduction

My chosen subject area and research questions require an inter-disciplinary approach, that cuts across different fields within social sciences - including social policy, sociology, housing studies, urban planning and design, critical, social and cultural gerontology and human geography. The subject matter of intentional communities – let alone a focus on ageing within them - is so marginal within mainstream academic disciplines and discourses that the concept of ‘undisciplinarity’ resonates. Escobar’s concept of undisciplinarity emerged from the Latin American group on modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (Escobar, 2008) and means that the phenomenon under investigation is impossible to reduce to one field. This poses a problem for my literature review: where do I draw the lines if there is undisciplinarity? The specific literatures that I have selected to review in this thesis are those pertaining *directly* to intentional communities within the most relevant disciplines: I have included international sources for the sociological analyses and academic research, but only UK sources for the more practical stories and historical and descriptive accounts within the grey literature. This is to avoid the literature review being diverted by the vast practically-orientated information from the USA, about CoHousing in particular.

I acknowledge that my research questions guide me to a number of significant bodies of knowledge that, within the confines of a single PhD, I cannot do justice to. I mention them briefly here before turning to the main focus of this literature review, but they will also provide a conceptual lens when I discuss and interrogate my own research findings at the end of each chapter. The extensive literatures about housing and household formation, even within the UK, don’t relate closely to my research questions. However, key debates within this field do provide important material: about social class and inequalities of access to housing including the politics of property ownership (Evandrou, 1988; Flint, 2015; Kenyon and Heath, 2001; McKee and Muir, 2013; Rogaly and Taylor, 2009; Saunders, 1984; Savage et al., 1992); about choice in housing (Forrest and Leather, 2002; Heath, 2008; Kenyon and Heath, 2001; Skobba, 2015); analyses of the concept of a contemporary housing crisis (McKee and Muir, 2013; Minton, 2012; Rutter, 2015); and the application within housing of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts - for example, the use of symbolic capital to view housing tenure as a form of distinction (Flint, 2011; Flint and Rowlands, 2003)).

There is also a pertinent and long-standing body of literature within housing that has been critical of choices for older people as lacking appropriate diversity to match the changing needs and circumstances of older people (Audit Commission, 2008; Centre for Policy on Ageing, 1986; Tinker, 1997). Peace has evidenced the need for inclusive housing that recognises the diversity of older people's needs (Peace, 2006; Peace and Holland, 2001; Peace et al., 2011), alongside criticisms of the demise of housing as a public good and increasing domination of private markets that fail to deliver such standards as *lifetimes homes* (Barlow and Venables, 2004; Department for Communities and Local Government et al., 2008; HAPPI, 2009; Lifetime Homes, 2015). Peace and Holland suggest that housing provision is institutionally ageist (Peace and Holland, 2001) and Peace has argued that UK housing has disembodied and disabled human beings through designs that are insensitive to the changing needs of people through the life-course (ESRC/OU seminar series entitled 'Ideal Homes?' 2013 – 2014). She has cited intentional communities as exemplars of the diversity of housing provision that ought to exist describes 'new concepts like HomeShare and CoHousing' as examples of hope for alternative housing choices for older people (Peace, 2006: 186).

Chapman and Hockey (1999) have also been influential in criticising mainstream housing production and provision and have described the historical forces that have shaped British housing, from the British speculative builders responsible for 'producing homes according to pattern book designs' (Chapman and Hockey, 1999: 6), to the manipulation of the market by property-based capital and the cultural conservatism which means an individual's 'control' is 'mediated by expectations about acceptable forms of decoration, furnishings, social manners and order' (Chapman and Hockey, 1999: 195). They describe people setting up and living in intentional communities as people who 'dare to be different' by challenging the rules of social conventionality as 'exceptional' and as 'rather like religious pilgrims' (p197). These critiques of notions of choice in housing for older people and this positioning of alternative communities as swimming upstream against the norm are highly relevant for my research and analysis. Therefore, I draw on highly significant and critical publications from within the field of housing to set the context and within my analysis, but I do not provide a comprehensive literature review.

Similarly, in asking questions about later life and focussing on the perspectives of older members, there are important concepts and relevant texts within the fields of cultural and critical gerontology (Twigg and Martin, 2015a). It would not be relevant enough to review

the extensive and growing literatures within gerontology because of its historic emphasis on clinical health, nor social gerontology, with its focus on older people mainly from a social policy perspective (Bond et al., 1993). My early focus on the literature within ageing began with the intersection between housing, ageing *communal living* in the UK, but the majority of publications were concerned with questions of physical well-being, formal care services the concept of communal living was dominated by issues relating to residential and nursing care, which are not relevant to my core research focus. Work exploring the interrelationship of housing, ageing and *community* led me to the urban planning and neighbourhood design sector. This had some overlap with the literature about intentional communities in relation to questions of buildings design and the facilitation of older peoples' engagement with local communities and neighbourhoods. Again, some of the significant learning and concepts from these specialist academic literatures are drawn on to set the context and to inform my analysis, but I do not provide a comprehensive literature review of them.

Finally, I have to make mention of the concept of *identity* that has emerged as a central axis of sociological analysis in the last 20-30 post-structural years and which figures in both the bodies of knowledge – housing and ageing – that I have made reference to above. Since Giddens seminal work and in the aftermath of the post-modern turn, challenges to and opportunities for the making of new forms of identities have been explored across many disciplines (Adams, 2006; Giddens, 1991; Wetherell, 2009). Of relevance here are those that specifically explore ageing and identity (Twigg and Martin, 2015b: Section III) and identity and the consumption of housing and home (Hearn and Roseneil, 1999: Part I) because they have both drawn attention to questions of meaning-making by individuals, but acknowledging power relations that constrain choices and operate to exclude or isolate certain people through discourses of what is normal and natural (Gurney, 1999b; Marshall, 2015). Once again, I can't do justice to the vast literature about identity in both these fields but I do draw on relevant authors and key concepts throughout my analysis.

In summary, my literature search strategy was focussed specifically on intentional communities and (given that this term is a term used widely only in the past twenty years) alternative terms used to describe them in the past ('communal groups'; 'communes'). I conducted a search based on combinations of words using Boolean operators ('community' AND 'home' AND 'older people') to ensure that I did not miss key research from broader literatures. I also undertook a search strategy based on the main sub-sets of intentional communities ('CoHousing', 'Housing Co-operative' and 'Ecovillage'). I further limited the

scope of the literatures by *not* including: non-English material; literatures that discuss intentional communities, but narrowly relating to economics, environmental and earth sciences, psychology, rehabilitation, medicine and nursing care, architecture and housing design or urban renewal; literature about therapeutic communities where individual participation in the community was not voluntary (examples include people with learning difficulties). This yielded 90 papers or books.

After reviewing the 90 papers and books that emerged from my systematic search strategy, I also conducted a review of all the contents of key journals that the selected research papers had been published in (for example, *Journal of Housing for the Elderly* (USA-focussed), *Housing, Theory & Society*, *Urban Research & Practice*) for the last three years and I reviewed regular e-mail updates for these and other journals during the course of my PhD. The full details of my original (2014) literature search strategy and my later repeat search (2016) are provided in Appendix 1. First I address the question of definitions.

## Definitions

The term *intentional community* is a relatively recent development in the long history of communal living and diverse definitions are used around the world. Documented use of the term seems to have begun in 1980s USA, when the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) started, emerging out of the International Co-operative Council. The FIC acknowledges the long-standing existence of such communities and explains their role as a support network:

*Intentional Communities have for many centuries been places where idealists have come together to create a better world. Although there are thousands of intentional communities in existence today many others in the formative stages, most people are unaware of them or the roots from which they spring. The Fellowship for Intentional Community is increasing public awareness of existing and newly forming communities.* (<http://www.ic.org/the-fellowship-for-intentional-community/> accessed 4/4/16)

The definition is not watertight; as the literature shows, the key defining characteristic is considered to be the degree of *intentionality* in living together, distinguished from communities that develop serendipitously through adjacency, in neighbourhoods, or are developed by commercial property developers for example (Baker, 2014; Christian, 2003; Dawson, 2006; Kanter, 1972; Rigby, 1974). In 1976, Abrams and McCulloch, in their study of communes and the commune movement in Britain, argued that defining such communities



was an integral part of his research rather than something that could be done from the outset:

*The definition is itself caught up in the whole process of observation and interpretation... Definition is a delimitation of questions, not an account of the world (Abrams and McCulloch, 1976: 24)*

At the same time, Rigby proposed a typology of six different types of communes based on the goals of the community (Rigby, 1974), but many members of the commune movement insisted that there were 'as many types of commune as there were communes' (Abrams and McCulloch, 1976: 25) and Abrams and McCulloch admitted that they had 'wrenched from the whole range of communal activities' a specific focus on secular family communes (p26).

Abram & McCulloch's caution about the social context in which any definition of intentional communities is constructed is still relevant. Sargisson, a key contemporary academic author in the field of research into intentional communities, provides a definition that opens out the question of definition itself. For her, intentional communities are:

*...bodies of people who have chosen to live – and usually work in some way – together. They have a common aim or commitment. This commitment might be to such things as a political ideology, a spiritual path or to Co-operative living itself. Those studied in the course of research for this book self-described as environmentalist. Intentional communities are sometimes referred to as 'utopias' (Sargisson, 2000: 29).*

Therefore, the question of definition in an academic sense is far from simple and subject to change over time. There is, however, increasing contemporary use of the term within the networks that support the development of intentional communities: 'Diggers and Dreamers' (a not-for-profit organisation in the UK that produces publications and supports a website providing a directory of communities) defines intentional communities as:

*Shared house, communal household, CoHousing group, ecovillage, ashram, alternative community, commune, housing co-op...with the locations and premises occupied being equally varied, as are the motivations and ideologies of the people who live in them... [with an] underlying commonality that links the groups together. A common thread that is the quest to create community (Bunker et al., 2007: 4)*

A contemporary North American guide defines intentional communities thus:

*A residential or land-based intentional community is a group of people that have chosen to live with or near enough to each other to carry out their shared lifestyle or common purpose together. Families living in a CoHousing community in the city, students living in housing Co-operatives, sustainability advocates living in rural back to the land homesteads are all members of intentional communities (Christian, 2003: xvi).*

So there is a practical contemporary consensus around the use of the term to describe groups of people that live and organise their lives together around certain common values or lifestyles. Current descriptions draw on a long history of experiments in communal living that have been described by different generations of scholars.

### **Brief history of the literature relating to intentional communities**

There is a long history of stories about utopian or unconventional communities that either hoped to, or delivered, places to live that enriched people's lives, dating back to pre-industrial worlds. Scholars have identified intentional communities as far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Hardy, 1979; Holloway, 1966; Jones, 2007; Morris and Kross, 2009). Often these were religious intentional communities and, within these accounts, there has been some focus on the inclusion of what were then referred to as *elders*, often within extended families, such as the Oneida communities described by Kanter (1972, Chapters 1 and 2). The religious nature of these communities meant that much of the research in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was conducted by those interested in religious studies (Hinds, 2004 (1961); Tyler, 2007 (1962)).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of interest shifted to studies of the Kibbutz in Israel and the hippy communes of the USA (Kanter, 1972; Miller, 1999; Shenker, 1986). These late 20<sup>th</sup> century studies were broadly sociological. Kanter's historical and sociological study explored the mechanisms of commitment that make communities either succeed or fail, based on historical analysis and empirical research in and amongst the communards of the 1970s in the US (Kanter, 1972). Miller described the hippy communes of the 1960s and 70s, including the communities that emulated in real life fictionalised utopias (the novel *Walden Two*) (Miller, 1999: 57). These three studies were sympathetic to the attempts of the groups involved to create alternative ways of life, recognising the problems many groups experienced. They analysed the factors that enabled and constrained communities to sustain their visions and ideologies over time. They saw the relevance of these micro communities as exemplars for wider society, offering lessons that might help wider society address social problems arising from modern industrial society and the demise of traditional social ties. The focus was often on the involvement of young people and family dynamics.

At this time, Hardy explored the history of alternative communities in England (Hardy, 1979). Two significant empirical studies in the UK were undertaken (Abrams and McCulloch, 1976;

Rigby, 1974): Hardy and Ward's joint work on people building communities in early 20<sup>th</sup> century plot lands in England (Hardy and Ward, 1984) and Ward's analysis of alternative housing movements (Ward, 1983). Again, age was not an explicit part of these accounts, although they had youth and rebellion as themes.

Coates, a self-taught historian and active communitarian for many years of his life, has published two key texts on the history of utopian thought and experiments in living in Britain since 1325 (Coates, 2001) and on 20<sup>th</sup> century communal living in Britain (Coates, 2013). He has also produced a blog that provides a rich contemporary history and illustrates how within even one building history repeats itself, as well as highlighting the dysfunctions of the contemporary housing market in London (<http://blog.utopia-britannica.org.uk/608>). His work is the result of the collaboration with fellow historians of the communes' movement and academics; it divides the UK history of utopian experiments into different, mainly chronological threads, ranging from 15<sup>th</sup> century Christian sects, through the English Civil war, artists' colonies early organic farming. He recognises that religion and politics were inseparable in much of this history, as were magic and science and that little is truly 'new'. Hence his chapter on the 'Old New Age' movements: 'We like to think that the 'counter culture' came along in the 1960s not the 1860s, but all the elements were there then' (p159.) Coates draws out the connections between early (1600s) and modern day movements, between the early experimenters with community and the search for a better life: the Quakers, the Moravians, the innumerable religious groups the Owenite socialist traditions (p67). The works of Hardy and Ward overlap with Coates work (Hardy, 1979; Hardy, 2000; Hardy and Ward, 1984). The important lesson from this work is that intentional communities are far from being new or innovative, though the particular form they have taken in contemporary UK society is under-explored.

## **Contemporary literature - international**

In the last 10-20 years, there has been increasing interest in intentional communities in Europe, North America Southeast Asia and Australia. UK writers have been amongst those describing personal journeys searching for meaning in diverse intentional communities and asking what makes some work better than others (Bramwell, 2014; Jones, 2007). The research has been interdisciplinary: ranging from foci on food choices and their relation to questions of race and class (Aguilar, 2015), to the growing environmental movement, with specific interest in ecovillages, despite definitions of ecovillages being varied and much

debated (Chatterton, 2013; Chitewere and Taylor, 2010; Christian, 2003; Dawson, 2006; Ergas, 2010; Lietaert, 2010; Shirani et al., 2015).

Sargisson has made a significant contribution to academic research in the field of intentional communities. Her work has embraced the diversity of intentional communities and interdisciplinarity (green political thought, feminist thought and deconstructive theory), to build a substantial body of empirical research on international intentional communities. She has explored diverse types of intentional communities, exploring what they are and what they stand for. She has described them as 'real working entity, not impractical', often with ambitious aims and visions, members of which 'have commitment and energy and are active political agents':

*...they are not, then, communities of unpractical dreamers, escaping from the harsh realities of life. Life in each of the communities visited is, in its own way, challenging most people's motivations for living in community are political, ideological and/or spiritual... None of the communities make claim to perfection... members are often excessively critical of the community. Nevertheless, they do see themselves as playing a transformative role and welcome interested visitors – they aim, in this way, to demonstrate the viability of alternative lifestyles (Sargisson, 2000: 29)*

Sargisson counters the stereotyping that exists within narratives of the 1970s and she addresses a number of key questions in relation to these communities. She sees intentional communities as 'spaces in which transgression and utopianism can be explored' and offering 'pragmatic and practical examples of alternative property relations from which many interesting theoretical questions can be pursued' (Sargisson, 2000: 77). She argues some communities provide examples of paradigm shifts in terms of property ownership, enacting stewardship over ownership generating, to some degree, a sense of personal empowerment and self-worth through being able to detach work from traditional waged labour for example (p101). For Sargisson the principles and practices that some intentional communities embody provide an 'opportunity for thinking differently about something that we might otherwise take for granted' and in this sense are utopian (p102). However, she does not utilise this utopian tradition in an idealistic way and remains open to criticism of the experiments she encounters (Sargisson, 2010).

Sargisson bases her analyses on extensive empirical research, including fieldwork in several countries (e.g. New Zealand, USA, Denmark and Sweden) and all the intentional communities in New Zealand (Sargisson, 2003). Her research involved visits to these

communities, 80% of which are egalitarian in constitution, to explore power and decision-making processes in relation to concepts of procedural justice (Sargisson, 2004). In her 2004 paper, she outlines in detail how communities sustain their egalitarian principles through processes and practices like consensus decision-making and codes of behaviour, and she examines how these have been developed to work for their communities over time. Later, she explores the paradoxical role that estrangement performs inside intentional communities by ‘facilitating critical distance and group coherence’ (Sargisson, 2007: 393) and how important boundaries are in maintaining and mediating estrangement. Her work is important for my thesis because she highlights the ways that communities control and manage the entry of new members:

*Entrance and exit rules play an important role in maintaining group coherence and stability. Prospective members are usually invited to visit on several occasions for short stays before being permitted to take up trial membership. This trial membership can last anything from three months to several years depending on the level of commitment involved in full membership (Sargisson, 2007: 408).*

Like Kanter, Sargisson provides an acute analysis of the tension between being against mainstream society and being part of it and the way that different communities grapple with this. Her work points to the importance of establishing mechanisms that include and exclude ‘the other’, including careful negotiations with neighbours *within* and *outside* the community’s boundaries and vigilance to ensure that estrangement does not get out of hand. Sargisson’s encounters with many members of intentional communities over more than a decade have also provided a longer view, drawing out how communities are not static entities, but constantly changing, shifting their intentions, inventing pragmatic adaptations having to accommodate changes beyond their control (Sargisson, 2009).

### **Interest in CoHousing**

Like others academics interested in intentional communities, Sargisson has more recently written specifically about CoHousing <sup>1</sup>, looking at its history and development in the last

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from UK CoHousing Network website: CoHousing started to develop in the UK at the end of the 1990s. The movement has gradually built up momentum and there are now 19 built CoHousing communities. A further 65+ CoHousing groups are developing projects and new groups are forming all the time. CoHousing communities in the UK range from around 10 households to around 40 households. Most communities are mixed communities with single people, couples and families but

decade, particularly its expansion within the USA. She has suggested that the recent waves of CoHousing development are significantly different to earlier Northern European CoHousing examples 'in culture as well as structure' (Sargisson, 2012: 33). Sargisson asks: are these utopian social experiments or just (as advocates claim) pragmatic steps to better communities? She argues that the evidence so far 'supports both positions: CoHousing is a pragmatic utopian phenomenon' (p44). Her questions are pertinent to my research focus.

Sargisson is engaging with an extensive and increasing body of published research specifically about *CoHousing* developments, which draw on North European traditions and are mainly Danish and Swedish in origin. Research has been mainly in the USA and across Europe where established CoHousing communities have been used as case studies or sites for research (Chiodelli and Baglione, 2013; Durrett, 2009; Fromm, 2000; Jarvis, 2011; Jarvis, 2015; Kehl, 2013; Marcus, 2000; Sandstedt and Westin, 2015; Vestbro, 2000; Williams, 2005). Within this literature about CoHousing, there has been research linked to environmental questions (Lietaert, 2010; Meltzer, 2000) and to questions of gender (Toker, 2010). Bresson and Deneffe very recently undertook a survey in Grenoble to explore the diversity of collaborative housing and to establish what can be called CoHousing and how it is distinguished from other forms of more communal ways of living that exist in this region. They concluded:

*The middle classes who are currently involved in co-housing projects uphold humanistic and environmental values, opposing the values of capitalist economic liberalism, but nonetheless they are not part of a radical opposition to a social order in which they wish to play a more decisive role. (Bresson and Denèfle, 2015: 14)*

Such conclusions are helpful in enabling comparison with my findings about the specific position of CoHousing in the wider context of intentional communities and diverse forms of collaborative housing in the South of England (Chapter 5).

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some are only for people over 50 and two are for women only. The communities themselves range from new developments built to modern eco standards to conversions of everything from farms to Jacobean mansions to former hospital buildings and are in urban, rural and semi-rural locations. Some have very large land holdings as part of the community, others very little. Increasingly, communities are working in partnership with other agencies or are using innovative legal and financial structures to enable them to offer a range of tenure types including rental options. <http://CoHousing.org.uk/CoHousing-uk> Accessed 26/2/16

More importantly for the research questions in this study, research has been undertaken specifically relating to ageing and older people (Baker, 2014; Brenton, 1998; Brenton, 2013; Choi, 2004; Glass, 2009; Glass, 2013; Motevasel, 2006; Peace, 2006; Wardrip, 2010). These tell of the high levels of satisfaction amongst older residents of CoHousing communities for 'seniors' in Sweden and Denmark (Choi, 2004) and the specific kinds of satisfaction experienced by older residents in the USA, including 'feelings of safety and comfort through being part of an interdependent community' (Glass, 2013: 348). Glass is a gerontologist by background and has written extensively about senior intentional communities, especially CoHousing. Glass and Skinner have also explored the question of how communities that are built purposefully and formally defined as *retirement communities* compare with those that occur more naturally and the complex question of whether we should see these as *ageist* entities that maintain boundaries of social exclusion, or as examples of older people ensuring and securing mutually supportive living arrangements into older age (Glass and Skinner, 2013). Their work raises a critical question that my research addresses about how ageing operates to include or exclude certain people in the intentional communities in this study and with what impacts (Chapter 8).

Another American author, Baker, talks of her generation of 'baby boomers' and the conversations they are having about getting old and how focus groups around the USA have revealed the scale of denial amongst 'older people of all ethnic and class backgrounds' about imagining themselves growing frail and needing help (Baker, 2014: 7). She goes on to suggest that 'The essential question facing each of us as we age is: how can we balance our desire for independence with staying connected to others?' (p12). In her book she provides evidence of the 'inadequacies of traditional management-centric institutions' and the tension between the desire for independence and the need for *interdependence*, which she argues, like Glass, is under emphasised within contemporary USA thinking in relation to ageing (p18). She describes her journey around the USA comparing a number of different kinds of communities, including CoHousing communities, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities and niche retirement communities (where membership is based on common interests or identities, like sexual orientation or religious affiliation), to explore the strengths and weaknesses of different models of community-based forms of organisation for people as they age. She concludes there *are* good choices for the boomer generation and urges older people to consider their future options and choose wisely.

In Europe, Motevasel has researched the reasons for older people in Sweden choosing to live in senior housing. She found that the main reasons were wanting less practical responsibility for homes and gardens, in line with previous research findings from northern European studies. She also draws some other interesting conclusions. She conducted 32 interviews in four senior housing units - two of them with rental apartments, two Co-operatives with tenant-owned apartments - and described the diversity of reasons that her interviewees cited for living there, including affordability, but rarely included conscious motivation to live in a senior community (Motevasel, 2006: pp85-86). She also talks about how 'class affiliation' was apparent:

*Senior housing has different class-related forms of community and interaction. In the rental apartments, there is an active drive for community on the part of the housing company. Here one can discern the remains of a more collective culture, with coffee get-togethers and excursions arranged by the employed staff. In the housing Co-operative there is a more autonomous culture, in which the residents' activities are not initiated by employees but by enthusiasts in the association (Motevasel, 2006: 87).*

She describes how part of this is due to engagement, which is, in turn, key to satisfaction levels: 'The more active the seniors are in the maintenance of the building, the more satisfied they are' (Motevasel, 2006: 88). The organisation of housing is different to the UK, there are higher proportion of rental properties in Sweden, so the meanings associated with tenures like rental or Co-operative have different connotations.

Motevasel also reported that social contact enabled 'comradely relations', but that 'enforced social contact and collective aging can be a troublesome experience'; that the residents had not considered where they might live in the future and what might have to change as they aged (p88); and some negative views of senior-only communities, where one interviewee described her community as 'deaths waiting room' (p89). One of her key conclusions supports established research findings:

*Several studies show that people's housing is associated with the rest of their life story in terms of class, income, heritage, geographical origin, work, marriage children (Heywood, Oldman, & Means 2002). In several cases it turns out that there is a lifelong inequality between those who own their homes and those who rent them (Kendig 1984; Özüekren & van Kempen 2002; Izuhara & Heywood 2003). My study confirms this inequality. (Motevasel, 2006: 90)*



The questions raised by her findings fed into my research concerns: do such relationships between tenure and positive experiences occur in UK intentional communities with older members and if so, formed around what divisions in property types? How does living in an intentional community disrupt the patterns of inequality associated with traditional housing pathways into older age (Heywood et al., 2002)? Are people living in intentional communities more inclined to address concerns about the future and the potential issues associated with becoming older?

Very recently, in 2016, Ruiu also contributed to international debates about intentional communities in her study of CoHousing communities in the UK and in Italy, where she has explored how social capital (defined in the Putnam sense, constituted by bridging, bonding and linking (Putnam, 2000)), is engendered through the different infrastructures and processes of CoHousing communities. One of her key contributions is to raise concerns about some CoHousing communities having 'invisible barriers' that prevent 'the access of disadvantaged people' (Ruiu, 2016: 409), whilst making it clear that CoHousing is different from traditional gated communities (Ruiu, 2014). She talks about how CoHousing communities do not follow the same logic or respond to the same needs as gated communities, but that the more autonomous CoHousing projects can be more elitist in terms of income; this lends weight to Motevasel's findings confirming lifelong inequalities based on housing tenure. Ruiu showed how this is mitigated in communities where there are partnerships with external institutions or organisations (housing associations, for example), but she also describes how the dilution of group control may have costs in terms of levels of intentionality and communality (p410).

She concludes it is difficult to disentangle the social capital generated by living in CoHousing from the social capital already held by groups, which enables involvement in and the accomplishment of such projects, but she differentiates them from ordinary communal living arrangements (e.g. condominium). This, she argues, is based on having key elements of social capital which, at their strongest, include a key ability to build relationships *external* to the development with the wider neighbourhood and outside organisations to generate 'heterogeneity within communities (in terms of economic, cultural and social capital)' (p410). Her work was conducted almost in parallel with my research, though I adopted a different theoretical framing and included a range of different types of intentional communities (not

just CoHousing). In my discussion and analysis at the end of each findings chapter I address the commonalities and differences in our findings.

## **Contemporary literature - within the UK**

The contemporary literature within the UK relating to intentional communities is small in volume and interdisciplinary. It ranges from historical analysis of past communities (Cook, 2013), to explorations of the ways that such communities complicate individual propertied legal relations (Cooper, 2007), to accounts of the key roles of individuals in sustaining intentional communities as organisations (Forster and Wilhelmus, 2005), to the participation of young people in rural intentional communities (Maxey, 2004). The small volume in any one discipline is due in part to the underutilisation of communal living developments in the UK, compared with other European countries like Germany, Sweden or Denmark (Jarvis, 2013; Sandstedt and Westin, 2015; Sargisson, 2004). There are, however, growing accounts of UK-based groups, as interest in alternative solutions grows in response to the UK 'housing crisis'.

Housing Co-operatives have been evidenced as providing a model for successfully developing affordable housing and whilst the number of housing Co-operatives in the UK is not systematically recorded, this model of alternative housing has a long tradition in the UK (Conaty et al., 2008). Not all housing Co-operatives identify as intentional communities though and it is CoHousing that has been the focus of most academic research interest as the number of forming CoHousing groups increases and manifests in development projects (UK CoHousing Network).

Alongside Ruiu's inclusion of UK communities in her international study described above, three UK academic studies and some practically-orientated research are notable. Scanlon and Arrigoitia conducted a case study of a mixed tenure senior CoHousing development underway in a south London neighbourhood (Scanlon and Arrigoitia, 2015). They provide an account of the growing interest in CoHousing within the 50+ age group:

*In the UK, there is a growing interest in senior (50+) CoHousing from active members of the baby boom generation, who seek an alternative to living alone but reject conventional forms of housing for older people as paternalistic and institutional (Scanlon and Arrigoitia, 2015: 107).*

They talk about how recent national policies, such as the Localism Bill (now an Act) and national reports (HAPPI, 2009) demonstrate some central government interest in such developments. The focus of their research is on the challenges facing this new form of development in the UK including: competing with mainstream property developers; ‘the importance of price as a determinant of individuals’ access to CoHousing’ (p106); and ‘the economic decisions of CoHousing actors how financial arrangements are created and contested during the initial development stages of a CoHousing community’ (p108). What they conclude about the economic dynamics of the initial formation period is that there are significant new and additional risks associated with the CoHousing model that both developers and the groups have to bear. These risks can add to the costs that might otherwise be saved through adopting a collective approach and designing in the sharing of key resources. They argue that these can be particularly difficult to balance in an area like London where property prices are much higher than average and subject to extremely high speculative gains.

Jarvis has provided a detailed exploration of the ‘social architecture of co-housing’, based on evidence from the USA, Australia and the UK (Jarvis, 2015). She also evidences the growing interest in CoHousing in particular, describing it as the fastest growing type of intentional community worldwide (citing Williams, 2008). She focuses on the ‘soft infrastructure’ that underpins CoHousing communities, including the ‘invisible affective dimensions (of well-being and motivation), inter-relationships (people and places), thinking, learning, practice and performance’ (Jarvis, 2015: 2), as a counter-balance to the dominant focus in the literature about CoHousing on the physical infrastructure and design elements. Importantly, Jarvis questions any simple definition of CoHousing contests accounts that suggest CoHousing represents ‘gentrification by another name’ (Jarvis and Bonnett, 2013), recognising that:

*The strangle-hold of owner occupation in these neo-liberal economies is such that most of the co-housing projects so far have been built by groups that continue to rely on conventional bank lending secured against wage employment. However, this picture masks high levels of unmet demand and post-material aspiration to eschew debt-driven private ownership (Bourne 2010). Since the early 1990s, self-organising groups have faced far greater financial barriers to the development of co-housing projects than similarly motivated intentional communities faced in the 1970s (Metcalf 1984) (Jarvis, 2015: 3)*

Jarvis's research draws on her work in 12 CoHousing communities between 2008 and 2012, of which three are UK-based. Using Nussbaum and Sen's capabilities approach, she draws out the different types of inter-personal work undertaken in these communities that makes mutuality and cooperation work over many years (affiliation, endeavour, intention of sharing, co-presence examples of solidarity economy) and she illustrate the social and cultural barriers to successfully enacting and sustaining these practices. Jarvis, like Sargisson, does not romanticise these communities; she acknowledges the challenges they face (given their situation within the dominant neo-liberal capitalist system) and the limitations of what can be achieved (given their continued dependence on waged-labour and mortgage debt) (Jarvis, 2015: 11).

Chatterton has been involved in the development and study of what he describes as 'an embryonic post-carbon CoHousing initiative called Lilac' (Low Impact Living Affordable Community), based in Leeds. Chatterton explores the real-world practices, challenges and lessons of the 'first CoHousing project in the UK that is ecological, affordable and fully mutual' (Chatterton, 2013: 1655). Whilst much of his account relates to questions of environmental aspects of design and living, his explication of the mutual home ownership model that Lilac adopts provides an important example of how categories of intentional communities can be blurred. Individual ownership is involved, but so is common ownership and mutuality and there's an emphasis on equality of access to housing. This is achieved through an innovative system of affordability that enables lower income households to access homes on a more equal basis, providing a direct challenge to the 'business-as-usual' market supply of housing (p1699).

There are a number of UK-related practical and policy-related guides (Bliss, 2009; Bliss and Lambert, 2014; Bunker et al., 2007; Christian, 2003; Corporate Watch, 2011; Dawson, 2006; Field, 2004) and Chatterton's work bridges both the academic and the practical (Chatterton, 2015).

Brenton is a significant source of more practically-orientated research into CoHousing developments and the value of them for older residents. She describes the challenges potential CoHousing residents face in setting up CoHousing communities and the lack of positive UK policies to support such initiatives (Brenton, 2013). A clear supporter of the goal of expanding CoHousing, her work draws on the concept of the notion of social capital

articulated by Leonard & Onyx (Leonard, 2004), as Ruiu draws on Putnam (see page 33). It emphasises the democratic, egalitarian approach CoHousing communities adopt (Brenton, 2013: 13). Brenton describes a number of UK communities, including the 'care village' Hartrigg Oaks in York (<http://www.jrht.org.uk/communities/hartrigg-oaks>). She compares the approaches of conventional development of older people's housing with CoHousing as follows:

*Clearly the 'care village' model was seen to have attractions for significant numbers of older people and to have successfully delivered stepped packages of care, social interaction, freedom of choice and other values. This, it was acknowledged, requires a physical setting which, to be actuarially sound, is generally fairly large in scale. It is also very expensive. The care village was also seen as possibly distancing its residents from the outside world, whereas, in CoHousing, there is a strong emphasis on integrating within the locality and acting as a resource to the community's neighbours (Brenton, 2013: 13).*

Brenton has worked with the UK CoHousing Network, which has been funded as part of NESTA's 'Age Unlimited' programme to 'galvanise older people to downsize, change support themselves and other people as they move into retirement' via the CoHousing model. Speaking as part of the CoHousing movement, Brenton (like Scanlon and Arrigoitia – p 28) sees opportunity in the 2012 Localism Act as a potential catalyst for state support to encourage and facilitate CoHousing as an option for all older people in the UK. She points out that the wealth available within home owners' equity could be a key resource in making developments financially possible, as well as releasing larger owner-occupied houses for use by younger generations. Her work builds on 'how-to' guides published in the USA and the UK in the last decade that encourage older people to realise the benefits of living more communally and the value of communal living (Christian, 2003; Durrett, 2009; Durrett, 2011).

Another research project that may prove relevant to my thesis over time is that of Heath and colleagues. They have undertaken a recent study of the formation of contemporary relationships based on sharing homes that challenge and unsettle conventional notions of household formation, aiming to 'illuminate the possibilities and limits of different forms of communal living' (Heath, 2014; Heath, 2015; Heath and Calvert, 2013). Their thesis at the start was that forms of sharing, emerging as a result of diverse societal changes, are interesting in shaping contemporary housing lives. Through personal communications with members of this research project, it is apparent that the forms of sharing and communal

living that have emerged through their study are wide-ranging and difficult to categorise (email communication in 2014), so it will take time to compare my findings with their analysis of contemporary forms of household sharing.

## **Summary and contribution of this thesis to the existing literature**

In summary, the international and UK literature about intentional communities has grown in the last two decades. It has been particularly focussed on CoHousing and environmental aspects of community life and has had a tendency to ignore the more long-standing housing Co-operative form of intentional communities. Within the growing international literature some has been attention paid specifically to older peoples' involvement in intentional communities, especially in the USA, Denmark and in Sweden. In the UK there is increasing interest in the relationship between later life and CoHousing (in particular). This builds on and links to the related international research, but the field remains emergent, with no published studies undertaken of older people's experiences of living day-to-day in intentional communities in England.

My research aims to build on this emergent, growing international literature and add to it by focussing on gaps in knowledge across the field. The significant gaps that my research aims to make a contribution to are:

1. Understanding of English intentional communities in their diverse forms, not just CoHousing how they fit into the contemporary English housing context;
2. Exploration of the process by which individuals become members of intentional communities and questions of inclusion and exclusion, drawing on Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *habitus* and *capitals*;
3. The extent of older peoples' involvement in English intentional communities and the kinds of communities they are living in;
4. Understanding of how individuals have become involved in their intentional communities over their life journey and what has enabled or constrained their choices and their agency;
5. Exploration of individual older member's perceptions of daily life in such communities;
6. Insights into expectations of their communities, as individuals move into later life.

In the next Chapter I explain how I have approached the task of designing research to address these issues.

## CHAPTER 3 - EPISTEMOLOGY, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

I take the stance that a position of objectivity in social science research is untenable - a post-positivist stance that is also anti-foundational in that the very identification of this field of focus I have already theorised the significance of both the field and the focus within it. I make the assumption that my research questions are driven by theory, as all research questions must be, given the socially constructed nature of society (Wright Mills, 1959). I take account of the reflexive turn in social science, which has recognised that, while social science can offer normative arguments and evidenced justifications using the methods developed within its discipline, any arguments or explanations have to be seen in relation to 'the cognitive practices and processes constituting the social sciences in the first place' (Delanty and Strydom, 2003: 3) and to the specific historical context in which this body of knowledge has developed and emerged (Savage, 2010).

Therefore I do not see my social scientific research as scientific in the sense of making claims to objectivity or looking for universal laws, as is claimed in the natural sciences (Clegg et al., 2014; Kuhn, 1970). I recognise that, in the sea of potential social facts in contemporary UK society, I have focused my gaze on this particular phenomenon and in doing so I have revealed my interests and am, as a researcher, also constructed in a social context where social problems cannot be neutral:

*Each society, at each moment, elaborates a body of social problems taken to be legitimate, worthy of being debated, of being made public and sometimes officialised and, in a sense, guaranteed by the state. These are for instance the problems assigned to the high-level commissions officially mandated to study them, or assigned also, more or less directly, to sociologists themselves via all the forms of bureaucratic demand, research and funding programs, contracts, grants, subsidies, etc. A good number of objects recognized by official social science and a good many titles of studies are nothing other than social problems that have been smuggled into sociology ... Here is one of the mediations through which the social world constructs its own representation, by using sociology and the sociologist for this purpose. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 236)*

Thus I arrive at my thesis with context; I explained the history of my personal interest in this topic in my Introduction (p12). My researcher position and my research approach are described in this chapter and have emerged during the course of my research through reflecting on how the world can be seen and understood ontologically and epistemologically



(Dunne et al., 2005). My research has been a series of journeys (Hallowell et al., 2005) and I have arrived only for a brief time at this particular staging post – the completing of this thesis. In this chapter, I also explain how my engagement with theory underpins my methodological approach to my research questions my research design and methods.

## **Epistemological journey**

I started my epistemological journey observing the existence of these communities as ‘social facts’ - not as objectively ‘true’ in the positivist sense, but as socially constructed, shared conceptual categories (such as ‘intentional communities’, ‘co-operatives’, ‘home ownership’) that can nevertheless be empirically observed (Durkheim, 1968). I assumed this would be a realist project, orientated towards critical realist goals. I was keen to get from the philosophy of science to the *real* empirical site of my field of study - what Pawson and Tilley illustrate as the ‘car park’ (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 55) - where I would start to explore the enabling and constraining mechanisms operating in these communities on older members. I thought I was pragmatically disinterested in debating the theoretical polarities of realism versus social constructivism and wanted to move on to investigate the ‘actual social world’ (Creswell, 2007: 3). My realist assumptions were that housing in UK society is highly rule-bound, enshrined in laws of land and property and reflects long-standing socioeconomic rights that endure through generations. I considered these socioeconomic edifices to be clearly structural, so this was not the territory of hermeneutics or constructivism: this was the territory of concrete superstructures, of class determinants and inequalities, of collective actions and the *reality* of ageing.

Early on in my research journey I was influenced by different schools within the broad heading of critical theory. I saw relevance in the focus on power relations and the reproduction of relations of inequality, not by force, but using mechanisms of consent and cooperation. This seemed especially relevant to structural inequalities produced by the commoditisation of land and housing in a Western capitalist society like the UK. Chiapello’s analysis (Chiapello, 2003) seemed especially appropriate for understanding dominant property relations such as home ownership as ideology - dominant interests and increasing societal inequalities of wealth masked by a widespread belief in property-owning as a good thing - and alternative ways of organising housing, such as intentional communities, as marginalised through these ideological mechanisms of legitimation within the established social order.

However, I became persuaded by critiques of critical theory as failing to provide an adequate account of why and how some *don't* accept, or resist societal norms. I was persuaded by Giddens that a more adequate account of human agency was required (Giddens, 1991; Giddens, 1994). Could these groups, these communities, be viewed as potential forms of resistance to the dominant ideologies of ageing and housing, potential examples of individuals and groups enacting agency? Could they be considered examples of human ingenuity, such as Cohen and Taylor's 'escape attempts' - the 'heroic diversity of people's search for something outside paramount reality' (Cohen & Taylor, 1992 (1976))? I showed in the literature review how Chapman and Hockey's brief mention of intentional communities ascribed this heroic status to them (Chapter 2, p20).

Considering these communities as creative spaces or practices of resistance seemed to offer a useful framework for an analysis of this phenomenon, but it also, inevitably, raised questions of power and the complex interplay of social structures and individual agency. This led me to Bourdieu and to those who have – following the post-modern turn and the emergence of standpoint theory, whether based around feminism (Smith, 1988), anti-racism (Hall, 1992), or gender and sexuality (Butler, 1999) – critically engaged with and usefully applied and enhanced Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. In particular, I found McNay relevant for the embodied nature of habitus and the constrained potential for agency (McNay, 1999; McNay, 2008); Adams for hybridising habitus and reflexivity (Adams, 2006); Silva and Skeggs for raising the problem of those whose voices are delegitimised and how these can be placed in Bourdieu's hierarchies of social value (Silva and Edwards, 2007; Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012); Reay relevant for the extension of Bourdieu's ideas to include emotional capital (Reay, 2000; Reay, 2004). In the remainder of this chapter, I describe why and how I have drawn on these theorists to frame my study.

## **Theoretical underpinning for my research and methodological implications**

*How can the sociologist effect in practice this radical doubting which is indispensable for bracketing all the presuppositions inherent in the fact that she is a social being, that she is therefore socialized and led to feel 'like a fish in water' within that social world whose structures she has internalized? How can she prevent the social world itself from carrying out the construction of the object, in a sense, through her, through these unselfconscious operations or operations unaware of themselves of which she is the apparent subject? (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 235)*

Here Bourdieu is asking how it is possible to research the social world in which the researcher is shaped without merely reproducing dominant narratives and discourses. This question is fundamental to the kind of *reflexive* approach of research that I adopt in this thesis; recognising and acknowledging my relation to my research subjects and objects. Bourdieu's analytic concepts are complex and require some description alongside my use of them as a lens through which to explore the subject matter of my study and answer my research questions.

My central question is what makes it possible for individuals to live in intentional communities into older age, given dominant housing and ageing choices in the UK. Bourdieu is useful because of his predominant concern with the interplay between structure and agency. His work supersedes theories of inevitable dominance of structural forces (i.e. is poststructuralist) and is focussed on *practices*, rather than the discourses of Foucault. Bourdieu views society as constituted by groups struggling over power and recognition in an unequal world and he theorises how these processes and practices of constraint (structure) and resistance (agency) are enacted in contemporary Western society (Delanty and Strydom, 2003: 325). Bourdieu directs the researcher to critically examine social phenomena by means of revealing the ways in which they have been constructed over time:

*...retrace the history of the emergence of these problems, of their progressive constitution, i.e., of the collective work, oftentimes accomplished through competition and struggle, that proved necessary to make such and such issues to be known and recognized (faire connaître et reconnaître) as legitimate problems, problems that are avowable, publishable, public, official (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 205).*

My task is to question what is accepted as common knowledge, accepted as social problems and to explore the genesis of my object of study within its field.

### **Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field**

What is required, as a starting point, is the identification of the *field* of enquiry, the field being constituted by the structures, the logic and historical relations of the arena in which the subject in question is created anchored in power. Bourdieu argues that the concept of field helps us to understand how social systems (societies) set limits to the behaviour of social actors; the field is the objective set of conditions that constrain individual agency and is constituted along the lines of discreet arenas, like a game in which contestants compete

over the resources at stake (Savage et al., 2005b). Early in his work, Bourdieu uses this concept to break with Marx arguing for the possibility of organising agents along divisions other than class - for example ethnicity – but accepting that economic groupings are key (Bourdieu, 1985: 199). He theorises an objective space having ‘determining compatibilities and incompatibilities, proximities and distances’ (p198), a ‘*space of relationships* which is as real as a geographical space’ (p198) - for example social mobilisation, where alliances are never *necessary* in the way that Marx argued in relation to class determinants. Instead Bourdieu wants us to take account of:

*the contribution that agents make towards constructing the view of the social world through this, towards constructing this world, by means of the work of representation (in all senses of the word) that they constantly perform... their social identity* (Bourdieu, 1985: 200)

In this research, I am making a case for viewing the field as the production and consumption of *housing and household formation* in the UK and the place within it (or apart from it) of the communities that I am researching. The other relevant and parallel field is the established social order of *ageing* in UK society, including the conceptualisation of ageing by recognised bodies of knowledge (authoritative voices) such as gerontology, or the UK state through policies that define what being older means, using categories such as ‘over 65s’ or ‘the frail elderly’. These authoritative voices generate expectations within and against which the older members of these intentional communities are living out their lives, making their decisions and imagining their futures – as Bourdieu describes, performing and creating their social identities.

It is this relationship of individual agents to social construction and representation, that I want to explore in this research, focussing on the members of these communities as agents engaged in creating social identities and forms of self-presentation as they tell their stories of becoming members of their communities (Chapter 6). This relationship is complicated by these individuals being part of an entity (the community) that is also generating forms of representation within the fields of housing and ageing (Chapter 5). So my research draws on both sets of practices: those of the individuals and those of the communities. Both are understood in this study through the interviews with individuals living in them. Fields also have past and present aspects, being situated in different epochs or generations (Bourdieu, 1998), suggesting attention to significant differences in the historical setting of these communities (Chapter 5, p102).

### **The specific field of power and struggles between groups over capitals**

Fundamental to Bourdieu's theoretical framework is the field of power, which he argues operates differently to any other field. The field of power is:

*...the space of the relations of force between the different kinds of capital or, more precisely, between the agency possesses sufficient amount of one of the different kinds of capital to be in a position to dominate the corresponding field, who struggles intensify whenever the relative value of the different kinds of capital is questioned (Bourdieu, 1998: 34).*

Bourdieu is arguing that within a society there are struggles between different groups of individuals over domination of the field in which they are operating (in this instance housing and ageing) and established structures are conserved or transformed through these power struggles. The currency of these struggles is different forms of *capital* which can be accumulated by social actors in order to gain advantage within a particular field. Bourdieu describes four types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic and describes how some forms of capital can be more easily converted into other forms of capital; for example, advantage in the educational system can be converted into professional status economic capital through occupational/wage advantage. He places an emphasis on economic capital because it is most easily converted into other forms of capital, but a central tenet of his theory is the complexity of the interplay of the different capitals and his recognition that economic position is not the *sole* determinant of social advantage. In later writing, Bourdieu talks about field-specific capitals such as educational capital or political capital (Savage et al., 2005b: 40).

Essentially, Bourdieu talks about how social space is constructed according to principles of differentiation which are relative to each other and he argues that in countries like United States, Japan, or France (which he describes as 'the most advanced societies'), the key dimensions are economic capital and cultural capital. Bourdieu argues:

*all agents are located in this space in such a way that the closer they are to one another in those two dimensions, the more they have in common; and the more remote they are from one another, the less they have in common. Spatial distances on paper are equivalent to social distances. (Bourdieu, 1998: 6)*

This encapsulates the foundation for his concepts of cultural capital and habitus.

## Cultural and social capital and habitus

In his early work, Bourdieu theorises cultural capital using the term *distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984) and illustrates this using a line graph which depicts the space of social positions and the space of lifestyles of specific social and occupational groups placed on the axes of economic and cultural capital to indicate the probable orientation towards voting for the right, or for the left. He reproduces this graph in his later works (Bourdieu, 1998: 5). For each 'class of positions' is a corresponding 'habitus (or tastes)' produced by the social conditioning associated with those positions and he argues that this helps to explain a degree of unitary amongst classes in terms of their choices, goods and practices (Bourdieu 1998: 9). Habitus is also constituted by:

*classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes. They make distinctions between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar so forth, but the distinctions are not identical. Thus, for instance, the same behaviour or even the same good can appear distinguished to one person, pretentious to someone else showy to yet another. (Bourdieu, 1998: 8)*

So the concept of habitus is created to describe the existence of entrenched, recognised values and practices held by groups of individuals, that differentiate them from other groups of individuals. Bourdieu also talks about social capital, as the resources groups have at their disposal to compete with other groups to gain advantage in given fields within society. Social capital is accumulated through networks of influence and Bourdieu sees the choices open to specific groups as shaped by access to social capital in the field (Bourdieu, 1991).

Cultural and social capital are central to the concept of habitus. Habitus is a key concept for shaping my research: the extent to which such shared values and practices make the adoption of alternative lifestyles possible. Bourdieu describes habitus further as:

*a system of structured and structuring dispositions... which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions. (Bourdieu, 1990: 52)*

and, crucially for my combined questions about agency and ageing, he describes it as a set of complex sociological and psychological *processes*, rather than a fixed position or positions:

*Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences therefore*

*constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal.* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133)

Habitus is a generative structure, a complex amalgam of past and present including predispositions such as familial legacy, which are manifested in individual's bodies (embodiment) and psyches. Bourdieu offers habitus as a way through the dualisms of objectivism and subjectivism, of structure and agency, to offer a framework that helps us understand agency in social context. Thus habitus offers a conceptual lens through which to engage with my research participants. It allows me to explore where they started in life, their early influences and their current occupational class position, in order to examine how they came to make their decisions about where they lived at what stages in their life and with what kinds of logics and reasoning - elements that may suggest common dispositions or convergences in tastes and practices that might otherwise go unnoticed. Bourdieu's idea of habitus suggests almost reflexes, born of upbringing and location within a social group. So researching such dispositions is about looking for often unarticulated assumptions, taken-for-granted notions and values that bind individuals together into groups.

Utilising habitus as a concept also involves critiquing the *misrecognition* of social status and accomplishment as somehow natural and recognising it as more to do with an affinity between class, cultural habits and dominant systems. In the context of housing-related research, habitus has been used to explore the relationship of social class and different housing tenures, such as the privileging of home ownership over social housing (Savage et al., 1992), as outlined in Chapter 2. In this research, I use it to explore what makes the lifestyles associated with intentional community living possible.

### **Symbolic violence and the doxa of contemporary housing choice**

Another central dimension of Bourdieu's framing of habitus is the *symbolic violence* which society exercises upon individuals indirectly and reinforced by internalisation and acceptance of ideas (Mills, 2008). Bourdieu draws on phenomenologists Schutz and Goffman to describe in detail how the State exerts symbolic violence on individuals or groups not based on force, but internalised by individuals. He talks about how the social order is reproduced *through* social actors, rather than forced upon them:

*The social world is full of calls to order which function as such only for individuals who are predisposed to notice them which, as a red light causes braking, trigger deep-*

*rooted bodily dispositions without passing through consciousness and calculation* (Bourdieu, 2000: 176).

Bourdieu describes how symbolic violence is exerted, not always obvious as a form of overt discrimination. He talks about ‘the violence that is exerted daily... through verbal reflexes, stereotyped images and conventional words... insidiously reinforcing all the habits of thought and behaviour inherited from more than a century of colonialism and colonial struggles’ (Bourdieu, 1998 p22).

McNay brings out the *embodied* nature of this power as exerted ‘through the subtle inculcation of power relations upon the bodies and dispositions of individuals’ (McNay, 1999: 99). This is a ‘two-fold naturalisation’ whereby social order is inscribed in the bodies of agents, embodied in both dominated and dominating actors and it reveals itself in the kinds of assumptions and categories that are taken-for-granted (such as binary gender categories, or the conceptualisation of ethnicities). Symbolic violence is the imposition of sets of values and tenets within a society that have become the default; the state is able to do this because these values have become ‘natural’ and other possibilities have been discarded:

*If the state is able to exert symbolic violence, it is because it incarnates itself simultaneously in objectivity, in the form of specific organisational structures and mechanisms in subjectivity, in the form of mental structures and categories of perception and thought. By realising itself in social structures and in the mental structures deducted to them, the instituted institution makes us forget that it issues out of a long series of acts of institution (in the active sense) and hence has all the appearances of the natural. This is why there is no more potent tool for rupture in the reconstruction of genesis: by bringing back into view the conflicts and confrontations of the early beginnings and therefore all the discarded possibilities, it retrieves the possibility that things could have been (and still could be) otherwise. And, through such a practical utopia, it questions the 'possible' which, among all others, was actualised.* (Bourdieu, 1998: 40)

An element of my research is, therefore, about unpicking and deconstructing how private ownership of housing and normative ideas about household formation have become considered natural and common sense and what intentional communities and their members’ housing histories and lifestyles can do to bring other possibilities and choices back into view. Bourdieu also talks about the *doxa* as the established orthodoxy in a field based on unreflexive acceptance of a common sense set of ideas or practices (Bourdieu, 1998: pp56-57) - ideas within a field that are accepted as self-evident. The concept is useful for exploring the contemporary *doxa* in the field of housing and household formation and the degree to which the communities and individuals in my research are challenging them.



Theorists who have built on Bourdieu's ideas argue this concept of symbolic violence is not omnipotent, but allows for the capacity for improvisation and for more generative politics (Giddens, 1994). Mills believes Bourdieu's notion of habitus sets the boundaries within which agents are 'free' to adopt strategic practices (Mills, 2008: 82); hence the claim for its transformative potential and for its usefulness in theorizing both continuity *and* change. This is central to my exploration of if and how individuals in intentional communities have been able to make choices that do not conform to orthodoxies of housing choices and household formation.

For me this contemporary engagement with Bourdieu's concept of power and symbolic capital is useful for thinking about *changing* property relations and ideologies of housing in the UK and how such relations are not static, but constantly changing and subject to intense struggles (Flint, 2015). For housing in particular, given its role as a key resource and form of infrastructure within UK society, the state plays a significant role in struggles between the agents possessing enough different kinds of capital to dominate the field. For Bourdieu, the state is the holder of a sort of 'meta-capital granting power over other species of capital and over their holders' (p41) and Bourdieu describes this specifically as symbolic capital. In a housing context, this concept has been usefully applied:

*Symbolic capital is thus utilised as a means of legitimising particular forms of consumption, conferring upon the agent a sign of distinction, within a wider habitus predisposed to recognise such distinctions. Crucially symbolic capital operates as a limited resource in which prestige is defined and distinction reasserted through the division and exclusion of particular groups. Within the housing field, symbolic capital may be seen to accrue to tenures, in which housing consumption confers an identity and status upon individuals, comprising both aesthetic (good taste) and moral (responsible conduct) judgements (Flint and Rowlands, 2003: 217).*

In Flint's work, it is possible to see how the state facilitates the shifting discourses towards enabling the power of private financial capital and land owners and away from counter discourses of social housing rights and needs, to the extent that struggles with those who are dispossessed by this shifting terrain become intensified.

The important element of a Bourdesian approach for this research is the way that social life and the acts of individuals are not reduced to any one dimension, such as social class. Instead it builds a framework that offers a way of viewing individuals and their actions as complex composites of influences, resources and determinants that need close critical examination to understand them. Both the communities as entities individuals as agents, are

complex composites and this approach guides me to explore them in some detail if I am to understand what makes them possible and sustainable.

Again, McNay has done much to explain further the generative aspect of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of agency and how determining structures are also open to being co-created by us through the meanings we ascribe to the world and the sense we make of it:

*On one side, there is a relation of conditioning where the objective conditions of a given field structure the habitus. On the other, there is a relation of 'cognitive construction' whereby habitus is constitutive of the field in that it endows the latter with meaning, with 'sense and value', in which it is worth investing one's energy (1992:127). Insofar as meaningful social action is what Crespi (1989) calls a 'borderline concept' – that is, it is neither fully determined nor fully willed – the habitus is a generative rather than determining structure which establishes an active and creative relation –arsinveniendi' (1992:122) - between the subject and the world. (McNay, 1999: 100)*

McNay's work is useful in getting deeper into how we can understand human agency within Bourdieu's theory: 'actors may be predisposed to act in certain ways but the possibility of creativity and innovation is never foreclosed' (p103). McNay brings out the tension in human existence between being shaped and shaping. This important thread runs through my analysis of the communities and the individuals, reminding me to look out for how they are both succumbing to the symbolic violence of dominant ideologies of housing and ageing and also resisting them; the degree to which there is conformism and convention, versus resistance and radicalism.

### **Bourdieu and empirical research**

Bourdieu's theories entail academic research engaging with not just remote analyses of society from the perspective of the ivory tower, but with the empirical world and with the behaviours and actions of actors in the world and the multiple ways in which they make meaning of their situations, while remaining ever cautious to over-estimating the expressive possibilities of actors in late capitalist society (McNay, 1999: 106). A significant example of Bourdieu's endeavour in this respect is his and his colleagues' research into social suffering in contemporary French society. This work provides an extensive account of how symbolic violence is exerted upon individuals and groups through the ideology of neo-liberal markets and the way the state is implicated in this Tyranny of the Market (Bourdieu, 1999; Bourdieu, 2003; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999). Building on this work, the key questions become:

what forms of tyranny or domination are revealed in the stories of the members of intentional communities about how they came to live in this unorthodox way and in what forms have expressive possibilities been, or are being, enacted?

Bourdieu's later accounts do not just finish by revealing the workings of dominant interests, but enjoin us as academics to commit to 'create the conditions for a collective effort to reconstruct a universe of realist ideals, capable of mobilizing people's will without mystifying their consciousness' (Bourdieu, 2003: 9). He calls on academics to use their 'scholarly knowledge', not just to critique neo-liberal orthodoxies, but to support social movements in the creation of 'novel forms of mobilisation and action' (Bourdieu, 2003: 14). He argues for research to challenge the think tanks through which neo-liberal domination of the policy debates is exerted (p20) and to describe the suffering created by neo-liberal policies and to build the foundations of an 'economics of well-being' (Bourdieu, 1999: 129). In the context of my interest in ageing within the communities this is particularly relevant: how are dominant interests operating in the field of housing and in how we view older people in relation to their housing interests where do these intentional communities and their members fit in, or not? What kinds of capital are being drawn on in order to act as ageing agents in this field? And to keep asking - what role do I play as a critical researcher in challenging the doxa of contemporary neo-liberal housing policy and provision?

### **Further critical engagement Bourdieu: feminism, reflexivity and identities**

Thus far I have described a Bourdesian underpinning to my theoretical approach, but I have also drawn on those who have critically engaged with Bourdieu to develop and clarify aspects of his theorising in order to operationalise his concepts in empirical research (Clapham, 2005; Flint and Rowlands, 2003; McNay, 1999). Adopting a Bourdesian approach entails acknowledging criticisms of the limitations of his application of and the development of his concepts by feminists (Adkins and Skeggs, 2004) and by those who acknowledge a tendency to teleology in some aspects of his theoretical model (aspects of his theory of *illusio* the moving of goal posts by members of established holders of capital when threatened) (Savage et al., 2005a). Silva and colleagues have also raised questions about operationalising his theory in empirical research in contemporary social contexts, 40 years on from Bourdieu's original framing of concepts like cultural capital (Silva and Edwards, 2007).

Adkins helps with Silva's questioning of the contemporary conditions and reinforces McNay's emphasis on developing Bourdieu's concepts for understandings of gender. She argues for not simply placing the historical objects of gender within Bourdieu's frame, but rather seeing gender as a generalised social field itself, as important as class or race or ethnicity (Adkins, 2004). She brings out the relational nature of all social life - 'there is no point outside of a system from which emancipatory politics can emerge' (Adkins, 2004: 7). She also talks about how, as work-based class relations become less important, new forms of classed relations are emerging centred around the female body. These are substantially mediated through the cultural media field which is increasingly implicated in the creation of habitus. She engages with contemporary theories of increasing individualisation to explore these not as necessary achievements in forms of self-expression or new forms of freedom from gender, but instead as 'involving complex and new modes of gendered and classed differentiation and division' and 'shifts in the conditions of social reproduction itself' (Adkins, 2004: 10). The way Adkins opens up for debate and critically examines individualistic claims for new choices and freer lifestyles emerging out of post-modern, post-traditional societies in the global North is particularly relevant for my study because I am interested in critically examining what could be perceived as individualistic claims for 'alternative lifestyles' (Sargisson, 2000: 29).

Adams also helps sharpen understandings of questions of possible emerging identities associated with contemporary life and their relation to the constraining forces of habitus in his consideration of the relationship between identity, reflexivity and choice in the context of changing social structures associated with globalisation (Adams, 2006). Adams points to McNay's identification of Bourdieu's underestimation of the extent of discontinuity in social reproduction, of the 'ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions' (McNay, 1999: 107). Adams argues for a notion of habitus 'tempered by an ambiguous, complex, contradictory reflexivity' that recognises how established social categories get reproduced 'but also challenged, overturned in uneven, 'piecemeal' ways' (Adams, 2006: 521). Adams work is useful for this study in asserting the possibility that forms of reflexive awareness, however partial, *can* result in the opening out of *choices*, whilst always recognising the new ways in which opportunity 'gravitates towards particular social groups' (p525). This is central to my research: to what degree have certain social groups benefitted from the opportunities offered by different generations of intentional communities?

### Further critical engagement Bourdieu: emotions

A further critical reflection on Bourdieu's concepts that has emerged from feminist theorising and research, is provided in the work of Reay on emotional capital. Bourdieu never referred to the concept of emotional capital, but he did briefly highlight the role of the mother in affective relationships - he wrote of the practical and symbolic work that 'generates devotion, generosity and solidarity', which falls more to women (Bourdieu, 1985). Reay concurs with Bourdieu that, despite the apparent 'demise of class' amongst politicians and academics, class remains a significant factor in the way people 'decode' the social world; class is undiminished as 'part of the implicit, taken-for-granted understandings they (people) bring to their relationships with others' (Reay, 1997: 227). But she has also developed Bourdieu's concept of habitus using gender to illustrate how this helps us think about the way that complex interplays between different constraining forces 'infuse' the experiences of individuals and the choices they make (p228).

Reay draws on the work that has, over the last 20 years, challenged the separation of emotions from the sociologists' arena of research (Hothschild 1983; Jackson 1993; Duncombe and Marsden 1993; Williams and Bendelow 1997). Reay draws on Helga Nowotny's development of the concept of 'emotional capital' as a variant of 'social capital', but characteristic of the private rather than the public sphere (Nowotny, 1981):

*Emotional capital is generally confined within the bounds of affective relationships of family and friends and encompasses the emotional resources you hand on to those you care about. According to Nowotny, emotional capital constitutes: "knowledge, contacts and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterised at least partly by affective ties" (Nowotny, 1981:148)' (Reay, 2004: 60)*

Reay also cites Allatt's definition of emotional capital as 'emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern'. Allatt lists support, patience and commitment as examples of such emotional resources (Allatt, 1993). Reay defines emotional capital:

*emotional capital can be understood as the stock of emotional resources built up over time within families and which children could draw upon (Reay, 2004: 61)*

Both Reay (Reay, 2004) and Nowotny (Nowotny, 1981) argue that, unlike other forms of capital, emotional capital is a resource that women have in greater abundance than men;

both also ask why it is that this form of capital converts less into other forms - why is it less valued?

Whilst gender was not my research focus, the concept of emotional capital is important because of the questions within my study about the relations and dynamics of the home space and the everyday life of the community of people living together. Reay's focus is on educational attainment and the role of the mother in the accumulation of emotional capital within different families with different class origins, the way these can open up or close down opportunities for children within schooling systems and the way emotional capital does not as readily translate into other kinds of capitals such as social or cultural capital, as economic capital does. This conceptual addition of emotional capital has been brought into this research therefore as a conceptual tool with which to explore my interviewees' perceptions of the *emotional skills and resources* involved in living in these communities, how these constrain or enable relations with others within their community and particularly to also explore how ageing might affect the accumulation of these skills and the sustainability of the communities.

## **Summary of Implications of Theory for Methodology**

I have outlined the implications of my theoretical framework for my research methodology throughout the section above. In essence, my developed Bourdesian theoretical framework sets the stage for exploring the dynamic responses or potentialities, for the kinds of subversion and struggle these intentional communities the individuals who have helped make and sustain them, *may* represent (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). I bring the methodological implications together in a summary briefly below and describe how this process was, like my epistemological journey, not linear and how I blended other approaches as I conducted my fieldwork and engaged with my data at different stages.

### **Operationalising a Bourdesian approach**

Operationalising this developed Bourdesian approach meant that my research task was to:

- question what is accepted as common knowledge, accepted as social problems to explore the genesis of my object of study within its field

- explore the habitus of the communities as entities, what forms of capitals are required to gain entry, recognising that they are generating forms of representation within the fields of housing and ageing (Chapter 5), understood through the interviews with individuals living in them
- pay attention to significant differences in the historical setting of these communities (Chapters 5, 6 & 7)
- explore the habitus of the members of the communities, what their early influences were, as well as affinities between class and social and cultural habits; how they came to make their decisions about where they lived at what stages in their life and with what kinds of logic and reasoning, looking for common dispositions or convergences in tastes and practices that might otherwise go unnoticed, via their stories of becoming members of their communities (Chapter 6)
- seeing individual stories of their everyday life and their reflections on any future plans as complex composites of influences, resources and determinants that need close critical examination if we are to understand them (Chapter 7)
- look for the cracks, gaps spaces of resistance to dominant ideologies and explore how the spaces get taken up, who notice and inhabit them and what makes this possible for certain groups and not others,
- remain open to articulations of reflexivity, specifically relating to home, family and community how these in turn remake society, albeit in often unnoticed ways (McNay - constituted and constituting);
- stay open to people's emotional investment as legitimate forms of capital.

### **Descriptive assemblage, listening and life stories**

Along my methodological journey, I was influenced by the warning by Savage for sociologists to 'keep up' with developments in contemporary society and not get stuck in stale battles about causation, when the real challenge for sociological research is careful and effective 'descriptive assemblage' (Savage, 2009: 458). I combine this with building on Sargisson's work by providing a full description of the membership and recruitment mechanisms operating within the communities (Chapter 5) which, whilst not the result of an ethnographic study, does attempt to produce the richness and complexity Savage's descriptive assemblage asks for.

I also became aware of the listening approach of community-based ethnographers whose work is about recognising the voices from the street-level (Back, 2007; Back, 2009). This affected the way I conducted my analysis, cautioning me against unduly fragmenting the stories that my interviewees told me. Encountering older interviewees and the rich complexity of many of their life stories, I also became influenced by topical biography in understanding narratives of home and belonging as part of narratives of life (Plummer, 2001). Plummer's approach led me to think about how to blend my Bourdesian framework with a full enough account of the journey each interviewee had taken to become a member of their community and their housing histories. This led me to Clapham's helpful framing of *housing pathways*.

### **Housing pathways**

Clapham draws on Bourdieu in trying to balance structure and power with agency and resistance in his analysis he draws on the literature of housing studies to argue for the importance of understanding the meanings people make of housing; housing choices as a key expression of lifestyle and of identity (Clapham, 2005). He builds on the idea of housing careers and expands it to suggest housing pathways as a framework of analysis:

*offered as a way of ordering the housing field in a way that foregrounds the meanings held by households and the interactions that shape housing practices as well as emphasising the dynamic nature of housing experience and its interrelatedness with other aspects of household life.'* (Clapham, 2005: 27)

I use this framing of *housing pathways* to explore what other factors are revealed in my interviewees stories as having enabled or constrained their individual agency in their housing and lifestyle choices (Chapter 6) and as a way of seeing common patterns in their expressions of ontological and collective identity through their housing journeys over their lifecourse.

This use of housing pathways raised another critical dimension that was not developed in Bourdieu's work: the importance of the temporal dimension (McLeod and Thomson, 2009). I was talking to these individuals about events that had taken place across their life course and I recognised how important it was to describe not just the multiplicity of reasons that individuals explicitly related about why they lived in their community, but also to explore changes in their thinking over the years as well as attending to the specific contexts and stages in life in which the seeds of thinking might have been sown. These approaches helped



me recognise that particular stories are told in particular contexts and it is important to notice what stories get told, by, about and to whom, in the same way that Bourdieu encourages us to be interested in how certain social spaces get taken up, who inhabits them and what makes it possible for certain groups and not for others.

So whilst Bourdieu and those who have critically developed his conceptual tools are central to my thesis, these other influences also helped to shape my approach. They guided me towards attending to the detail and complexity of the life histories narrated by my interviewees of the communities they lived in and the importance of the interplay of the past, present, and future.

## CHAPTER 4 - METHODS

### Introduction

The theoretical underpinning outlined in the previous section shaped my research methods. My methods involved a telephone survey of intentional communities in the South of England and qualitative interviews with older members of sampled communities. This Chapter describes my rationale for this approach and the methods in detail. It includes information about the sampling rationale, methods used to find out about the sampled communities (telephone survey) and the methods used to explore member's perceptions and experiences about what it took to live successfully in their communities (interviews). It also describes the processes involved in organising and preparing the interview 'data' for analysis.

I drew extensively on five main texts to help me determine appropriate methods for my questions and to shape my approach to tackling the practical issues involved (Creswell, 2007; Dunne et al., 2005; Mason, 2002; Seale, 1998; Silverman, 2013). All of these texts reinforce the key message that qualitative research is about rigour and careful 'craft' (Silverman, 2013: 73). I followed Mason's useful headings in setting out my detailed questions and linking these to appropriate methods (Mason, 2002: 28-30) and adopted the criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research set out in Silverman (Silverman, 2013: 306-307). Throughout I have followed Seale's advice to be clear about what I am doing and why (Seale, 1998: 113). The key premise underlying my use of qualitative methods is that such methods provide insight: my interviews offer a systematic exploration of the stories and narratives generated by these individuals, but I do not make generalisations based on these insights.

### Delineating the scope of the 'population' and sampling communities

The first stage of the project was to address the question of the scope of the population of intentional communities. The questions of definitions of intentional communities has been addressed in the literature review (Chapter 2, page 24). Based on the UK literature, the 'Diggers and Dreamers' organisation emerged as a body representing a range of communities since the 1960s (Bunker et al., 2007; Coates, 2013)<sup>2</sup>. This is not the only source of

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk/>

information - there are organisations representing specific forms of intentional communities such as housing Co-ops or CoHousing<sup>3</sup> - but it is the most long-standing and UK-wide source of information.

The term 'sampling' is used in the qualitative research sense of conceptual sampling, rather than statistically representative sampling from which it might be possible to generalise about a total population. Information about the ages of members of the intentional communities listed in the Diggers and Dreamers directory was not available. Therefore, I undertook a brief telephone survey of the communities to establish how many had members aged over 60 and if so, approximately how many. A dual aim of the survey was to secure the information that would enable me to then invite participation from individual older members of these communities (see interview methods below). There were several layers to the sampling. I was investigating a potential population of all Diggers and Dreamers listed intentional communities in the UK (see table below).

Table1: Number of Diggers and Dreamers listed intentional communities in the UK, in Sept 2014

REGION	TOTAL NUMBER OF ICs (at Sept 14)	NUMBER OF IC THAT WERE RESIDENTIAL	% OF TOTAL UK (residential only)
South East	21	21	17%
South West	26	24	19%
East Anglia	6	6	5%
Midlands	15	15	12%
North of England	23	23	19%
Wales	15	15	12%
Scotland	19	19	15%
total	125	123	100%

I chose to include only communities in England (n=91 = the potential survey population), where the policy context at a national level is consistent, since part of my research was to draw out findings relevant to policy-makers as well as academic audiences. From that potential survey population, I started with the communities located in the South of England

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<sup>3</sup> Information about current housing Co-operatives are held in diverse sources that include: Confederation of Co-operative Housing - [www.cch.coop](http://www.cch.coop) and Radical Routes - [www.radicalroutes.org.uk](http://www.radicalroutes.org.uk). CoHousing groups are listed by the UK CoHousing Network - <http://CoHousing.org.uk/groups>

regions (n=46, representing half of the Diggers & Dreamers communities listed in England = selected survey sample) for two reasons: firstly, in recognition of the specific dynamics of the property markets in the South of England where discourses about a housing crisis were often focussed (BBC News, 2014; Beckett, 2015; Morrison, 2011; Rutter, 2015) and secondly, because of those in the South were closest to visit from my Sussex base.

I recognise that this purposeful sample of 46 communities in the South of England represented a specific sub-set of the wider field of intentional communities and that, without an established quantification and typology of all such communities, it was not possible to be precise about what kind of sample it constituted. The 46 communities did, however, include a wide range of organisational forms (CoHousing, co-ops, limited companies, charities etc.), explicit values (environmental, spiritual or religious, educational, artistic etc.) and membership size (from 10 to 100s). In this sense, I chose a sample from across accepted conceptualisations of intentional communities.

## **Survey Methods**

During September and October 2014 I contacted each community's 'key contact', initially by phone then by email, to explain my research and to find out if their community had any members aged 60 or over. I also posted information about the research on the Diggers and Dreamers website 'noticeboard'. After a minimum two week wait, non-responders were followed up with one further phone call and email. If there was no reply after the second phone and email contact, no further attempts were made and these communities were coded as 'non-responder' in my Excel spreadsheet database. This database was created to ensure I methodically recorded information gathered from conversations or emails; it was maintained until the final interviews were conducted in February 2015.

The first aim of the phone survey worked well and I secured information about the age profiles of the responding communities. Half of the sampled communities responded to the survey (22/46 = survey respondents) and in this way I found out which communities had members aged over 60 years (11/22 = potential in-depth research sample).

There were some issues achieving the second aim of the survey - finding out about potential older member interviewees and information upon which to base a sampling strategy for the interview participants. It proved unrealistic to use the survey as a basis for sampling any

meaningful categories of diversity amongst older members: I was 'cold-calling' key contacts within these communities to explain my research and invite them to take part and it quickly became clear to me that I was not going to secure information like gender or ethnicity about potential participants in this way. The community-key-contact respondents were often cautious or busy. Additionally, they had only partial information about the age of members and were reluctant to speak on behalf of either the community or individual members. Through these conversations I discovered some communities had experienced previous interest from the media and researchers that had not always felt respectful to them, so I ensured that I heard and respected their concerns. I also assured them my research was ethically reviewed and approved and gave a high priority to protecting their rights and respecting their concerns (discussed later in this chapter, page 70). One interviewee checked this approval out before deciding to contact me.

The result of this careful navigation of first calls and emails was that I honed the survey down to ask three basic questions: 1) if they had any members aged over 60 years living in their community; 2) if so, how many; 3) how many current members they had in total at that time. Of the 11 communities I surveyed, 7 had older members who expressed interest, so I sent them the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) and the Consent Form (Appendix 3), and all subsequently agreed to undertake in-depth interviews with me. I intended to use an interview with a member of a community not listed in the Diggers and Dreamers website as a pilot interview, however, because the timings got changed this interview became the fourth interview undertaken and was included in the study. A community from the East Anglia region became the 9<sup>th</sup> community because a member proactively contacted me after reading about my research on the Diggers and Dreamers noticeboard. By this time, I was in a position to recognise that this community had the potential to offer new dimensions to my data gathering around the organisation of economic capital (Community 8). This resulted in my in-depth interview research sample totalling 9 communities.

### **Sampling potential interviewees within the 9 communities**

Common advice on numbers of cases or participants for qualitative research seems to be 'make a lot out of a little' (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2013: 141), but there is no consensus on how many participants make a good study (Baker and Edwards, undated - 2014?). The point was to provide meaningful empirical contexts and illustrations or scenarios, rather than 'representative' data. I originally planned a strategic sample (Mason, 2002: Chapter 7) that

would shed light on my theoretically informed understandings, which suggested I look for a range of people on the basis of the diversity of socioeconomic background (economic capital), education (cultural capital), but also other differences that might inform notions of affiliation and habitus, such as gender or ethnicity. Using the concept of habitus to explore my research questions also meant that I needed to habitus in relation to the communities as entities. Given the lack of existing data about intentional communities, I based my typology on existing categories of difference in their listings, such as size or location (rural/urban).

I also needed to consider how to sample interviewees based on age. Definitions of 'old age' have long been considered problematic (Fontana, 1977). In the UK context, one of the key significant markers of 'old age' is being over 65 years of age (ONS, 2012), although in the Introduction (page 15) I talked about how such categories are being diluted by government reforms aimed at reducing the burdens associated with increasing longevity. Well-established concepts about ageing and what it means are increasingly being contested in social and cultural gerontology literature (Twigg and Martin, 2015a). This includes recognition that literal age, in years, holds only limited meaning as a category of differentiation of individuals or groups.

Yet, for the purposes of my research focus a line had to be drawn. There was evidence in other international studies of *senior-only* intentional communities that most members were over 60 (Choi, 2004) or in the USA mostly over 70 (Glass, 2013). However, at the start of my research, because there was no prior research conducted in the UK on ageing in intentional communities I did not know if there were *any* older members in intentional communities. The age category most frequently referred to in information about forming 'senior' intentional community groups, was over 50 years (based on three groups, two listed in the UK CoHousing Network directory under 'forming groups' and one advertising on the Diggers and Dreamers noticeboard). Without a clear precedent in previous research or a threshold in widespread usage within the networks of intentional communities, I therefore initially selected the threshold of 60+. It seemed to offer a useful boundary between the statutory definition of 65 years and a more fluid notion of *becoming* old, which acknowledged the arbitrariness of such thresholds.

I based my initial approach to potential research participants on this. My efforts to hold to this arbitrary threshold in selecting interviewees were thwarted in the field. The second community key contact who agreed to pass on my invitation to potential interviewees was in

Community 2 and he thought the potential interviewee was 60. At interview it turned out that he was 59. In community 6, the key community contact thought that people over 50 were to be included, so two of my interviewees were 53 and 59. Having travelled some distance to the community and having started the interviews with these individuals, I included them mainly because my original age threshold had been arbitrary and my focus was on ageing, rather than a study making strict comparisons based on participants' ages. Such is the pragmatic reality of empirical research undertaken within time and budgetary constraints (Hallowell et al., 2005).

Based on my theoretical framework and methodological approach, I devised an interviewee classification form (Appendix 4) that would help me determine what Taylor calls *classificatory identity* as distinct from ontological identity (Taylor, 1998), the latter being more the focus of my interviews. The classification sheet was intended to help me locate each individual within contemporary UK social policy landscape and was based on key Bourdesian dimensions of social identity such as occupational class, annual income and property wealth (economic capital) and ethnicity and educational qualifications (cultural capital). The aim was also to seek out range and diversity amongst my interviewees, where possible. I based the questions on the UK Census, on the basis that these were a tried and tested format. I asked each interviewee to complete the classification sheet if they were happy to.

In retrospect, however, I omitted to include a direct question to interviewees about gender. Instead I *assumed* gender, based on normative notions, which, on reflection, I should not have done, given the contested nature of contemporary understandings of gender as not inherent and obvious. I also did not ask about sexuality because at the beginning I did not foresee it would be relevant. This was another omission I regretted, since one of the emergent themes became family and friends and for one interviewee (who identified as gay), sexuality played a role in her thinking about notions of family within the community. Future research could usefully address this.

Based on discussions with my supervisors and after reflecting on the specific literature relating to the number of interviews that constitute a respectable qualitative sample (Beitin, 2012; Creswell, 2007; Mason, 2002), I aimed to conduct around 15-20 interviews. Given the relatively small numbers of potential interviewees, I started with an opportunistic or volunteer approach, which is common for qualitative research projects at PhD level (Seale,

1998: 139). I decided to interview all individuals aged around 60 or more who agreed to take part, whatever type of community they lived in. The purpose was to explore the individual experiences of life within these communities, whoever the individuals were, since there was so little previous research for me to draw on in this field.

As the interviews progressed, I narrowed the strategy. Firstly, as I have mentioned in the section above (p50), my age threshold was difficult to adhere to. So, after I had secured the first 10 interviews, I began to focus on securing interviewees who were well past their 60<sup>th</sup> year to provide more of a focus on what is referred to as the fourth age (Lloyd, 2015). Second, my original aim had been to find communities that were as diverse as possible. However, when the opportunity arose to interview more than one participant from a community, I adapted my strategy. I realised this could yield a fuller and clearer understanding of how the community was organised and how it worked from varied perspectives. Additionally, by spending more time in the community, I might come to understand more about who chose to speak about what and in what context. This enabled exploration of a key Bourdesian theme of interest: what wasn't spoken of. Therefore, I continued with this approach, accepting all participants from each community who were willing to be interviewed, rather than seeking greater diversity of communities.

I decided not to seek out further interviews once I had booked 20. However, the logistics of booking interviews ahead and the way that an interview opportunity would sometimes arise whilst I was on location, meant I ended up carrying out 23 interviews. The number of interviews in each community were:

Community 1	-	2 interviewees (two separate visits)
Community 2	-	2 interviewees (one visit, over one day)
Community 3	-	1 interviewee (one visit)
Community 4	-	2 interviewees (one visit, over one day)
Community 5	-	5 interviewees (one visit, over two days)
Community 6	-	5 interviewees (one visit, over one day)
Community 7	-	1 interviewee (one visit)
Community 8	-	2 interviewees (two separate visits)
Community 9	-	3 interviewees (one visit, over one day).

## Qualitative Interviews Methods



From the start, I considered interviews to be epistemologically appropriate, offering a way of engaging with the housing life histories of participants that could reveal their background and resources ('habitus' and capitals), as well as their stories of 'life-choices', of struggle and resistance (agency and identity). Interviews were also appropriate practically, given the time and resource constraints I was working within.

Interviews of some sort remain the dominant form of 'data gathering' for qualitative researchers across diverse disciplines (Gubrium et al., 2012). As I have argued (in the first section of Chapter 3), many of the current epistemological approaches used in social sciences see as problematic and out-dated the notion that there is any 'truth' or neutrality involved in social scientific research. There is no *correct* interpretation of such interview 'data' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). There has been a legitimate and necessary epistemological upheaval that has blurred notions of fiction and truth and of disciplinary boundaries (Seale, 1998). However, my approach to answering these research questions is rooted in a Bourdesian approach which combines realism and social constructivism (Chapter 3). Like Hammersley and consistent with Bourdieu, I am not interested in slipping deep into deconstructionist territory, although I accept what I have gathered is narratives which cannot simply be read off as 'facts'.

Interviews can be seen as offering individual perspectives on retrospective or current events, eliciting stories which 'show how human actors do things in the world, how their actions shape events' (Mattingly and Lawlor, 2000). My emphasis was on hearing their perspectives and stories and exploring, *with the participant*, what they think has made is making, their life-style and home choices possible and interpreting these perspectives, alongside a reflexive account of my own role in what has been revealed (or not) (Mason, 2002: 78-79). As a qualitative researcher, I accepted I had already started to co-construct meaning with my interview participants through the topics and questions I selected to ask them. I was also aware that, to some extent, I would be part of the shaping of these narratives through the ways I interacted with interviewees. This is reflexive research practice (Dunne et al., 2005; Mason, 2002; Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002; Seale, 1998) and the interview as 'contextually located social action' (Dunne et al., 2005: 33). My relative 'insider' status, both as a person in my fifties and as someone who was in a forming intentional community, (discussed below, page 76) was something I acknowledged could shape the interactions with interviewees.

Interviews were chosen as a way of helping/guiding the respondent in ‘reconstructing aspects of their personal history’ (Bryman, 2012: 440). Andrews makes the point that such reconstructions are partial and based on the subjectivity of individual’s memories (Andrews, 2014); this temporal aspect is important to acknowledge as a limitation of all interviewing about the past. The interviewees’ stories of how they came to be living in the community in the first place were often about events that took place decades ago. The stories may have been told many times over and I acknowledge what was told was as much part of the interviewee’s present identity making, in the specific context of the interview, as it was an account of what had happened in the past.

### **The craft of interviewing**

Applying this theoretical knowledge to my interview methods, I adopted an open approach to asking questions in the interview. I maintained a focus on the topics I was interested in while staying open as to where the interviewees might lead me. I conducted a pilot interview using a simple list of questions and revised some of the terms and questions I was using. I consulted some of the methods literature specifically concerned with interview questions (Wang and Yan, 2012). I rephrased my questions and conducted my second interview, after which I realigned the sets of questions to provide me with more memorable anchors (as interviewer) to guide my interviewees, whilst not closing down unduly where the respondents might lead me. As a result, I arranged the questions into four sections: background, living here now, you and how you fit in and the future. This helped me to more easily locate and re-locate where we had got to in the interview as the interviewees followed their own storytelling routes.

After the first three interviews, I reviewed the transcripts against the six criteria for ‘effective qualitative interviews’ suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale:

*are characterised by the ‘spontaneous, rich, specific and relevant answers from the interviewee’ (2010: 202); contain significantly more dialogue from the respondent than the researcher; demonstrate the researcher following up to clarify the meanings of answers where necessary; are, to a large extent, interpreted throughout the interview; contain moments where the interviewer verifies their interpretation of the respondent’s answer during the interview itself; are ‘self-communicating’ in that they require little explanation. (Brinkmann, 2015)*

On this basis, I included the pilot interviews in my study since they held significant and interesting data and, in the light of gaps in data from my first interview, I went back to my

research participant and gathered some data subsequently by email. I realised at an early stage how significant the life histories of the participants were going to be, so I undertook some oral history training and reviewed Plummer's work on the use of life stories (Plummer, 2001). The oral history training helped in two ways: First, because oral history is about capturing audio or video recordings of interviews with participants, it helped me with techniques for listening to my interviewees in silence, without feeling the need to voice acknowledgement of what they were saying (e.g. using nodding and encouraging facial expressions, rather than saying 'ok'). Second, it helped me create more open-ended questions throughout the interviews, questions that allowed my respondents to take me more fluidly to the stories they wished to tell and what they felt was relevant and therefore maintain a balance between this and what I was more directionally focussed on eliciting from the interviewees. By the time I had conducted my fourth interview, I had picked up two additional topic prompts (about family a 'typical day') and I felt satisfied with and confident in the use of my 'interview questions checklist'. The format remained stable, but also open, for the rest of the interviews conducted (Appendix 5).

### **Situating the life of the interviewee within the community**

*My entire scientific enterprise is indeed based on the belief that the deepest logic of the social world can be grasped only if one plunges into the particularity of an empirical reality, historically located and dated. (Bourdieu, 1998: 3)*

This quote illustrates Bourdieu's commitment to empirical research and the importance of situating phenomena within their wider historical and social context. As I conducted the interviews, I began to learn more about the community context *through* the interviews, especially in those communities where I interviewed a number of members. The story of the individual was often woven into the story of the community, especially for those individuals who had been members for long periods of time.

From these different member's perspectives, I was able to situate the respondents' narratives within their specific community's history and social and historical context, which often yielded rich and interesting data about the communities as entities in their own right. In addition, I used the community's web profiles and conversations with my interviewees while they showed me round their communities as sources of data. This led to my decision to develop a typology of the communities, based on the key axis of difference suggested by Bourdieu: economic capital (Chapter 5, p66).

## Data Organisation and Transcription: on Listening and Reading

Having experienced Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) through prolonged keyboard work I was keen to explore different ways of preparing interview data for analysis. This led me to consider how I was to engage deeply with my material and what the effects were of converting my live interviews into research 'data'. I started my exploration by asking the question: what might be gained by using only the audio recordings in my analysis? Within my methodological framework, it seemed possible to analyse the data *without* transcripts of the interviews, so I weighed up the difference between *reading* the material presented and *hearing* it.

For two of the six transcribed interviews, I conducted an experiment: for the first, I listened to the recording and wrote down (on paper) preliminary themes emerging from the interview and I timed the process; for the second, I read the transcript and wrote on the transcript preliminary themes emerging from the interview and I timed the process. I assumed it would be quicker to read the transcript than listen all the way through the interview but, actually, there was not much difference in the times. I think one of the reasons for this was how much easier it was to grasp what the interviewee was saying when they were speaking, compared with reading the text. The dynamics of spoken language and the contextual nuance provided by *hearing* the interview helped me with meaning. I also found it more engaging *listening* than reading and I felt I listened more closely.

There were some practical issues with this approach; I had to find out how to anonymise a recording. I used free software recommended in the oral history training I had undertaken called Audacity. It allowed for editing out names and anything that compromised anonymity and it allowed me to snip out sections of interviews and insert them into PowerPoint presentations as recordings. I also had to learn how to annotate and code an interview recording rather than a written transcript, which was possible within NVivo.

Once I had overcome the logistical challenges, I presented this approach to my peers and tutors, summarising what I considered to be the strengths and weaknesses of the traditional written transcripts, compared with the audio recording method. I engaged the audience in a discussion about the difference in their experience of the two different approaches. There were some obvious differences, such as the revelation of gender and a sense of origin (accent, hints of class and education). There was also a quite marked difference in the way

that the audience interpreted one quote. Initial interpretation of the written quote suggested themes like loss, sadness, regret, whereas the recording revealed there was humour in the interviewee's tone and that what she was describing was the attitudes of other people and how they viewed her life, not her own sense of unhappiness with it. In addition, there was more sense of my presence in the interview, the tone of my questions, my laughter at her irreverent tone. The post-presentation discussion revealed and confirmed how much easier it was to skip over my role as researcher when reading transcripts.

I was challenged by my peers' responses too. The main challenge was that the act of transcribing – of turning dialogue into text, the very flattening that I had described – helps the researcher to distance herself from the material *in order to be able to analyse it*. In other words, the creation of distance, the objectifying of the encounter, enables the researcher to hold the experience 'over there' and look at it with more critical faculties, more critical distance; to not get drawn back into the present of the interview encounter.

## **Reflections & decisions regarding preparation of data for analysis**

In the discipline of film, media & cultural studies, experimentation with *how* we generate and present data has been around for some time. Back argues for sociologists to pay attention to the fragments, voices and stories that are otherwise passed over or ignored. Back critiques what he considers to be poor research, which tends to merely present data as a series of quotations:

*The portraits of the research participants are sketched lightly, if at all and the social location of the respondent lacks explication and contextual nuance. Sociological data is reduced to a series of disembodied quotations... in the end the texture of the very lives we seek to render is flattened and glossed. Put crudely, the words of respondents will not carry vivid portrayals of their lives. (Back, 2007: 19)*

He also critiques the notion of participants' utterances speaking for themselves and I was aware of the process of 'authorial concealment' that can take place in unreflexive research (Dunne et al., 2005: 49). Back talks about the task of good sociological writing to be bringing to life of people we work with, without, at the same time, drowning in the detail. He talks about how analytical *and* creative this process is and how different media, such as photography, can complement and enhance words. Pink reinforces this in her work using video in the domestic home to reveal gendered roles and subtle forms of identity work (Pink,

2004). She illustrates how understanding of experiences and practices within the home is enhanced by treating the home as a 'pluri-sensory context' (p 137).

Such methods are made possible through changing information and communication technologies that make audio and video almost as easy to manage as text. As McLeod and Thomson have pointed out, research methods are the products of specific times and places (McLeod and Thomson, 2009) (p 10). For my research, this exploration focused my attention on the process of analysis. Hammersley reminds me that there are some key steps for all researchers: selectivity; language - turning heard words into written words involves language/understanding; interpretation - trying to convey what was being said, how, with what emphasis and import (p9). He also warns researchers not to lose their grip on reality:

*There is a slippery slope from recognition that decisions and interpretations are necessarily involved in transcription to the conclusion that the data are created or constituted by the transcriber rather than representing more or less adequately 'what occurred'. In effect, this leads to a radical epistemological scepticism that is self-undermining.* (Hammersley, 2010: 10)

Therefore, like all qualitative researchers, when I came to analysing what I had gathered I made critical, analytical decisions about what was important and how best to describe it. The way I recalled and revisited my 'data' was an important part of this process of working it out. I decided to consciously make this an explicit part of my analysis process.

### **The resulting process of interview data preparation: transcripts versus recordings**

The detailed process I undertook for organising my interview data ready for analysis is set out in the table below. Essentially, I used audio recordings in the analysis of half (n=11) of my interviews (no textual document) used written transcripts for the other half (n=12).

I transcribed half of my interviews (mixing up the order in which they were conducted) and left half as audio recordings and then analysed these in these two different formats. I transcribed 12 of the interviews myself using Dragon Voice Recognition Software (VRS) to avoid typing. There are precedents for this approach (Brooks, 2010; MacLean et al., 2004; Matheson, 2007; Perrier and Kirkby, 2013). I provide a detailed description of the exact steps for this stage of processing my interview recordings into data, including the free software that I used to anonymise my audio recordings, in Appendix 6.

I undertook the analysis of each set of interviews - x12 using transcripts only, x11 using audio recordings only - separately and in the course of analysis I also noted down (in a separate file created for this purpose) any observations I made or thoughts I had about the specific format of the data. A summary of the practical and analytic advantages and disadvantages of each method are outlined in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of the advantages and disadvantages of analysis using transcriptions compared with using audio

<b>Transcriptions</b>	<b>Audio recording</b>
Easy to import	Easy to import
Significantly more data preparation time	Significantly less data preparation time
Quicker to pick up how to do it in NVivo	Slower to pick up how to do it in NVivo
Quicker to scan back and forth across the text to find sections	Slower to find the exact section (more difficult to locate the start & end)
Lose the affective dimension data and contextual information	Retain the affective dimension data and contextual information in voice
Easy to export or cut & paste quotes	Easy to export quotes (audio form) BUT need to have technology to share it and can't use them in a paper doctoral thesis! So ended up transcribing quotes.

Transcribing audio recordings into written documents made the information available more manageable, but it was at the cost of rendering the interview less alive; freezing it, literally pinning it down onto a page ready for dissection. How else to manage the rich complexity of individual people with all their decisions over 50 or 70 years of adult life and their narratives about their decisions over their lifetimes? In this process of rendering, of making more manageable all that is encountered in these interviews, there was an inevitable letting go of the visceral intensity of live interaction. In order to draw any conclusions from research – not to become self-undermining, as Hammersley describes it - we need to make it manageable. Transcripts rendered my experience in my interviews more manageable: I felt less implicated in them once they were text on a page; I gained distance from them, I carried them around, I read them in whatever order I wished, I poked at them and scribbled on them and I extracted from them what I saw as relevant, what I needed and then I filed them away.

I found that I could do exactly the same carrying, re-ordering, poking, scribbling, extraction, filing and rendering with the audio recordings, though the technology involved in scribbling notes and thoughts adjacent to sections of audio recordings made the process less portable

and more dependent on information technologies that took time for me to learn. Paper documents still had the advantage of being more portable - data analysis on a paper document can be done anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Having audio recordings as the medium for data analysis had other advantages though: hearing my interviewees speak wasn't as detached as reading their words; I felt myself drawn back into their world, noticed unspoken emotions, recalled histories revealed in accents and was more aware of my own presence in the interview. I also had a keener awareness of what could what didn't, get followed up; how partial these analytical findings might be.

On reflection the audio recordings revealed more of the fragility of communication between myself and the interviewee; I was reminded of the dance that had taken place between us: I was trying to both listen and guide the conversation. They were chewing over the questions, trying to articulate explanations of what had happened to them in life and sometimes struggling to provide coherent rationales for their decisions or choices, when they were often the result of specific and circumstantial webs of interactions.

What I also identified through this process was a greater presence within audio recordings of the *emotion* within the stories and the story-telling process. Thomson et al (Thomson et al., 2012) have argued that this can be present in text if you take the time to look for it, if you read it slowly and carefully - even text written by past researchers re-read by new researchers some 10 years later. They reanalysed the observation notes of interactions between a young mother and her baby (originally part of a psychoanalytic infant observation study). They used texts written by the original researchers and made their own analyses, paying attention to the 'feel' of the episode in their own readings. They then compared these with the analytic narratives of the original researchers. In doing so, they revealed 'the textual mechanisms through which affect is housed in material' and drew out 'the unspoken' present in the text, stored in the text (citing Ogden, 1999) further (Thomson et al., 2012: citing Lorenzer) that 'scenic material can be encoded within and communicated by texts' (p317).

I concluded audio recordings could be used more in analysis, not only on an equal footing with transcriptions, but as one that retains more of the 'affective dimensions of meaning making'- affective dimensions being 'immediate, embodied sensations' (p320) - that Thomson et al are keen for researchers pay attention to in their analysis. The process revealed to me something of what Savage describes as 'the messiness and indeterminacy of



the research process itself' (Savage, 2010: x), and that research is, itself, socially constructed and the rules and conventions of its processes are also open to dissection.

### **Approach to Data Analysis - Thematic Analysis**

Following my methodological approach I undertook thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) of the data I had collected: interview transcripts, interview audio recordings, brief biographies of each participant, individual classification forms, profiles of each community (based on interview information and web profiles) and field notes. The broad approach was abductive: the themes developed in response to the research questions, which in turn reflected the methodological approach, though some unexpected new themes also emerged, for example, those relating to one-to-one relationships within communities and distinctions between conceptions of family (topics that emerged through the open and flexible approach to the interviews topic list).

I opted to use NVivo qualitative data analysis software as the platform for my analysis because it helps to organise and present data systematically and transparently, can be more easily reviewed and amended than paper methods and can be more easily copied and shared than paper-based methods. Initially I thought I would undertake analytical coding in the order of transcripts first, followed by audio recordings. However, the emergence of strong themes relating to the differences in the communities meant I changed this order and analysed the interviews from each community *together*. This enabled me to write up profiles of each community, from which I developed the typology of the communities.

Following an initial review of the audio recordings and/or the written transcripts and the field notes, I developed a mind map to outline the initial themes emerging from the interviews and visits (Appendix 7). I was then ready to enter the data onto NVivo and start coding the data as part of a second round of data analysis. A breakdown of the themes generated from the data and the codes/categories within them are provided in Appendix 8.

In summary, the analysis process was conducted systematically as follows:

STAGE 1 – Initial analysis and production of individual housing pathways & community profiles:

- a) Re-listened to interviews and re-read transcriptions to develop initial themes (grouped by community)
- b) Reviewed all field notes and made links to interview data
- c) Wrote individual housing biographies (based on interviews)
- d) Converted individual housing biographies into diagrams of each individual's housing pathway, to help me develop an overview of all the interviewees
- e) Wrote each community profile (based on interviews and community web profiles)
- f) Created a mind map based on initial themes.

STAGE 2 – second round of analysis, using NVivo:

- g) Loaded all transcriptions and recordings onto NVivo
- h) Coded all data within NVivo, based on initial themes plus some new, emergent themes
- i) Ranked main thematic areas according to volume of codes (Appendix 8)
- j) Reviewed data within each significant thematic area to develop outline findings.

This systematic process of analysis provided the foundation for the research findings which are the subject of the next chapters. Next, I explain my ethical approach and practices.

## **Ethical Approach**

### **Researcher Identity: power, minimising harm and sensitivity**

I have mentioned (page 65) that I considered the research results would constitute a form of co-production of meaning with research participants, hence the open-ended, informal structure of the interviews. I tried to develop an informal approach and a conversational tone in the way I conducted the interviews. I recognised the 'power asymmetries' inherent in the research relationship and attempted to minimise their impact and appreciated the 'need for social sensitivity both during and after the interview' (Dunne et al., 2005: 34). I ensured that participation in the interviews was entirely voluntary by making contact via an intermediary (my key contact within the community) who passed on my invitation to potential interviewees. This meant that potential interviewees could refuse without having to make contact with me. I also minimised the risks of harm to my participants by allowing them to choose where to be interviewed, so maximising their control of the situation. I was honest about how long the interview could take and explained it was up to them how long they wanted to speak for. I also made clear both verbally and in the participant information sheet that they could stop the interview at any time, for any reason, without any further repercussions.

The most significant risk to participants was anonymity, since the communities were unusual entities and the population of people living within them was small. I was concerned certain individual characteristics, or descriptions of specific settings, could lead to individuals being identified by other people living in their own, or similar communities. This remained a constant tension in the conduct, analysis and writing up of my research. My first mitigation of this risk was to explain the risk to interviewees and advise I could not *guarantee* anonymity and that they should be aware of this risk in the way they responded. In the analysis and writing up, I balanced the need for clarity and detail with the need to ensure anonymity. I undertook a series of changes to my data to minimise this risk, including removing all identifying data from transcripts and field notes, placing individuals in age categories rather than using their actual age and obscuring locations by making them more regional, for example.

I was also careful not to make myself vulnerable throughout the research process. I informed friends and my supervisor of the location and time of each interview and undertook precautions, such as carrying a mobile phone at all times, to ensure that I could call for help if required.

### **Information, Consent and Participation**

Ethical considerations also included attention to participants' informed consent and ethical processes of engagement, data confidentiality and management. I had to adapt my strategy for the survey because the initial plan was to secure *written and signed* consent from each of the key contacts in the communities prior to gathering any information. Once I had made contact, I realised this was unworkable: the first few contacts were willing to answer questions but they wanted to answer questions there and then and were not interested in a process of receiving and sending of consent forms. So I changed this stage to involve only verbal consent.

For all the interviews with older members, a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 3) was provided initially (mostly by email). Then consent to visit and conduct the interview was given (either by email or by phone). I took paper copies of both the sheet and the form and allowed time for interviewees to read them at the start of the interview and I left copies

with each participant (unless they requested that I take them back). All consent forms were signed by the participants on the day of the interview and retained in a confidential folder.

Most interviewees were comfortable with the anonymity arrangements described above (p60). However, two interviewees thought anonymity unnecessary and argued it was an obstacle to helping people learn about and understand more about their communities. I explained my guiding principle had to be minimising any chance of harm and therefore not only individual and location names have been anonymized, but also some more distinctive features of some personal histories.

During the interviews, there were occasionally moments where interviewees were upset. I was aware this might happen, so I always carried tissues and offered to end the interview when this happened, but none chose to do this. I always allowed time for them to recover and asked if I could get them anything (glass of water for example), hopefully making it clear their comfort was my primary concern.

Ethical approval for the research project was given by the University of Sussex Ethics Review Board in July 2014 (Appendix 9). The initial fieldwork started shortly after this, with the main survey conducted from September to December 2014 and the interviews from September 2014 through to February 2015.

In my initial ethics plan, I thought I would send transcripts of interviews to Interviewees as soon I had completed them and undertaken my first round of analysis; I wanted to be as sure as possible that interviewees were comfortable with how I was using the material they had provided (co-production of meaning, pages 64 and 73). However, I did not anticipate how much reflection and decision-making would be involved in my data preparation and processing (see pages 66-72), nor how long it would take me to accomplish a first round of analysis. At that stage I could see how tentative my preliminary analysis and was reluctant to share it.

In the end, I retained the goal of sharing my analysis with participants but sent it to them once the analysis was completed and the thesis was in penultimate draft form. In August 2016 I emailed all interviewees who had provided me with their email address a copy of the draft thesis, explaining they could check what I had written about their community and what

quotes I had ascribed to them by searching the document (using their individual and their community's anonymised references). I also included a 600-word summary and their individual housing pathway diagram. I had given a deadline for responses of 3 weeks. I received eight replies which resulted in the amendment some minor details about individuals and the communities.

### **Insider/Outsider Status**

I was not an 'insider', despite how I came to being interested in this topic. I have not lived in an intentional community, but I considered I had some degree of 'insider' status because of my own life experiences (explained in Chapter 1, page 13). In early conversations with key contacts and potential interviewees, I used opportunities to describe how I had come to be interested in this subject and the origins of my PhD research questions and used these to build relationships with potential participants.

These conversations helped secure participation in three ways. First, I have mentioned how communities had experienced previous media and research interest that had not always felt worthwhile for them (p50), so my involvement in building a community with my friends marked me as a sympathiser rather than an antagonist. Second, amongst potential participants there was often enthusiasm for helping other communities, so my practical experiences and engagement felt positive to them. Third, my project management experience in health and social care helped me present as an experienced person (not amateur) who might be well-placed to influence relevant policy makers.

The priority for me was to ensure I set out my research goals clearly and honestly. Therefore, I always emphasised the principal academic purpose of my research was the achievement of my PhD and that any other outcomes would be secondary. Being consistent with my theoretical and methodological approach, I did not consider it appropriate or possible to be *objective*; rather, I was explicit about my background and my motivations. I held in mind Bourdieu's injunctions to academic researchers not to just critique ideologies of domination and reveal injustices, but to commit to 'create the conditions for a collective effort to reconstruct a universe of realist ideals, capable of mobilizing people's will without mystifying their consciousness' (Bourdieu, 2003: 9). I balanced this approach with the necessity to apply academic rigour to my research.

This approach is recognised in the methodological literature as marking a departure from traditional positivist approaches to interviewing, in which association or sympathy with those interviewed, or empathy in the conduct of face-to-face interviews might be construed as bias or partisanship. In this traditional positivist approach to interviewing, the interviewee is seen as the seam of information and the interviewer as the extractor, or miner, of that information (Kvale, 1996). I accepted the premise that my research was inherently social and inherently political (see above p 53) and that in order to achieve academic rigour, neutrality was not an option. Instead I accepted the imperative to develop 'self-knowledge and conscious self-monitoring' as part of my learning to research effectively (Dunne et al., 2005: 35). For this purpose, I kept a researcher diary throughout my field work which I discussed with my peers and my supervisor and which helped me to consider the social relations and dynamics of my research encounters - the 'dynamic synchronous intersubjectivity' of my interview experiences (Dunne et al., 2005: 46). This process was ongoing throughout the research process, including the analysis and writing up stages: ethical considerations were part of my reflective process and decision-making regarding data preparation and analysis and were part of my concern to not disembodify and unduly fragment my research participants' lives and perspectives.

This Chapter has, then, set out my epistemological position, my methodological approach and the methods I used to conduct my research and explained how they link together. In the next four Chapters, I outline the findings of my research, starting with Chapter 5 which sets out the context in which my interviews with individuals were located - the nine intentional communities - and outlines the main differences between them based on economic capital.

## **CHAPTER 5 - A TYPOLOGY OF THE COMMUNITIES AND DISTINCTIONS BASED ON ECONOMIC CAPITAL**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in detail the intentional communities included in the study, given how little detailed research has been undertaken in this field (evidenced in Chapter 2) and to situate the lives of my interviewees within the different types of intentional community. In order to understand what makes living in intentional communities possible for my interviewees I needed to draw out the habitus of the intentional communities they were part of, formed around the key concepts of economic, cultural and social capital. In this chapter, therefore, I answer the following key research questions:

- How many communities had older members?
- What kinds of communities had older members?
- Were there distinctions between the communities in terms of the economic capital required to become and to sustain living as a member?
- Were there other key distinctions between the communities relating to cultural capital?

I start with the results from my survey of the communities in the South of England, which provides the age profile of the membership of the nine communities that responded to my telephone survey and the members of which I interviewed. I then describe the current financial costs of entry and the cost of living in the nine communities as the basis for distinguishing the communities in terms of Bourdieu's key axis - economic capital.

### **The results of the preliminary survey of 22 communities in the South of England**

I have mentioned (page 59) the telephone survey provided me with an approximation of the numbers of communities that had members known to be aged over 60 (n=11/22). I also established that the proportion of people aged 60+ in each community ranged from 5% to 60% of total membership and that there were no existing communities exclusively or intentionally for older people within the Diggers and Dreamers population. A limitation was

the knowledge of the key contact about the exact ages of their members, so all numbers are approximations. Also communities are always changing, so the information only applies to the specific time the survey was conducted, in September 2014.

I was then able to review the publically available sources of information about those communities with members over 60<sup>4</sup> (n=11). This revealed that the communities were located in rural, urban and suburban settings; that they described their organisational forms as CoHousing, Co-operatives, limited companies and charities; and they had been in existence for up to 128 years and as little as three years (average 28 years).

Of the 11 communities identified as having older members, only nine were involved in the second stage of the research, where I visited the community and interviewed older members. As I explained in Chapter 4 (page 63), I had conducted sufficient numbers of interviews by the time I visited the ninth community. The remainder of this Chapter relates to these nine communities and the information I gathered about them from my interviews with members.

## **Overview of the nine intentional communities in this study**

Given my theoretical framework and research questions, my focus was to provide a specific social and historical context in which to situate each individual interviewee and the community they live in and to describe in detail what it took for a member to gain entry into the community.

I developed an overview of all nine communities (this section) and an individual profile of each community (next section) where the older members lived, in order to develop an understanding of the common and distinguishing features of the different communities. An example of a community profile is provided in Appendix 10 and has been slightly altered to ensure anonymity.

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<sup>4</sup> I used websites such as Diggers and Dreamers and the individual websites of the communities, which gave me information about the size, age and type of location of the community e.g. (urban or rural)



The starting point for describing the dimensions of difference between the communities is summarised in table 3 below. This table shows that the nine communities included in this study were:

- a mixture of urban, suburban and rural;
- ranged in age from 3 to 40 years;
- ranged in size from 5-10 to 70-80 members;
- ranged in land size from less than 1 acre to around 70 acres;
- were all intergenerational (though community 7 had no under 18s);
- ranged from having 5% members aged 60+ years, to having 70% (average around 15%).

This table also shows the diversity of the organisational forms used by different communities and sometimes *within* a single community.

The next step was to look more closely at the nine communities to start to understand their place in the field of housing. Given my Bourdesian theoretical framework, I approached this task by exploring distinctions between the nine communities in terms of economic grouping (the key form of capital distinguishing entities).

### **Economic capital: the finances required to become a member**

Fundamental to distinguishing the communities as entities, is the economic capital required to be a member; more specifically the *financial* capital required to become accepted and the monthly costs of living in the community, including any conditions about the ongoing form financial contributions take.

Within the field of housing, a key distinction is made between different types of housing tenure: whether or not housing is owned or rented by the people who live in it. I have shown in my literature review, housing tenure has a long-debated association with social class (p23). This traditional distinction is insufficient for an analysis of these communities. Only one of the communities (Community 1) had a single tenure arrangement (leasehold ownership of individual homes). Another community was operating a mixed tenure system, albeit temporarily, (Community 9). The other community, which had some individually owned units, worked on a Co-operative rental model (Community 5). So the economic and legal arrangements in the nine communities complicated simple categories of housing tenure. A more useful way of distinguishing the communities from each other was by the financial

**Table 3:** Overview of the nine intentional communities, in order of the age of community, from youngest to oldest

	What they call themselves	No. of people	% of people 60+	Size of land (acres)	Year org/IC started	Age of IC (yrs)	Location	Organisational form	Explicit ideological focus
2	Ecovillage/squat	30-40	5% (1 person)	1-5	2012	3	semi-rural	Squat; off-the-grid self-sufficiency	Sustainability
9	CoHousing	5-10	30%	1-5	2001 /2010	4	urban	Complex: individual ownership via leases; property management company owns land & buildings	(none listed)
7	Housing Co-operative	5-10	10% (1 person)	< 1	2007 /2010	4	urban	Housing Co-op; all renters; Co-op owns land & buildings	(none listed)
1	CoHousing	70-80	5%	20-30	1995 /1998	17	semi-rural	Complex: individual ownership via leases; property management company owns land & buildings	none
5	Intentional community	5-10	70%	5-10	1970s /1983	31	rural	Complex: mixed ownership via leases & renters; property management company owns land & buildings	ecological
3	Housing Co-operative	60-70	5-10%	< 1	1978 /1989	36	urban	Housing Co-op; all renters; Co-op owns land & buildings	(none listed)
4	Housing Co-operative	20-30	5-10%	1-2	1978	37	urban	Housing Co-op; all renters; Housing Association owns land & buildings	(none listed)
6	Housing Co-operative	30-40	15%	1-5	1977	38	urban	Housing Co-op; all renters; Co-op owns land & buildings	(none listed)
8	A group of families and individuals that have chosen to live together	50-60	30%	60-70	1974	40	rural	Complex: no individual ownership but must invest 'loanstock' to secure individual space; multiple forms to own & manage buildings and land	ecological

capital required to become a member (which I set out in the next sections of this chapter) and by the approximate costs of living for individuals in each community (which I set out in the subsequent section of this chapter).

Data about whether an individual had to have financial capital to become a member of each community is summarised in the final column of table 4 below. I have highlighted in darker shading those communities that required new members to have capital (darker shade), the one community where this was a choice (lighter shade) and the communities where there was no requirement (un-shaded).

What this shows is that sometimes the distinction was simple. For example, the two communities that describe themselves as CoHousing, were based on individual ownership of units (leasehold properties) within community owned land and shared facilities (the community as freeholder). The four traditional housing Co-ops were based entirely on members paying rent and no capital was required. The distinction was more complicated in Communities 5 and 8: Community 5 offered mixed forms of tenure and included both leasehold properties and Co-operative rental properties; Community 8 was technically a housing Co-op, but required new members to have access to financial capital to invest as loan stock, so it was a hybrid form of housing that was neither traditional ownership nor traditional rental. A key finding therefore was that it was not possible to use the organisational form or conventional concepts like housing tenure (owner versus renter) to establish if the communities were only open to members with financial capital. I needed a deeper understanding of exactly what was going on in the economics of living in the communities if I was to understand what role economic capital played in the habitus of the communities. In the next section therefore I describe how the communities enabled or restricted entry based on financial capital.

#### **a) Profiles of individual-ownership model communities (requiring financial capital investment)**

As briefly outlined in the table above, three of the communities in this research require a member to have financial capital to become part of that community. Communities 1 and 9 described themselves as 'CoHousing' and members needed to 'buy in' to secure a property within the community. The basis of ownership in these two communities involved paying for

Table 4: Summary of the organisational form of each community and the financial capital required to move in (in order of none to typical market costs)

Comm . No.	What they call themselves	Organisational form	Financial capital required to move in?
2	Ecovillage/squat	Squat; off-the-grid self-sufficiency	None
7	Housing Co-operative	Housing Co-op; all renters; Co-op owns land & buildings	None – traditional Co-op
3	Housing Co-operative	Housing Co-op; all renters; Co-op owns land & buildings	None – traditional Co-op
4	Housing Co-operative	Housing Co-op; all renters; Housing Association owns land & buildings	None – traditional Co-op
6	Housing Co-operative	Housing Co-op; all renters; Co-op owns land & buildings	None – traditional Co-op
5	Intentional community	Complex: mixed ownership via leases & renters; property management company owns land & buildings	Mixed tenure options
9	CoHousing	Complex: individual ownership via leases; property management company owns land & buildings	Yes, pay typical market cost
1	CoHousing	Complex: individual ownership via leases; property management company owns land & buildings	Yes, pay typical market cost
8	A group of families and individuals that have chosen to live together	Complex: no individual ownership but must invest 'loanstock' to secure individual space; multiple forms to own & manage buildings and land	Yes; pay less than typical market costs, but investment is linked to local property price index

a leasehold property within the buildings/site, much like a conventional purchase of an apartment within a block of flats, using a mortgage secured from conventional lenders.

However, there were three important differences compared with a conventional purchase of a flat: first, other people living in the block (members in the community) were involved in vetting and approving new householder's looking to purchase a flat; second, there was an expectation that new householder would commit time and energy to the community of people living there (for example, taking part in making regular communal meals, undertaking cleaning or maintenance rotas, attending meetings or workgroups); and third, new households were expected to work together to manage the buildings and gardens (though this was similar to some conventional leasehold ownership when a shared freehold was involved).

Given the importance of economic capital in understanding the habitus of the communities and the unorthodox nature of these arrangements compared with conventional housing, I wanted to understand the costs of gaining entry to each community and typical day-to-day living costs. I provide a summary of this information in the community profiles provided below. These profiles also illustrate some of the other differences between individual communities that helped me establish how far it was possible to refer to a shared habitus across groups of communities. I start with Community 1 which required the most economic capital for entry based on typical property market values, then Community 9 which was similar, but at a different stage of development and then Community 8 which was more complicated.

**Community 1** was made up of a set of blocks of brick-built buildings which were converted to provide homes to the majority of the approximately 70 members. A further handful of modern housing units had been built on the site since the original conversion. The buildings were set in 20 to 30 acres of land, the majority of which was landscaped, with some set aside for growing food. The cost of the houses ('units') within Communities 1 and 9 was on a par with conventional housing market values in their local area. For example, at the time of the research a three-bedroom property within Community 1 was being sold for around £5-600,000, typical of the high house prices that characterise the South East of England housing market. The founding members of this community had been able to sell their individual properties in London and pool their resources to buy land and buildings in this cheaper rural

location. They had spent money and devoted considerable amounts of time and energy to converting the properties into housing and to creating their 'common house' and other shared resources. The properties they created had increased in value in parallel with the local housing market. So the community membership was mainly made up of established homeowners, some with outstanding mortgages and the house prices were unaffordable for people who were not already property owners in a similarly priced area, or who had other access to financial capital.

The cost of living per member within this community was more variable because housing costs were dependent on the size of the unit purchased (conventional market evaluation) and there was less communal eating and less communal buying of household consumables than in the other communities. Individual households here ran more or less like conventional households – buying their own food and consumables and paying for their own phone and internet, heating and electricity. The difference was that residents bought their power supplies from the 'Power Company' that was part of the community and that they, as a community, ran. The community 'service charge' per household worked out at around £25 per M<sup>2</sup> and included communal buildings and various services such as water and drainage, land maintenance and insurance. Council tax was paid individually by each household and rated by the council in the same way as any other property owner. In terms of the high cost of individual entry into the community this was the most affluent community of my sample.

**Community 9** was a relatively recently formed community, made up of nine individuals living in one building as a temporary arrangement prior to the development of their land, on which they planned to build 10 eco-houses for each of the members. The community was in transition: they had purchased the land, but the building was not habitable, so they had spent money renovating it so some of them could live in it whilst the process of designing and securing planning permission for the eco-houses was underway. The community was also in transition in the way that it organised itself; structures, policies and procedures were all being discussed and developed.

Originally, there were about eight individuals who put money in to buy the land and the house at a cost of around £20-30,000. They had employed a builder to undertake the work to make the main building habitable, funded through a bank loan from an ethical lender for around £300,000 (for the whole development). The current membership was paying a monthly amount to the community organisation to pay off this loan. The community was

constituted, in part, as a housing Co-operative. Within the original group there were people who did not have the required financial capital to invest: interviewee 23 started off as a member of the group 10 years before they secured the land, but had no capital to invest at the time (four years ago) and only managed to secure the £26,000 required to be part of the membership at a later stage, after the land had been purchased. He had moved in about 2-3 years ago and, like the others, was paying in a monthly amount.

Once the individual housing units were built and occupied, it was planned that the main house would become the CoHousing 'common house' where all communal activities could take place and guest rooms would be available. Each member was expected to fund the cost of building their own unit and would own their own leasehold unit once it was built, in a similar way to Community 1, though they had yet to work out all the legal details of this. The price per unit was expected to be around £100,000, which they expected to be slightly below market value because they would be organising the building themselves and would save on the cost of the property developer. In this sense, this intentional community was undertaking a custom self-build project.

The current cost of living in this community per member was around £300 per month for paying back the loan and maintenance/repairs, though different size rooms were costed slightly differently, plus about £70 per month for services. This was the second most affluent community of my sample, in terms of the anticipated high cost of individual entry into the community.

### **b) Profile of a hybrid individual and social-ownership model community**

**Community 8**, home to around 50-60 individuals, had more complicated arrangements and it could be described as a commune, though interviewees did not use this term because of negative connotations from the past. The individuals were, in effect, living as one household (albeit an extremely organised household with lots of rotas) where individuals had their own private space and their own front door (albeit a front door without a letterbox and left mostly unlocked).

Whilst new members were expected to invest a financial sum to live there, the community was constituted as both a Co-operative and as a housing association, so the investment was made in the form of 'loan stock'. Loan stock is a legally defined form of financial investment,

part of the legal structure for Co-operatives in the UK and it is a mechanism where anyone can lend money to a co-op for a specified period of time (at whatever rate of interest is negotiated between the two parties at the time) and can get that money back at the end of that period should they wish to do so. Lending a co-op loan stock does not, however, give the person investing money any rights of ownership. Therefore, new members 'buying into' this community were not strictly buying anything, nor could they access mortgages through conventional lenders because there was no individual legal ownership. Some efforts had been made by community members in the past to get mortgage lenders to recognise the arrangement as a secure investment, but they had not succeeded. This arrangement was described as an informal one – being a transfer from one member (the member coming in) to another member (the member leaving) *via the community organisation*. So in this community potential new members had to be able to pass on an appropriate amount of capital (to the individual leaving) *without* a mortgage, which meant that often new members were people who had housing equity or other forms of cash capital, or who were able to borrow from family and friends.

Once accepted into the community and having provided the appropriate amount of loan stock for the unit they were moving into (units were priced according to their size), the new member did not strictly *own* their unit/apartment (no legal ownership), nor were they strictly a tenant (no rent was paid). Instead their system worked on trust and the loanstock system: as long as the individual or household had been accepted into and played their part within the community and had replaced the loan stock of the previous member (held in the accounts of the community), they could use the space/unit that had been allocated to them by the wider community. In this sense, members could be seen as *neither or both* owners and renters. This arrangement had been created by the community over time and did not fit in to any established models used by other communities: they had creatively combined the notion of investment and commitment usually associated with individual ownership, with the principal of *no individual ownership*, thereby ensuring enduring community ownership of land and buildings. This was unique amongst the communities I studied and I found no other community using this creative arrangement.

The price of each housing unit was calculated according to how big it was and the quality and location of the unit. They had three levels of charging: two-room units, four room units and six room units (the latter mainly for families). The cost of the unit to the individual was lower than mainstream housing prices in the area because they had started their pricing at a lower



than average unit price when they had initially devised the system some time ago. The community could do this because of its long history: it had no outstanding mortgage to pay off and the loanstock invested in the Co-operative as an informal condition of entry was simply part of the collective pot held by the Co-operative/Housing Association to pay for major repairs or significant outlay when required. However, the community tied the rate of interest offered on the loan stock to the national house price index, so anyone living in the community for a length of time would not be disproportionately priced out of the local housing market should they wish to leave. In other words, individual householders investing their capital into living in a unit within this community, could expect a similar rate of return on their capital as if they had purchased a unit in the local housing market (albeit from a lower starting point).

The cost of occupying a full-sized six-room unit within the community was about £250,000, substantially lower than the equivalent amount of space in a property in the local village. What was significant was that the community had been able to keep unit capital costs lower than average house price values because it was not dependent on buying and selling in the mainstream system of individual home ownership. It had existed for long enough to not have significant financial pressures on the community as a whole and it benefitted from the efficiency of a high degree of sharing facilities like bathrooms and kitchens.

In this community, all the costs for heat, light, council tax, insurance and structural repairs were divided up between the units/households. The division was based both on the size of unit (more cost per square metre) the number of people living in the unit (higher for more people). A person living in a two-room unit paid £135-140 per month, which interviewees acknowledged was extremely affordable for living in this region. Obviously a further reason for their low cost of living was how much maintenance work members did themselves within the community. Low living costs were achieved because members gave around 12 hours of time per week do all the work involved; the community only used external contractors for big land and building jobs. This low cost of living enabled many of the members to combine a secure home, access to a remarkable range of facilities (for example, a badminton court), three meals a day of mainly organic food sourced locally and the security of knowing and being able to trust their neighbours. Some members were also able to do work they liked in the mainstream economy, such as care work, or artistic creative work, which in UK society pay low wages, as long as they combined it with working within the community.

So, in summary, all three communities (Communities 1, 9 and 8) required new members to have access to financial capital. Two were ownership-based CoHousing communities the third (8) was a more inventive and complex arrangement that could be described as a Co-operative or as a commune. All three communities had organised themselves such that they had robust and secure housing located within exceptional grounds that they had been able to afford by pooling their economic capital. None had received any kind of state subsidy. The cost of the units within Communities 1 and 9 was on a par with conventional housing market values, which for the South East of England is unaffordable for people who do not already own a property or have access to significant financial capital, so the communities were exclusive on the basis of economic capital.

This raises fundamental questions about the degree to which such communities can be seen as ‘alternatives’ to conventional models of housing development, such as conventional ‘gated’ communities or even conventional middle-class neighbourhoods or villages, which exclude through the high cost of housing. Community 8 complicated this analysis however, because whilst new members were expected to pay a capital sum in order to live there, the community was constituted as both Co-operative and housing association so the investment was made in the form of ‘loan stock’ and the requirement was based on trust rather than legal entitlement. This community had also created an internal lending system that was available to potential new members unable to access the financial capital required without help.

The three communities represent a pragmatic approach to building their intentional communities: they have built their communities on the principle that *financial investment* equates to commitment and stability and security. However, this premise was challenged by the existence of the other communities.

### **c) Profiles of social-ownership model communities (NOT requiring financial capital investment)**

All the intentional communities described in this next section did *not* require financial investment in the community on joining and represented social-ownership models, although there were variations between the six communities. At one end of the spectrum, there was Community 2, which was a squat/eco-village offering an opportunity to live at *no* cost but

with very little housing security; at the other end, there was Community 5, which was a long-standing community that offered new members a choice between 'buying in' as a leaseholder or becoming a renter within the community. In order to work logically through these communities based on social-ownership I will start the most straightforward - the housing Co-operatives – and present the profile of the community with a mixed model of ownership and rental housing (Community 5) last.

Communities 3, 4 and 6 were all housing Co-operatives, were located within urban or suburban settings and had been in existence since the 1970s and, once again, this had implications for the cost of living in these Co-operatives. **Community 3** was located on the South Coast and was one of a number of properties within the Co-operative and was built in 1989 with public sector grant funding. As a result, the community had very little outstanding mortgage (their mortgage made up only 3% of the original build cost) and the current tenants paid low rents compared with the city average. This community was a traditional housing Co-operative, in that it was self-determining and self-managing through the collective efforts of its members. The physical arrangement of the rooms was dense: the building was designed mainly for young people and a handful of young families and for the most part each member had their own private room but shared kitchens and bathrooms. There were a couple of self-contained flats within the community for families. They had substantially less physical space and physical resources than the communities that require new members to bring in financial capital. In common with many of the properties nearby in the central urban location, they had little outdoor space and small communal areas.

Rent for a two-bedroom unit within this community was £95 per week, or £380 per month, which included all bills (heating and electricity for communal areas, water, broadband and phone), maintenance, use of the laundry room and a computer to enable communications between members. The rents were approximately a third of the private sector rents in the city for the equivalent space. There was security of tenure for individual members as long as there was continued active participation in community/Co-operative life, undertaking their fair share of the work to keep the community functioning.

**Community 4** was also a traditional housing Co-operative, but located in the inner suburbs of London (where average rents were amongst the highest in the country) and was home to around 25 members. As with Community 3, it had been funded initially through public sector grants, but unlike community 3 this housing Co-operative had always been owned by a

Housing Association. Therefore, whilst the community of members living in the property organised themselves independently as a Co-operative – making decisions at meetings, one member one vote – the Housing Association owned the land and buildings, which limited their control. Like Community 3, most members had only one room for their private use and there were communal bathrooms and communal kitchens. This community had extensive gardens with mature trees and space to grow vegetables and flowers, as well as a children's play area. The cost of living in this community was, once again, remarkably low given its proximity to London: each member paid £80 per week, or £320 per month, which included rent and all bills. This rent level had been the same for ten years.

This community did not enjoy the same level of security as the other Co-operative that were self-managing. During the time that this research was conducted, an attempt was made by the Housing Association to re-locate the Co-operative in order to redevelop the whole site. It appeared that the only obstacle to this development plan was the tenancy rights of older Co-operative members, some of whom had lived there for 30-40 years. So, apart from Community 2 (the squat), this Co-operative was the most insecure community in being able to control its own future, despite its longevity, because of its ownership by an external organisation.

**Community 6** was also a traditional housing Co-operative based on renting, with around 35 members, following Co-operative principles in terms of decision-making and open membership. Like Community 3 members had retained control of their buildings and land over many years as a self-managing Co-operative. I was unable to determine if they had received a public subsidy at the time of their inception. Located in an urban area and surrounded by housing estates, each member/household had their own house, arranged like a street. The majority were two-bedroom houses with just two four-bedroom houses and all the common areas outside the individual houses were for shared use, including land for growing vegetables and a children's playground. The physical layout of this community was more like CoHousing: all households had their own front doors with individual letterboxes, the front doors faced each other and there was one 'common house' assigned for communal use.

As with the other housing coops, the cost of living was very affordable: the cost of one of the houses was around £320 per month, including repairs and maintenance and a certain amount of money towards interior decoration and gardening. There were communal outdoor areas, but the common house was the only communal building and there was no

regular communal food sharing (unlike in Community 5). Conventional boundaries between private and public space were more traditional than in any other rental-based community included in this sample. Because of this, the costs of living in this community were more individualised.

**Community 7** stood out as the community which was most financially challenged of my sample. Again, this was a traditional housing Co-operative, following Co-operative principles and practices. Members paid rent and did not own any part of the property individually. Like Community 4, it was located in the inner suburbs of London, an area of extremely high property values. The group had set up in the mid-2000s. The property was purchased a few years later and was one of the newest of the communities in my sample, which explained the greater challenge it faced financially. The building was purchased with a small deposit (raised through loan stock) and a large mortgage. Individual members had one room each for private use and shared the use of a kitchen, bathroom/showers, lounges and a garden. As with other Co-operatives, there was no capital required to move into this community. Instead each member paid rent according to the size of their room: from £550 to £650. This included rent, utility bills including internet and costs of running the communal facilities (for example washing machines). The food kitty was £20 per person per week. This community had very limited financial reserves and had a large mortgage to pay each month; there had been little time for any accumulation in the capital value of the property.

**Community 2** was distinctive in this sample because it was essentially a squat. Not only was no economic capital required to become part of the community, interviewees explained there were *no rules at all* for joining except 'respect for the land' and respect for other people occupying the space. This community described itself as an eco-village on the basis that they had created a community in the woods, off the grid (no mains water or power – only a supply of spring water) and were working together self-sufficiently to manage on a day-to-day basis without any of the usual amenities. They were occupying land within a very affluent outer suburban London luxury homes development site that had been stalled for a number of years and they had started living there a couple of years before the interview took place. The community consisted of around 30 dwellings, ranging from cleverly engineered benders and garden shed-sized homes made from recycled materials, to living under canvas. The community was dispersed across an area of about two acres of woodland.

At the extreme end of the sample spectrum, all that was required was to survive. This was the least secure of the communities described here, although it had managed to reach some

agreement with the representatives of the land owners about temporary use of the land. There was some pooling of resources in this community. For example, when visitors brought food or members went on foraging trips looking for food in skips in the local towns, what was found was often shared with other members in the common area and the common kitchen. There was a lot of collaboration between members; for example, helping with the building of dwellings, or the management of waste, or the sharing of lifts if someone had access to a car.

**Community 5**, like in the ownership-based communities, had organisational structures that were complicated: part Co-operative (one member, one vote, all members have equal rights in decision-making irrespective of investment) and part property development/management company (the vehicle by which the estate and buildings are owned and managed). Here, though, members were either owners (leaseholders) or renters. So it was possible to become a member of this community without any financial capital at all and most of the current members simply paid monthly rent (7 out of the total nine members). There was no difference in rights between those that held leases and those that rented – all members were equal in terms of decision-making (Co-operative principles). The organisational structure came about following a crisis in their finances in the 1980s. During this time, the community could not pay the mortgage and the main house was repossessed. It was finally purchased back as a result of an individual benefactor stepping in and through loans from other communities. Two of the existing members had capital invested in the community, either as loan stock or in the form of leasehold property. Member referred to the community as an intentional community but, like Community 8, it could be described as a well-organised commune though where individuals have private space. As with Community 8 (described on page 86-88), no one within the community used the term commune because of negative connotations in the past.

This was a rural community that had substantial land on which food was grown and sustainable technologies were used to generate energy. The cost of living in this community was very low: one interviewee (10) described how he had one of the smallest rooms, at a rent of £21 per week paid £14 per week service charge, which covered all the main services (except phone). He paid £18 into the food pool per week, which covered breakfast and evening meals every day. So his living expenses were including food (except for lunches) were around £50 a week, or £200 a month. Another member (interviewee 11) had a larger room and was paying £186 month and the same communal charge and food pool cost. As in

Community 8, the three main reasons for the very low cost of living were the economies of scale afforded by sharing facilities, having a communal approach to the cooking of food on a daily basis and the fact that all members contributed approximately two days per week of their time to maintain the community (including work on the buildings and in the gardens, for example).

In summary, these six communities were built on models of *social-ownership*, such as housing Co-operatives where members were renters rather than owners and no economic capital was required to become a member. The six communities had found contrasting ways to organise their housing and did not adopt the dominant ownership model. Yet they also provided their members with robust and secure housing for the most part. Some had access to exceptional land and other physical resources that individual members could not have afforded on their own. Like the individual-ownership communities, the Co-operatives had built, or were building, organisational structures and a community of shared interests that provided a form of stability and security. But unlike the three individual-ownership communities, the social-ownership communities were open to a more diverse membership since entry requirements were only the ability to pay what were, on the whole, very low rents compared with private rent levels in their areas. It is the comparison of daily cost of living within each community and the relationship to individual wealth that I now turn to.

## **Overview of the cost of living in the communities**

The table below attempts to summarise the individual household costs of living in each community and to make an approximate comparison with the costs of living in an equivalent space in each community's local housing market. I developed five simple categories:

1. Squatting cost = cost of day-to-day food & survival only (lowest cost)
2. Significantly below = significantly below current rental market in the local area
3. Slightly below = slightly below current rental market in the local area
4. Typical Rental = typical rental market cost
5. Typical HO = typical home ownership market cost (highest cost).

Inevitably the data in some communities was approximate, either due to the lack of household-level information about costs in some communities, or lack of knowledge of interviewees about specific costs because of the complexity of their community's arrangements. This table shows that, as with the financial capital entry requirements, there

Table 5: approximate monthly housing unit costs and cost of living compared with typical market costs (in order of low to high cost)

	What they call themselves	Main form of tenure	Type of Unit (i.e. private space)	Typical rent per unit (monthly)	Services & maintenance charge per unit (monthly)	Food pool costs per person (monthly)	Category of Total monthly living costs	Expected no. of hours work for the community
2	Ecovillage/squat	Squat	Self-made dwelling	£0	£0	voluntary	<b>1 Squatting cost</b>	Voluntary
3	Housing Co-operative	Rental	Two-bed flat	£380	£0 (included)	n/a	<b>2 Significantly below</b>	Attend meetings & be involved in working groups
4	Housing Co-operative	Rental	Room only	£320	£0 (included)	£20 (covers basics only)	<b>2 Significantly below</b>	Attend meetings & be involved in working groups
5	Intentional community	Mixed ownership & rental	Room only (rental); Flat (ownership)	£180	£56	£64 (covers breakfast & eve meal)	<b>2 Significantly below</b>	2 days per week
6	Housing Co-operative	Rental	House with own kitchen & bathroom	£320	£0 (included)	n/a	<b>2 Significantly below</b>	Attend meetings & be involved in working groups
8	Group of families & individuals that have chosen to live together	No individual ownership, must invest 'loanstock'	Neither owner nor renter	£0	£140	£60	<b>2 Significantly below (rental &amp; HO)</b>	12-15 hrs per week
9	CoHousing	ownership	Room only (temporary)	£300 (temp)	£70	n/a	<b>3 Slightly below (temporary)</b>	Attend meetings & be involved in working groups; forming group so workload was high
7	Housing Co-operative	Rental	Room only	£600	£0 (included)	£80 (covers eve meals)	<b>4 Typical Rental</b>	Attend meetings & be involved in working groups
1	CoHousing	ownership	House or flat with own kitchen & bathroom	n/a – market value	£24.50 per m <sup>2</sup> + elect, heat, phones, internet	n/a	<b>5 Typical HO market cost</b>	Attend meetings & be involved in working groups



was a hierarchy of costs of living within the communities. The costs ranged from being equivalent to typical home ownership costs of living (these tended to be the CoHousing communities), to being significantly below the typical rental household costs of living (these tended to be the housing Co-operatives, of course, the squat/ecovillage).

A factor that significantly affected cost differences between the communities was the degree to which they pooled or shared resources, facilities and food. Members in Communities 3, 4 6 lived almost completely independently of each other on a day-to-day basis. In comparison, with Communities 5 and 7 had more communal arrangements for eating, working and deciding things together, with shared responsibility for paying for, daily cooking and eating, for example. I called these communities more *collaborative* intentional communities (discussed further in Chapter 7).

The picture that emerged was also complicated by the age or generation of the community. The cost of living in the young, new housing Co-operative community (7) was significantly different to the older established ones. Community 7 had a high cost of living, despite being a housing Co-operative because it was in the early years of paying off its mortgage. The older established coops had been able to accumulate capital within the community/Co-operative and had used this to keep rents low for their members (Communities 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8). A key finding therefore is that *generational capital* exists in some intentional communities. This complicates the more traditional economic divisions between ownership-based and rental-based communities. The hierarchy in costs illustrates what I described earlier: the degree to which the communities cooperated to pool or share facilities and food significantly affected individual costs of living.

In the light of the similarities and differences between the communities in terms of economic capital, I expected noticeable differences in the income levels and property wealth of individual members, based on the types of communities they lived in. But as the next section shows, this was not the case.

### **Individual member income and property wealth**

In order to establish levels of individual wealth amongst interviewees, I asked them about current income, average income during the last decade of formal working life (based on ONS census terminology and definitions) and the value of any property they owned. The results are provided in Appendix 11.

Average income in the UK in 2014 (the year in which I conducted the interviews) was £31,300, but for people aged 50-65 averaged £35,200 for people aged 66 or over averaged £24,600<sup>5</sup>.

I found half of interviewees (11/23) received incomes of less than £15,000 a year, well below both the UK national average and the national average for people aged over 50. A further nine interviewees received incomes between £15,000 - £30,000, which was also just below average incomes for their age range. Only two individuals who were working full-time received incomes over £30,000.

Average income during the last decade of formal working life was similar: 11/23 had earned less than £20,000 per annum; 11/23 had earned between £20,000 and £40,000 per year, (one was missing data). This told me my sample of interviewees was made up of people considered to be living on lower than average incomes, but it was also clear the individuals whose incomes were greatest did not necessarily live in the communities that required greatest financial investment. The two individuals with the highest current annual incomes were renters and lived in Community 5 (hybrid housing Co-operative and ownership model) and community 6 (housing Co-operative).

In terms of individual wealth based the value of property they owned, I found that 12/23 did not own property (although one had in the past). 11/23 interviewees continued to own property, the value of which ranged from less than £125,000 to over £500,000. The interviewee whose property was worth £500,000+ lived in Community 1 (CoHousing – ownership model); the other interviewee who owned their property within their community lived in Community 5. The others who owned property did not live in them; rather they lived in as renters in their communities and owned property elsewhere they rented out. Exploring the housing pathways of the individuals also revealed that some members of some housing Co-operatives had been owner occupiers in the past and had acquired financial equity through selling property that had, for example, been inherited from their parents.

Once again, I could not assume the most affluent individuals in my sample would be living in the communities that had the highest requirements in terms of economic capital. For example, interviewee 1 was living in the most expensive community to move into (Community 1,

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<sup>5</sup> ONS source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/distribution-of-median-and-mean-income-and-tax-by-age-range-and-gender-2010-to-2011>

CoHousing), but his annual income was less than some individuals living in much cheaper housing Co-operatives, because he was retired and had become a member of the community by moving in with his partner (see his housing pathway in Appendix 12). By contrast, another individual living in a low-cost housing Co-operative that required no financial capital to become a member, had a current income that was closer to the UK national average and also owned a property outside the community. So, any clear-cut economic distinction between the *individuals* who were members of the higher-cost individual-ownership communities and those who lived in the lower-cost social-ownership communities, could not be made. This distinction was also complicated by an individual story that illustrated how the rules could be were, flexible for certain individuals.

I have mentioned how Interviewee 1 had become a member of Community 1 through moving in with his partner. Subsequently, his partner had died and he found himself, in his early 70s, unable to remain in his home because he could not afford the high cost of a unit within the community. In response, the community had created a working role within the community, that came with housing, thereby enabling him to remain within the community. What this illustrated is how the economic rules for entry into a community did not provide the whole picture of what was possible and how other values and principles were drawn on in decisions about membership. Other forms of what Bourdieu defined as cultural and social capital were also involved in making membership possible, which is the focus of the next Chapter.

## **Discussion of Chapter 5**

In this section I consider the implications of my research findings and relate them to the existing literature. I also draw out what this first set of findings suggests for the utilisation of Bourdieu's key concept - the importance of economic capital in the generation of habitus.

### **Economic capital and distinctions of individual and social ownership**

The key distinction I established between individual versus social (or community) ownership of houses (or units) within the community, reinforces a key distinction made within housing studies between forms of ownership (page 21 of the literature review). This therefore confirms the relevance of key debates within the field of housing for studies of intentional communities, such as the relationship between housing tenure and social class for example. The distinction could irrespective of whether communities labelled themselves CoHousing, Co-operative, or eco-village,

although here the CoHousing communities were constituted around the individual ownership model and were more orthodox in their household living costs whereas the housing Co-operatives and eco-village/squat were based on social-ownership models and the cost of living within these communities was *significantly* lower than in the private rental market in their geographical area, depending on the degree to which they adopted more a more collaborative approach to daily living, sharing resources, facilities and food on an everyday basis.

Both models of intentional communities had achieved stability and security for their members, though there were significant differences between communities in terms of generational capital (the accumulation of property wealth within the community over years), whether or not the housing Co-operative as an entity had retained ownership of the land and buildings (which achieved significant economies in the cost of living). Therefore, a first key message is there is little meaningful unity behind the concept of intentional communities; there are significant differences in the habitus of these communities based on economic capital and the degree of collaboration in organising day-to-day living.

### **Inclusion and exclusion**

This fundamental distinction had the corollary that the social-ownership communities were more *inclusive* and the individual-ownership communities more *exclusive* at the point of entry for new members. This confirms Ruiu's findings that CoHousing projects, as a particular and growing form of intentional community, tend to be elitist in terms of the income members need to have to provide the financial capital investment required (Ruiu, 2016). In relation to Sargisson's earlier representation of the communities she studied around the world as examples of 'alternative property relations', the findings here show only *some* of the communities enact 'stewardship over ownership' (Sargisson, 2000: 101). My findings lend support to the idea that UK CoHousing is drawing on more North American influences which differs from other forms of intentional communities by having 'anti-radical tendencies' (Sargisson, 2012: 50).

Throughout the extensive long-standing literature that explores the nature and meaning of community (Allan and Phillipson, 2008; Cohen, 2002; Delanty, 2010), questions of inclusion and exclusion have always been fundamental (Baumann, 2001; Young, 2010). Young critiques the ideal of community, arguing that it 'privileges unity over difference, immediacy over mediation' and internal group sympathy over 'understanding of others from their point of view'. She considers community a problematic concept for politics because the desire for identification 'underlies

racial and ethnic chauvinism' and proposes a 'good society' based on decentralised small units which is 'both unrealistic and politically undesirable' since it avoids the question of relations between the units (Young, 2010: 433).

Young's argument is difficult to contest. Perhaps it is even tautological because such 'othering' is inherent in formation of all groups. A Bourdesian approach more usefully directs me to ask more specifically about what specific groups, with what kinds of members (backgrounds and histories) and with what degree of openness to others, come together to form what types of communities? The empirical realities of the economics of the intentional communities described here proved more nuanced and complicated than such theorising about community accounts for. However, Young is not the only critic of the concept of intentional community building.

Baumann talks of the risks of creating voluntary ghettos:

*Sameness means the absence of the other, the different one, surprise and mischief created precisely because of the difference, the alien... what looms therefore on the horizon of the long march towards 'safe community' (community as safety) is a bizarre mutant of a 'voluntary ghetto' (Baumann, 2001: 116)*

Baumann cites Wacquant who defines ghettos as 'territorial and social blending the physical proximity/distance with moral proximity/distance' and as being constituted by 'homogeneity of those inside contrasted with the heterogeneity of the outside' (p116). He warns that in American history, this has always had an ethno-racial division. South African examples also raise important warnings about the exclusionary principles and practices of intentional communities that cannot be overlooked (Hagen, 2013). Baumann is more concerned with the dispossessed of American society, those who society has no economic or political use for and whose territories are stigmatized. His critique is important to consider here since, despite mitigating initiatives in some CoHousing communities, the mechanisms of economic capital and individual ownership reinforced and reproduced existing housing inequalities.

Taking the UK CoHousing network as representative of CoHousing communities in the UK, its website did not directly acknowledge the inequalities and power relations inherent in the ownership model (<http://CoHousing.org.uk/what-CoHousing>), but there was an important and emerging *intention* towards diversifying the model as newer developments start up (<http://CoHousing.org.uk/what-typical-CoHousing-community>). This suggests increasing awareness of such economic distinctions and inequalities. The hybrid community (Community 8) also showed how even distinctions based on ownership were complicated, mixing different

organisational forms and trying to mitigate individual financial investment requirements through their internal loan mechanism.

The emergence of LILAC is an exemplar of innovation in CoHousing. It directly challenges the inevitability of CoHousing becoming elitist in terms of economic capital by providing a model of affordability that enables lower income households to access homes within the community on a more equal basis with wealthier households (Chatterton, 2015). This particular example confirms what Sargisson's finding that such communities are not static entities, but constantly changing, shifting their intentions and inventing pragmatic adaptations (Sargisson, 2009).

Bauman's and Young's critiques represent enduring challenges to even the most economically open communities (such as the housing Co-operatives) - to consider the degree to which their explicitly stated principles (such as the seven principles of housing Co-operatives, which include non-discrimination) are truly enacted in the implicit criteria and tacit processes by which new members are accepted (of which I speak more in the next Chapter).

### **Generational and affordability capital**

Another theme emerged from data relating to the economics of the communities that has relevance for understanding their habitus, was the accumulation of generational and of liveability capital in the older communities. All long-standing intentional communities had, over time, accumulated financial capital through the growth in their property assets over the past 40 years, irrespective of the model of ownership. This *generational capital* complicated the initial individual versus ownership distinction. Generational capital had accumulated in the long-standing housing Co-operatives just as it had in the older CoHousing community. Importantly, the control of this capital only accrued to those older housing Co-operatives that had retained independent ownership of their properties by their Co-operative. This reinforces Ruiu's finding that communities which do not retain control of ownership of their land and building risk weakening their intentionality and communality (p 27).

Another form of accumulation of economic capital emerged from the data. A combination of long-term security, low rents and low living costs - achieved through collective sharing of facilities and eating communally - represented an accumulation for the members of these communities of what I call *affordability capital*. This affordability in day-to-day living costs suggested to me that members' lives were made more *liveable*. This concept draws on the work of feminist and social

class theorists who refer to those excluded or marginalised by dominant forces in society, find ways to express their own values, meanings and identities; to make their lives more liveable (Back, 2015; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012). Liveable lives is a concept also used by those who theorise identity and how individuals in contemporary Britain align themselves with, or resist, contemporary categories and prescriptions (Rogaly and Taylor, 2009; Wetherell, 2009). This is something I consider further in Chapters 7 and 8 .

Generational capital builds the concept of time and ageing into the economic capital equation relating to these communities, both for collectively owned communities and those where individual ownership was the model. In the private ownership model, this generational difference was more significant because early joiners benefitted from individual property value accumulation that they could withdraw when they sold their property. In contrast, the social-ownership housing Co-operatives all members benefitted equally from the accumulation, through ongoing low rents available to both long-standing and new tenants. Individuals who had lived in social-ownership communities for as many as 40 years had benefitted longer than new tenants – experiencing a form of combined generational liveability capital. In Bourdesian terms, this accumulation of capital did not constitute an equivalent form of economic capital held by the individual homeowners within CoHousing because it was not transferable to a new living arrangement outside of the Co-operative – these economic assets could be ‘readily stored and transmitted’ (Savage et al., 1992: 212). So, a key message of my research is that the private versus social-ownership distinction remains critical in our understanding of the habitus of different communities despite the complications of individual income, generational and liveability capital.

### **Social-ownership communities as utopian**

In Chapter 3, I described how Bourdieu referred to symbolic violence (page 46) as the imposition of sets of social values and tenets that are taken for granted and without question and how home ownership has acquired symbolic capital in UK society. I argue that the housing Co-operative intentional communities in particular represent a challenge to the doxa of conventional housing policy and practice, which equates quality of housing and housing stability and security with ownership. My findings support the theorising of homeownership as an ideology - the reproduction of private property relations and the inequalities associated with it, not a ‘natural’ societal response to housing need (Flint and Rowlands, 2003; Gurney, 1999a; McKee and Muir, 2013).

Some social-ownership communities had contributed further to liveability capital, through collective sharing of facilities, resources and shopping and eating communally. These not only transgressed the orthodoxy of individual ownership, but of conventional household formation and the boundaries of what was considered private space (discussed in Chapter 7). It was these communities that combined social-ownership with more daily sharing of household space that most represented what Bourdieu called *practical utopias*: choices that were discarded along the way, reminding us of the ‘possibility that things could have been (and still could be) otherwise’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 40). Sargisson has developed this association with utopia in her work, describing some of these communities as *critical utopias*, combining criticism (of society) with creativity:

*They disrupt familiar concepts and practices, creating spaces in which alternatives can be imagined and explored. They hold up a mirror to their world, often revealing the familiar to be actually very strange, (Sargisson, 2010: 24).*

Her work does most in the field to examine these properties of intentional communities. Wright broadens this out to develop a theory of alternatives and transformation *within* capitalism and adds an historical dimension to this analysis. Wright argues there is no radical alternative to capitalism and that capitalism’s features are enduring and developing far beyond the limitations that Marxists in the middle of the last century anticipated (Wright, 2010). Wright sees transformatory change being more likely achieved as a result of actors going about their daily activities; the transformation happening as a ‘by-product’ of the actor’s adaptive strategies. He argues change is more likely to result from such incremental steps of social empowerment. He argues for a critical emancipatory social science that has four elements: moral foundations (arguments about social justice); diagnosis and critique (of existing institutions); theory of alternatives (alleviators of harm); and theory of transformation (how to get from here to there). His three main moral foundations are centred on the principles of equality (throughout the life-course), democracy (access to self-determination) and sustainability (future generations should have access to the social and material means to live flourishing lives at least as much as past generations). These represent an interesting moral test of both intentional communities and of housing systems in general. His theory of alternatives and of transformation is based on:

*accounts of empirical cases that are neither gullible nor cynical, but try to fully recognise the complexity and dilemmas as well as the real potentials of practical efforts at social empowerment (Wright, 2010: 151)*

This is a useful way of seeing the social-ownership model communities in this research: as the realisation of processes of social empowerment. Wright distinguishes between three basic logics



of transformatory change: ruptural, interstitial and symbiotic. Interstitial change is about working with the gaps within the dominant system and is relevant here:

*Interstitial transformations seek to build new forms of social empowerment in the niches and margins of capitalism, often where they do not seem to pose any immediate threat to dominant classes and elites. (Wright, 2010: 303-304)(p303-4)*

This is where the long-standing, self-determining and more communal social-ownership communities fit in: as exemplars of *real utopias* that emerged at a particular point in time within UK capitalist property relations when a gap opened up – in the 1970s and early 1980s - during a relatively brief period of ‘counter-culture’. Having found and used cracks in the system to grow over 40 years, they represent models of housing provision and household formation in creative opposition to the dominant tendencies within UK society over that period of time. The outstanding question remains why such exemplars of affordable housing and living have not been more widely replicated why, as I discuss next, communities adopting individual-ownership models (like CoHousing) are becoming more high profile.

### **The doxa of ownership and the rise of CoHousing**

From a Bourdesian perspective, it is unsurprising that CoHousing, based mainly on an individual-ownership model, seems to be the fastest-growing form of intentional community in the UK, or at least the most high-profile (Jarvis, 2015; Morrison, 2011; Vestbro, 2000). It has been well established that the ideology of home ownership remains largely unchallenged within mainstream discourses in the UK and other models of housing provision, such as social housing, have been marginalised (Flint and Rowlands, 2003). The opportunities in the UK property market for groups to set up affordable housing Co-operatives and the political will within local authorities to support them, have declined significantly (Bliss and Lambert, 2014; Handy and Gulliver, 2010; International Cooperative Alliance, 2008).

Coates has provided much historical evidence of this transition, showing how the 1970s and early 1980s were the last decades when relatively cheap, large properties in need of renovation and suitable for collective living were available to groups of people without accumulated wealth, particularly in towns and cities. Coates suggests property price rises in the 1980s and 1990s and the conservative political environment, including the introduction of the Poll Tax in 1990, forced people who might have sought communal living to find other options, including making homes in

second-hand vehicles (the Peace Convoys of the 1980s and the New Age Traveller movement of the 1990s) (Coates, 2013: 368-369). He also points to UK legislation that prevented the free movement and settlement of mobile groups of people (the Public Order Act of 1986). This led to groups of travellers seeking out affordable agricultural land or woodland and some living in temporary accommodation, like benders and tipis (building on the example of the famous Tipton Valley in South Wales). His work establishes the genesis of the 'Low Impact Development' movement. His analysis is persuasive, fitting with my review of the literature that shows a growing research focus on low environmental impact living and eco villages (pages 27-28).

CoHousing has emerged in the UK in this socio-historical context, with the first UK CoHousing convention held in London in 1998 (Coates, 2013: 371). The CoHousing model as espoused by the most often-cited text in the UK (McCamant and Durrett, 1994) draws on different political traditions to those of the UK housing Co-operative movement, as Sargisson has pointed out. CoHousing in the USA is infused with American ideals of freedom, the right to private property and building communities of mutual support, in contrast with European models (Sargisson, 2012). This makes CoHousing ideologically distinct from housing Co-operatives that draw on ideals of worker solidarity and community rather than individual ownership (Conaty et al., 2008; Sennett, 2012). Individual-ownership model CoHousing conforms to the values and practices of the neo-liberal *doxa* of housing in the UK, which has enabled it to accrue a greater degree of symbolic capital - recognised and legitimate authority in the field (Flint and Rowlands, 2003). It offers reassurance to prospective members that their individual property rights will continue to be fully respected and enshrined in law (Field, 2004; McCamant and Durrett, 1994; Wardrip, 2010).

There is, as Bourdieu describes it, a 'mysterious efficacy... a subterranean complicity' in the way that the symbolic order is reproduced and the growth of CoHousing can be seen as example of this. CoHousing is not imposed on those individuals seeking to create intentional communities in the UK; it is a collaboration of those involved in it - a construction from within the dominant symbolic order (Bourdieu, 2000: 169-170).

Bourdieu argues that economic capital is a key distinction constituting the habitus of groups and my research confirms this distinction is as important for the intentional communities studied here as it has been shown to be for individual households, despite the various complications also revealed. However, there were diverse ways that individuals had become members of the communities: different eras in which they had become members, different housing pathways that had led them to choose to live in their community. In the following chapter, I outline and explore these individual pathways, drawing on the other key axes of distinction that Bourdieu offers in his

theoretical framework – cultural and social capital – to explicate the role these forms of capital played in making membership possible.

## CHAPTER 6 - CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL REVEALED IN HOUSING PATHWAYS

### Introduction

In the communities' profiles on the Diggers and Dreamers directory and on their own websites, there was little explicit information about the cultural values each community felt were important. For example, in the section of the directory entitled 'ideological focus', seven out of the nine communities had listed 'none'; Community 2 used the word 'sustainability'; Community 8 used the word 'ecological'. The descriptions each community provided were mainly practical in nature, focused on who currently lived in the community and how the community worked on a daily basis - for example how often members came together to make decisions, or to share meals.

During my interviews with individual members, I asked whether there were specific values that members had to sign up to and whether or not these were written down. There was no written document relating to this in any community. Some interviewees referred to their community's formal constitution and explained it had implicit values - an example being the seven principles of Co-operative living that the housing Co-operatives were formally constituted around <sup>6</sup>:

*Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility caring for others. (International Co-operative Alliance, 2016)*

However, the intentional communities that were not housing Co-operatives were not able to draw on such explicitly articulated and shared principles and values. My framing of my research based on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the forms of capital that contribute to generating it, meant that my focus was on exploring the cultural and social capital shared by the individuals living in the communities. Bourdieu argued 'groups are not found ready-made in reality... they are always the product of a complex historical work of construction' (Bourdieu, 1987: 8). This

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<sup>6</sup> These are set out by the International Co-operative Alliance: <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

suggested I needed to explore affinities and dispositions as a way of drawing out the underlying structural connections and factors that were operating to construct the habitus of these individuals over time.

In undertaking this work, I start with Taylor's conceptualisation of classificatory identity (mentioned in Chapter 4, page 62), as distinct from ontological identity (Taylor, 1998). I use this to explore shared affinities amongst my interviewees. I then draw on my interviewees' stories about how they became members of their communities and use Clapham's useful framing of housing pathways (Clapham, 2005) to analyse what commonalities and differences were evident in my interviewees' housing and lifestyle histories.

Bourdieu's work suggested that I address what was not made explicit, not transparent, what was taken-for-granted in the stories and narratives of my interviewees, as a way of revealing the kinds of cultural and social capital available to them and the factors that had enabled them in their agency (or not). In this chapter I therefore ask:

- What did these individual members have in common more *structurally*, such as occupational class, gender ethnicity (classificatory identity)?
- What kinds of cultural and social capital were suggested by my interviewees' accounts of their housing pathways and how was their agency enabled or constrained?
- What else was revealed in the interviewees' stories of becoming members?
- Did age and generation play a role in making their housing choices possible?

To support my analysis in this Chapter, I provide a table which presents a summary profile of all the interviewees (Appendix 11). I also provide a diagram of the housing pathway of each interviewee leading up to living in their current community. This diagram is inspired by Clapham's housing pathways concept and provides an overview of each individual's topical life journey (as Plummer describes it (Plummer, 2001)) – topical meaning their *housing* life journey - told using the narratives and stories of the interviewees (Appendix 12). I provide this detail about individuals in order to hold to my methodological commitment (Chapter 3 pages 54 and 68) to enable readers to see my interviewees as whole people with rich and complex lives and to not unduly fragment their lives in the analysis of my data and the presentation of my research.

## **Classificatory identity: the individuals and their backgrounds**

### **Gender, ethnicity and marital status**

In terms of gender, my sample of interviewees was mixed (13 female, 10 male) and most communities included were mixed (though I did not establish the exact mix in each community in my survey). This sample profile contrasts with the evidence from the literature about forming groups which suggests emerging intentional communities, particularly CoHousing communities, are predominantly made up of older women (50+) (Brenton, 2013; Glass, 2009; Scanlon and Arrigoitia, 2015). All the sampled communities were intergenerational, though, as shown in Chapter 5 (table 3, page 81), the proportion of older members varied considerably.

There was homogeneity in terms of ethnicity: all interviewees were white and none described their ethnicity as being BME. Whilst this sample of communities and of members cannot be considered representative of the whole population of intentional communities, it does add to questions raised about why the communities as a whole are made up of predominantly white members (ESRC seminar series 'Collaborative Housing and Community Resilience' held 2014 to 2016 and doctoral research by Yael Arbel currently underway in Leeds University). This is an area worthy of further research.

Of the 23 interviewees, only one had been married to their current partner for the majority of their adult life (Interviewee 3). Many had experienced the breakup of a marriage/partnership and nearly half the interviewees (12 out of 23) were single at the time of the interview. However, this was only a snapshot at the time and some interviewees had started or finished relationships relatively recently.

### **Familial origins, class identification**

What emerged in the analysis of the brief life stories was a diversity of home and family backgrounds amongst the interviewees, although no interviewees described themselves as from wealthy backgrounds. There was no single class identity, with the individuals describing themselves as variously from working to middle class families. There were individuals who described their upbringing as 'very poor working class', as well as those who had come from a 'middle class family' and had attended private school.

Some interviewees mentioned class: Interviewee 7 talked about how their small community (Community 5) had become more mixed in terms of middle class and working class people being members; Interviewee 1 talked about how his community (Community 1) didn't have skilled manual workers, like builders or carpenters or plumbers; their membership mainly worked in intellectual or service occupations and he saw this as a deficit in the social mix of the community. These suggested class profiles of communities could not be verified based on this research which was limited to interviews with only *some* community members, but this could be a fruitful area of future research seeking to understand intentional communities.

### **Occupational background**

A key contemporary classification of people in the UK continues to be based on occupation, so I explored with each interviewee their own descriptions of their work life or career and compared them with the current ONS occupational classification system. For older people, it is important to factor in retirement and so I asked about the past as well as the present. There was considerable variation in terms of the ONS current occupational *hierarchy* across the whole sample, ranging from occupations such as University Lecturer or School Teacher currently described by the ONS as 'Professional Occupations' (group 2) to hairdresser (Caring, Leisure and other Service Occupations', group 6) to massage therapist (Associate Professional and Technical occupations, group 3), to dinner lady ('Elementary Occupations', group 9).<sup>7</sup> Most interviewees had undertaken more than one type of occupation during their working life and some very many. This made distinctions based on occupation alone inadequate for drawing firm conclusions.

However, there was one commonality in work experiences that seemed significant. Looking at the interviewees occupational histories overall, there was high representation of public and voluntary sector workers: 10 had been teachers of varied kinds at some point in their lives, one had been a nurse, four had been some form of local government officer, three had worked in mental health services or social work. Other individuals had been self-employed for most of their working life (hairdresser) and one individual had worked in a highly competitive commercialised sector as a film-maker.

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<sup>7</sup>[http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dev3/ONS\\_SOC\\_hierarchy\\_view.html](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dev3/ONS_SOC_hierarchy_view.html)

### **Educational qualifications**

Many interviewees (16 out of 23) had been educated to degree level or above. This group (though not all) shared a common disposition towards involvement in education and teaching.

These were the classificatory identities of my interviewees. I explored further and analysed their affinities and common experiences using Bourdieu's notions of cultural and social capital. I start with cultural capital.

### **Cultural capital**

Bourdieu talks about cultural capital as shared tastes, habits and choices within social groups, which are generated through common experiences and familial background embodied by individuals and often operating at a subconscious level (Chapter 3, pages 45-47). Using this concept of cultural *distinction*, I explored the commonalities that emerged from the biographical stories interviewees told about how they had come to live in their community. In my analysis of this biographical data I explored what seemed relevant to understanding what made their lifestyle choices possible; what could be considered examples of cultural capital. In this section, I describe these affinities to build up a picture of the diverse experiences involved in interviewees becoming involved with their communities and becoming accepted as members. Education is of central importance to Bourdieu and I have mentioned the high representation of post graduate qualifications and teaching experience amongst half my interviewees, but there were other experiences that also emerged as significant.

### **Travellers of the world**

All the interviewees had moved around the UK before moving into their community and many had travelled and lived abroad. Two (interviewee 7 and 20) had worked in Africa; three (interviewee 5, 9 and 14) had lived in South Africa or the USA; and two (interviewee 4 and 19) had lived in Ireland. Some described moments of having their minds opened during their time abroad and of having been inspired by the alternative communities they had seen in other countries:

*Interviewee: The year I spent in America, in California, I came across community living there. It was 1980 you know and it was quite a thing over there and so I visited a few*



*communities, or we had as a family um... I just really, I just really liked that way of spending one's life, yeah then then...*

*Interviewer: What did you like in those initial encounters and did you and your husband both like it or was it more your thing?*

*Interviewee: I think it was more my thing, um, I mean I knew in that year that we were over there that things weren't going very well, you know, so I suppose I was always looking for something else, you know, it was almost subliminal at that point. So I saw people working on the land and we stayed in one particular community which was called All Hot Springs, up in Oregon it just appealed to me people living in the woods in little houses, you know, eating together, that sort of lifestyle, working together, you know, I suppose a little seed began to grow from there. (Interviewee 9; Community 5)*

This quote illustrates a key finding: that knowing about intentional communities as a potential way of living was crucial to making it possible. In this particular case, Interviewee 9 gained this knowledge through international travel opportunities open to her as a young adult in the 1970s, as with the other interviewees who had experienced this. So there was a generational aspect to the opening of their minds to the possibilities of intentional communities, for some interviewees.

The 1960s and 70s have been viewed as a time of new opportunities for physical and social mobility and there is a lot of evidence, particularly within gay and feminist histories, of the new freedoms that young people experienced during this time (Cook, 2013; Jolly, 2011; Miller, 1999). However, it has also been recognised that this is, to some degree, an historical construction of an era; not all 'children of the 60s' were able to take advantage of such freedoms (Savage, 2010). I considered further what *enabled* these individuals to take advantage of the new opportunities available to their generation and to realise alternative living arrangements. Another factor was revealed by Interviewee 9 (in the quote above): a dissatisfaction with conventional set ups and a restlessness ('looking for something else'). This was also a common feature of some stories of realisation and it hints at the way relationship breakups were implicated in stories of finding communities.

### **Relationship breakups and breakdowns**

In addition to the classificatory identity of my sample as predominantly separated or divorced and often single (page 110), relationship breakdown featured in the stories interviewees told me. A thread running through a number of stories was dealing with the losses associated with relationship breakdowns and the role living in their community had played. These emerged as different versions of similar stories. There were stories of how the desire to live in community had been part of the break up. For example, Interviewee 11 provided an account (that clearly still felt

emotional for him) of how his desire to live in his community 30 years ago had played a central role in the breakdown of his long-term relationship with a partner who did not want to live in the community. The trauma had precipitated a mental breakdown and he had spent a couple of months in a mental health facility not long after he moved in.

There were also stories of how living in the community had only been possible *after* breaking up. For example, interviewee 13 described how her husband left when her children were 18 and 20 and how 'horrendous' she had found the experience of separating. She talked about her nervousness about whether moving into the community would suit her, but also about how she would have never done it if she'd stayed married:

*Interviewee: And then when I moved in here it was a hit and miss, shall I, is it, will it be okay? You know and it has been, it's been fine.*

*Interviewer: And do you think you'd have ever moved into a place like this if you'd stayed part of a family, as a whole family together?*

*Interviewee: I ... (long pause)*

*Interviewer: Would you have ever moved here with your husband, for example, once the kids had gone?*

*Interviewee: I can't imagine my husband doing that, no. (Interviewee 13; Community 6)*

So relationship dynamics were integral to many of the stories about how they had come to their communities. There was no one dominant narrative and as with other factors described by interviewees such experiences were often intertwined with other factors, such as having children, or being a single parent.

### **Having children, especially as single parents**

For a number of interviewees, having children as a single parent played an important role in seeking out and settling in their community (4, 6, 7,8,15,16,17,19,20,23). Many talked of the value they had found in having a supportive community in which to bring up their children, both for them as parents (e.g. baby-sitting, sharing concerns) and for their children (e.g. sibling-like relationships, playmates, other parental figures or adult mentors). For some interviewees this was central to their motivation:

*The dream was that our children would grow up in that communal kind of environment, where they would mix freely with adults and, you know, they would have more mentors, they would have more mentors than just their parents. That's certainly what I wanted. (Interviewee 23, Community 9)*

The parents also talked of having wanted their children to have more freedom, space to play in and peers to play with than they would have had in more conventional home settings:

*they (his children) liked the space, they liked the freedom... they like the fact that they've got friends here, there's always friends here, there's always kids around. They can have people here and that's open as well, but they are, they have their own, they've got a home with friends when they feel like it. (Interviewee 12, Community 1)*

*we used to do skipping out the front, double-dutching all the kids would be out on their bikes cos we had a lot of kids back then. A lot of younger families with children, like for instance, next door had three children, another house at the end had four children...I mean at one point we had about 20 children, you know different ages sort of thing. (Interviewee 16, Community 6)*

Talk of happy childhoods in safe, shared spaces was also woven in with more practical reasons.

Sometimes parents talked about the value of sharing parental roles with other parents.

Interviewee 4 also described how, as a single parent with a pet, her options for renting in the private market in the late 1970s had been limited:

*I had to find a sympathetic landlord, landlady as it turned out, who would have somewhere that I could put a piano and wouldn't mind a child and a dog, because with those three constraints in my life, um, a Co-op was the only place that was going to be able to allow me to have a secure place on a long term basis.*

So the inadequacies of the private rental market in the South of England was also a significant factor in her decision-making. The onset of long-term chronic illness in her 20s had also made it impossible for interviewee 4 to buy a home, even during the 1980s when the opportunities for homeownership and mortgages were peaking (Kemeny, 1995; Savage et al., 1992).

Interviewee 15 also talked about the practical necessity of finding a better home for her and her children: she talked about the loneliness and 'hard work' of parenting on an isolated council estate where she had brought children up in their early years. This was a contrast to bringing her children up in the supportive environment of Community 6, where they had lived in the later years as her children grew up. In these two cases (Interviewees 4 and 15) it was evident a shortage of economic capital - the means to get a mortgage - played a role in them seeking alternative routes to secure and stable housing for their families. These multiple motivations cannot be separated out from each other, nor from economic necessities.

In contrast, Interviewee 7 had been in a financial position to buy a small property for herself and her son after splitting with her husband, but she talked about how she had hoped living in an

intentional community would have provided more support both for herself as a single parent and for her son as an only child:

*I remember the first Co-operative meeting I went to, I remember saying 'I'm very excited to be living here, it's fantastic, thank you so much you know, one of the reasons I have moved here is cos when you're a single parent with a child you can't get a smaller family so I would love it if people want to get involved with doing things with my son. (Interviewee 7, Community 5)*

So practical necessity as well as ideals about what childhood should be, played as important a part in the rationale for parents moving into their communities. It was often not possible to distinguish between not *wanting to* or not *having the choice to* parent in conventional settings or households. Nor was it easy to distinguish between the motivations that were articulated specifically around parenting and children and those that seem related to a more general dissatisfaction with conventional family life and other aspects of society, including work.

### **Dissatisfactions with conventional life**

A common expression of dissatisfaction with conventional life was the rejection of becoming a typical nuclear family. A number of interviewees talked about rejection of the nuclear family as a model for living. Interviewee 18 described how when the community/squat that her and her husband had been living in was sold off, she had been pregnant and so they had been 'doing the nuclear family thing'. But she had found it 'too difficult' to sustain – to go from a place with loads of people to being completely on her own with the baby, whilst her husband was out at work.

Interviewee 20 described an epiphany he had experienced thinking about the nuclear family when he was quite young:

*At age 15, when at a church service, when I should have been listening to the sermon or something, a thought came into my mind that the nuclear family is too small. And it may have had something to do with the loss of my father, I don't know. Why should I have a thought that the nuclear family is too small? (Interviewee 20, Community 8)*

This interviewee mentioned his childhood loss of his father and two other interviewees also talked of the traumatic loss of a parent during their childhood and highlighted the effect on their feelings about the fragility of the nuclear family. This suggests that personal psychosocial factors had also been important for some interviewees; some interviewees early emotional experiences opened up their thinking about conventional structures and norms.

There were further narratives about interviewees realising conventional life did not offer them what they wanted or needed. A number of interviewees described their motivation and their influences for seeking out more community-based living at a later stage in life:

*I suppose in my late fifties I was just thinking 'I don't really...' and I'd sort of been and done the permaculture course and I was interested in permaculture and things I just thought it's so wasteful living on my own in a terraced house - I don't really need my own washing machine, I'm really happy to share kitchens and bathrooms, I don't need a lot of furniture cos you just clean it that's all really (laughs) and it's very energy efficient and also I quite like living communally. I was thinking to myself 'When was I happiest living?' And I was actually happiest living when I was sort of living in my twenties sharing flats with people. It was great. I didn't have to mend them when they sort of, have the upkeep responsibilities, um, so I thought 'I'll just look for some other kind of living' really. (Interviewee 22; Community 9)*

This quote combines a number of factors and influences that this interviewee identified as being part of what had brought her to living in her community. There's the influence of the Permaculture course, which might be usefully described as a specific form of cultural capital; there is the concern about the wasteful nature of individual houses, part of environmental or green consciousness that was common amongst the interviewees. There's also the striving for happiness and the description of her critical reflection on what she did and didn't need from society. This *reflection* led her to look for something else, something different to her current living arrangement as an owner occupier with a lodger. It is an example of the way a whole mixture of motivations was often articulated to explain how the individuals had come to seek out this unusual living arrangement. Their narratives illustrated something best described as *alternative* cultural capital; rather than aspiring to conventional housing and household choices, these interviewees rejected them and sought out something better.

This emergence of *alternative* cultural capital as a theme was reinforced by some interviewees' expressions of dissatisfaction with conventional work. This took a variety of forms including feeling 'fed up with teaching' (Interviewee 22; Community 9) or stories of how many professionally-qualified individuals 'had laid their professions aside to come and work on the land' (Interviewee 7; Community 5). For some individuals, this lack of interest in conventional work or careers meant they had made their livings from a very diverse range of activities, such as interviewee 14. She had undertaken work in an incredibly diverse range of types of work from care services to boat building to retail and had spent only a small part of her life in a conventional career. When this career had not suited her she had changed it:

*the job became more and more about meetings and spreadsheets and budgets and, ah I was given the opportunity to take another step up, which would have virtually meant that I would do no face to face training at all, which is what I loved. So I was also due my State Pension to start that year, so I decided I didn't wanna do that, I really didn't... (Now) I've got the best of both worlds now, I get to do the work with the people which I love and I don't have to do all the rubbish that goes along with it (Interviewee 14; Community 6)*

Her sense of agency in relation to her work was evident; she had not accepted the conventional trajectory up the line of management and had found her way into self-employment/consultancy in order to do the work she liked on her own terms.

Interviewee 19, a lecturer in higher education, also talked of how he had always viewed mainstream career progress as a lower priority than life in his community:

*the work was just to bring some money in, this (the community) was more important, the way of living that I believe in very strongly' (Interviewee 19; Community 8)*

Many interviewees talked about how they had balanced part-time work with work within the community and how the former was simply a means to an end, whereas they felt more strongly about the work within the community. For most interviewees, their living and working in community had outlived any job or profession they had occupied. Interviewee 19's quote also brings out a strong element that was often under articulated by interviewees: their belief in the value of living in an intentional community; a belief in it as a way of life that exemplified a form of alternative cultural capital.

The other enabling factors involved in how interviewees came to live in their communities were related to social networks and people they knew, what Bourdieu referred to as social capital.

## **Social capital**

Bourdieu distinguishes social from cultural capital, social capital being more about social networks individuals belong to and social status and esteem that develop through social connections and familial links. These are part of the composite influences that determine individual's life choices and pathways (Chapter 3, page 43). In my research, distinguishing between cultural and social capital was not clear cut: for example, the high representation of teachers was relevant in terms of Bourdieu's central thesis about the importance of the education system in cultural capital, but individual's workplaces were also important in generating social

networks and opportunities. This was acknowledged by one interviewee who, when asked about what their community values, said they shared values related to being 'socially responsible' and this was reflected in members' occupations:

*I mean we're sort of green'ish, sort of left'ish, um, most of us oddly enough work in some sort of community service. Four of us used to work at the council, er, a couple of teachers of various sorts, or ex-teachers. So it's on that socially responsible side, basically, but there aren't any rules saying you have to be. (Interviewee 21; Community 9)*

He was acknowledging and describing the social proximity made possible by having a work place in common ('the council'), or a professional identity (teachers) and how these enabled shared values. Three members of this community of nine people had worked together in the past: Interviewee 22 described how she became involved in setting up their community when she 'bumped into' one of the other founding members in the local council canteen at work and he had mentioned they were looking for new members.

In another community (6), Interviewee 15 talked about how working in a Co-operative shop had led to her hearing about the setting up of the community, so both work and involvement in the Co-operative movement were relevant. Interviewee 17 provided another example of this, having found out about the setting up of her community through her community development work. The examples both suggest that both Bourdesian cultural and social capital were operating through relationships formed at work.

Connections with the Co-operative and environmental movements were another common feature of the stories told about finding out about the opportunities for alternative living, particularly for those living in the housing Co-operatives. Interviewee 9 had first visited her community whilst volunteering with Friends of the Earth; Interviewee 5 had first heard about a vacancy in his community through being involved in an environmental campaign event where a fellow activist had mentioned it. The Occupy movement<sup>8</sup> had been instrumental in Interviewee 2 finding the squat/ecovillage community he had lived in for three years. So activism and political values and allegiances had played a significant role for some individuals in the way they generated social capital.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://occupylondon.org.uk/>

So whilst for the Co-ops in particular, there were rules about openness and equalities of opportunity in new recruitment of members and the communities did sometimes advertise for new members, the dominant recruitment method was via the social networks of the existing members.

One interviewee rationalised this approach to recruiting new members in terms of safeguarding the interests of the younger members of the community:

*...this is a bit of a bugbear because obviously rooms don't come up very often, because people are settled in now, um, because we've got children here, we prefer to have someone that knows someone that lives here, so you know, we can't have a complete stranger come in. If no one knows them, cos you know, we don't know anything about them and we have got children, so normally it's a friend of a friend of a friend, um we have, which also goes against the Housing Association thing cos you have to have um..., you have to be shown that you're open to everyone, so we have, when we have had a room, we have put adverts out, saying we're a community we have had a few people move in from that that's been fine, but usually it's, we'd rather know who they were. (Interviewee 6; Community 4)*

Her account makes clear that recruitment of new members is more often than not from within the social networks of existing members. In community 6 this was also evident; three of the 24 houses in this community were occupied by members of the same family, so familial relations also facilitated access to community living.

### **Family and friendship networks**

Familial relations were based on marital or biological ties for some interviewees. However, the distinction between family and friends was blurred and to some degree they considered the community to be like extended family, especially where they had known other members since they had been young. Interviewee 14 described how when she had returned from living abroad it was always to her friends in this community that she had returned and how important this connection had been over the years:

*there's a group of four or five of us who've known each other since our teenage years and have all gone off, say, one of them lives over there, (name)'s husband then there's a few others in the road, close neighbourhood, who we'd all gone off and done we've all come back together, so there's a very close... [pause] they are a family, part of my family as well. And I guess the extended family of my blood relations, but also to a certain extent some of my close friends, again like (name), she has two daughters, who each have two daughters*



*and they call me Aunty and they're a part of my family as well.* (Interviewee 14; Community 6)

So familial connections were also part of the social capital involved in finding out about and access to community living. Some narratives of connection were of deep emotional attachment to specific individuals and family units within the communities.

These examples raise interesting questions about the degree of openness of the housing Co-operatives to new members. All formal housing Co-operatives have to sign up to the seven principles of the Co-operative movement, including equality of opportunity (Chapter 6, page 108) and new members do *not* have to sign up to specific sets of values. However, these examples suggest certain kinds of social and cultural capital are shared by members who become successful in their applications and are also reflected in the decisions of the existing members in accepting them.

However, for some interviewees, commitment to community living as a lifestyle was not as strong or as permanent and a number of interviewees had moved in and out of living in intentional communities. These changing affiliations and lifestyle choices had implications for understanding the habitus of the individuals and communities.

### **Housing pathways in and out of community living**

Whilst the examples above suggest that we can talk of the habitus of intentional communities, formed around common values and capital, two interviewees' stories illustrate the diversity in where and how some individuals had lived over their lifetime, both within and outside of their communities.

The housing pathway of interviewee 18 (Appendix 12) shows how she had moved between living in conventional arrangements: with her husband and baby; later as a single parent with her sons; caring for her father in his home once the children had left home and living in intentional communities in her 20s and again in her 60s. Her trajectory was quite different to other communards of her generation who, once they had found their community in the 1970s and early 80s, had stayed and brought their children up there.

She had made a conscious decision not to live in community as a single parent with two children because, she had reservations about parenting within a community setting. She talked about the tension between her more conventional side and the more radical political side of her identity

and how this tension underpinned the difficult choices she had faced in finding affordable housing when she wanted to return to London:

*There's two things. One that I didn't have a choice: that I've burnt my bridges, I've sold my house I have, um... and er I could go back to the South West where I could rent somewhere cheaper than this... (long pause)... um... it was kind of desperate cos 'I have to live somewhere with other people, I can't carry on living on my own London rent, or else I'd have to leave London... and then there's this place and 'Oh, it's political Oh, this is who I used to be...' so here I am in this project. And I do really enjoy that. The idealistic part of me likes the challenges of the relationships with people and so on there's this other, there's the two people that I always am - there's the one that always wanted to be normal, so that's difficult... (Interviewee 18; Community 7)*

I see a number of things woven together in this narrative: the practical nature of her dilemma having sold her house and not being able to get back on the housing ladder; the tension between her desire to be 'normal' and her being commitment to a political way of life; the tension between her current sense of self (in her late 60s) and her nostalgia for her younger self (something I explore more in chapter 8).

In the housing pathway of interviewee 22, there were also tensions. These seemed to manifest themselves in her ambivalence about her commitment to remain living in her community. In her stories, she talked about moving in and out of different kinds of living arrangements and seemingly never able to settle in them for varying reasons; she had moved in and out of different housing tenures, at one time living in a Co-operative, at another time as a lodger and at another time as a homeowner.

These two examples make it clear that living in an intentional community at one point in an individual's life does not necessarily equate to a lifetime's commitment and a key message is that individual affiliation to their community could also be fleeting and ambivalent.

### **Becoming a member at different stages of life of the community**

The stories of the interviewees also revealed that what made becoming a member of their community possible altered at different stages of development of the community. To become a new member once the community was established was described as a different experience and process to being a founding member.

Those who had been involved in the early stages of developing their communities - before the purchase or lease of land and property - described how the founding groups had tended to come together through a mixture of friendship, work or political networks (except Community 4).

Acceptance as part of the founding group had been dependent on individuals being able to commit time and energy to the arduous and unpaid work of getting the intentional community project off the ground, when these initiatives had to fight to be recognised by local authorities.

In all the communities, the constitution of the founding group changed while the community became established and land and property secured. This is a critical distinction in the life course of the community: the creation and development of the communities - even in the more fertile counterculture landscape of the 1970s - involved overcoming many financial, logistical, bureaucratic and organisational obstacles and the demands on the individuals involved have been well documented elsewhere (Sargisson, 2012; Brenton, 2013; Scanlon and Arrigoitia, 2015). A key message is that what made becoming a member possible during the founding phase was having significantly more commitment, resources, adaptability and resilience than becoming a member once the community had been established.

The ageing of the community represents another key temporal aspect that altered individual's experiences of becoming a member. Interviewees described changing experiences of recruitment during what were, in effect, different generations of their intentional community. For example, Interviewee 16 talked about how much more mainstream their community had become in terms of accepting being acceptable to, new members with different occupational backgrounds. She described this less in terms of occupational status or class than in terms of being alternative:

*You don't want people to come because of money, you want them to come because they want to live in a Co-op and share have support and support other people. I mean it would have been unheard of before to think that we would have had a policeman living in the street, or that we've got a couple of teachers living in the street that just wouldn't have happened before, it just wouldn't. It would have been seen as 'Hey man, that's too straight!' you know, whereas now it's not seen in that way really. (Interviewee 16; Community 6)*

Another member of this community, Interviewee 14, also talked about the increasing formalisation in the practices of their housing Co-op:

*we've had to become a little more formal to make sure we do have policies and to write them and to, um, you know, there's quite, er, a movement I've been part of it in some cases, to, yeah, to formalise some of those things that have been kind of accepted, you know when you move from, it's almost like the law, isn't it, when you move from common law, from the kind of things that's expected as far as behaviour and interaction goes. And start having to put some, the roles have always been there, but I think we've had to get a little bit more formal about it. (Interviewee 14; Community 6)*

So a number of the communities had been formed in the heady counter culture times of the

1960s and 1970s, which seemed to have been characterised by more informal movement in and out of communities and less formal rules and processes involved in becoming a member.

Interviewee 4 made some observations about the ways that her 30-year-old housing Co-op had changed since its early years in the late 1980s. She talked about how they had let go of practices such as 'having a pint' or breast-feeding at meetings and she described how the organisation had formalised as it had matured. It had become more aligned with mainstream organisational thinking in the implementation of policies and practices around for example, equal opportunities and recruitment of members.

Some interviewees felt a sense of loss as they reflected on what they perceived to be the changing values of their newer members. Interviewee 19 lamented how mainstream the values of new members coming into the community were, compared with the more explicitly political values he felt the founding members had:

*The energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the group of families who collectively set this place up does not seem to be present in the new families that arrive into what is already a well-oiled and well established institution. The collective, anarcho syndicalist, socialist, new age spiritualism of the early pioneering spirit does not seem to be present in our new members of today. People's needs seem to be driven more by economics and material comfort than by any need for political or social change. These are my perceptions. (Interviewee 19; Community 8)*

Interview 6 similarly described disappointment about how the commitment to communality had given way to individualisation within their community:

*We have a communal lounge downstairs where anyone can go and sit, light the fire, read books in the olden days we used to do that every evening, we'd all go in the lounge, we'd light a fire, you'd read, we'd chat, it doesn't happen so much now, I think people tend to more stay in their rooms, when we moved in, we said no televisions, except in one room, so everyone had to watch the TV together, which was nice, but then gradually it was I don't wanna watch that, I wanna watch this in the end people er sneakily took televisions into their room (Interviewee 6; Community 4)*

This sense of loss extended to some community's links with their wider locality too, to the demise of their outreach work:

*We used to do many, many more things sort of outreach things, we used to have much more to do with the village open days and garden events, you know, like be linked with the village a bit more. We used to have other communities coming to visit as well - playing a bit*

*of volleyball and netball and stuff like that. All that kind of stuff has slid a little bit, but only because we just don't have the people here anymore the people that we do have, um, they kind of have their own things, they have their own lives much more than we used to then.*  
(Interviewee 10; Community 5)

So there was a common refrain about the loss of more radical values across a number of the long-standing communities, particularly those that had existed for 30-40 years.

## **Discussion of Chapter 6**

Once again, in closing this chapter I discuss the implications of my research findings and relate them to the existing literature and relevant theorising and I draw out what this second set of findings suggest for my utilisation of Bourdieu's key concepts of cultural and social capital.

A key message from the findings in this chapter is that the individuals interviewed were diverse in their classificatory identity (based on familial legacy or occupational hierarchy), although there were some commonalities of experience and affinities in work and other life choices. Many interviewees had led varied working lives and had diverse experiences of housing and family-life pathways. The distinctive commonalities of experiences and affinities between interviewees suggested cultural and social capital were involved in making choosing community-living as a lifestyle possible. Social capital in particular was important in individuals finding out about vacancies in communities. But it was difficult to disentangle one from the other: cultural and social aspects were often intertwined in individual's stories of their experiences of becoming members.

What emerged from the data was a tension in the applicability and usefulness of habitus. It helped more in relation to understanding the communities than the individuals within them. It worked for understanding the communities by drawing out shared cultural and social capital, but not generated through the achievement of conventional values and markers of distinction, instead generated through *alternative* forms of currency, especially within some more radical communities. This alternative cultural capital was what seemed to play a role in individuals taking steps into this unconventional world of intentional communities.

### **Alternative cultural capital**

One aspect of this alternative capital - experiences of education and teaching – was significant in terms of Bourdieu's central thesis about the importance of the education system in cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). My research confirms historic accounts that have found high levels of involvement of teachers in UK intentional communities (Abrams and McCulloch, 1976; Coates, 2013). As I have described in this chapter, in the case of this group of interviewees, the holding of higher than average educational capital had not necessarily been used to achieve lifestyles and societal privileges in the way Bourdieu characterised in *Distinction* - to climb conventional social ladders and achieve increased normative status within the fields of housing or work. Instead, it seemed to play some part in these individuals acquiring a form of more *alternative* capital. Or did it?

Some have argued that examples of sub-cultural values operating counter to societal norms illustrate a limitation of Bourdieu's conceptualisation and interpretation of capital: how are we to make sense of what Silva has called 'non-accumulating cultural practices' and Skeggs has called 'delegitimised cultural capital', illustrated by forms of working class culture (Silva and Edwards, 2007; Skeggs, 2004). The stories here revealed a common dissatisfaction with conventional family and work life choices – a seeking of alternatives - that played a part in becoming involved with intentional communities.

Bourdieu used the term symbolic violence to describe the way states reproduce the established social order, subtly engendering an internalisation of the status quo, of the values and tenets of a society. This is part of how habitus is formed and sustained and how certain lifestyles are denigrated and devalued. In Bourdieu's analysis, education plays an important role in reinforcing dominant ideologies (Bourdieu, 2000). Given this, how did this unorthodox manifestation of an orthodox form of cultural capital (i.e. formal education qualifications) seem to work to make these members transgressive housing choices possible?

The educational capital commonly held within this group of interviewees seemed to help generate this *alternative* capital, which took the form of a critical perspective, the ability to articulate a set of alternative notions to aspects of mainstream society, counter to the orthodoxy (resistant), which individuals translated into access to their intentional community. Skeggs's work is mainly about the exclusion of working class identities in the dominant symbolic order, but I think her work is helpful in considering alternative cultural capital generated within these communities that exist outside normative housing and household formation. Referring to contemporary theorisations of subjectivity, Skeggs asks:

*How do we account for those who do not materialize on these figurative radars, who appear to be living life beyond the theoretical imaginary and empirical reality of exchange-value? (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 486)*

This question shines a light on the awkward fit between the concept of cultural capital and forms of it in social groups that are not recognised as being of value in orthodox societal hierarchies, such as members of intentional communities. In order to become members of the more transgressive of these communities, individuals had learnt to ‘talk the talk’. There was a set of common values expressed in the way the interviewees talked about being aware of this as a way of life, as a choice, as well as their specific journey to becoming a member of their community. Such values were more often implicit than explicit; it was evident that, as one interviewee put it, your face had to fit. There was a kind of *alternative currency* that individuals traded in when they ‘fitted in’ or were accepted, that was similar to what Bourdieu framed as knowing the stakes of the game, but a game that ran counter to normative value hierarchies.

Sandberg has used the concept of ‘street capital’ in his study of the life of black drug dealers on the streets of Norway, a predominantly white society, to describe the social space they have generated as ‘an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity (Sandberg, 2008: 605). He depicts their lifestyle as a form of ‘alternative search of respect’, a lifestyle available to marginalized groups that felt estranged from mainstream society (p613). Many interviewees’ expressions of dissatisfaction also included feeling estranged from mainstream society. As members of these communities, many seemed to be engaged in forming a collective identity as *outsiders* to the mainstream world of insiders. Educational experiences *seemed* to play role in this, but this is not to say that formal education was the only way for these individuals to have developed this critical perspective and alternative capital. Some interviewees described their critical awareness as having developed through years of political activism, or early childhood epiphanies, or their experiences of travelling the world.

Alternative capital also seemed to be apparent in the way some interviewees had navigated their relationship to mainstream work. For most interviewees, conventional forms of work were described as secondary in importance to the work within their community (the collective work to maintain the community). Only two individuals talked about the importance of their salaried work outside the community. For many individuals, living in their community had enabled them to be less dependent on formal paid work, or able to take more satisfying but lower-paid work. In this sense, an important part of community living was about reclaiming work from being solely

formed around mainstream waged labour (Gorz, 1999). However, this was also dependent on the generational economics of individual communities: individuals living in the younger communities had higher housing costs (described in chapter 5) and this limited the scope for them to control their relationship to work.

### **Alternative notions of family and friendships**

For Bourdieu, the family is a key concept in the reproduction of the societies of the global North. He talks about the family as a critical social construction; as one of the constituent elements of our habitus:

*a mental structure which, having been inculcated into all brains socialised in a particular way, is both individual and collective. It is a tacit law (nomos) of perception and practice that is at the basis of the consensus on the sense on the social world (and of the word family in particular), the basis of common sense [his emphasis] (Bourdieu, 1996: 21)*

In his conceptual framework, the family is integral to the circle that is the reproduction of the social order. The discontinuity and disruption in traditional family life that was common in the lives of my interviewees does therefore seem relevant in making it possible for these individuals to imagine and realise other forms of familial connection. There was explicit criticism of normative notions about the nuclear family by some interviewees. These sentiments were also common in earlier UK studies (Abrams and McCulloch, 1976; Mills, 1973; Rigby, 1974) and add to the sense of continuity with the counterculture values of the 1960s and 70s. Once again, being able to articulate a critique of normative notions of the family seemed to constitute a form of currency of belonging in some of these communities; a form of *alternative* cultural capital.

This value attached to alternative cultural ideas varied between communities. In communities where traditional boundaries of household formation were maintained (each household having their own front door, their own kitchen and bathrooms, even their own gardens) some interviewees expressed strong scepticism about the viability of communities that did not maintain conventional boundaries of household privacy (something I explore further in Chapter 7). For example, in the communities where the CoHousing design model had been adopted (i.e. bounded private household units), conventional family forms were more evident. The individuals in these communities seemed to represent examples of what Roseneil has described as people who were 'consciously seeking to create a way of life that would meet their need for



connection with others while preserving their autonomy and independence' (Roseneil, 2004: 415).

In contrast, other interviewees living in communities with more sharing of physical space and daily routines considered their fellow community members to be their 'family of choice' and there was more radical 'queering' of traditional notions of family (Weston, 1997). Where children had spent all their childhood in their intentional community, there were stories of children making lifelong bonds with both adults and children within the community. In a key text from the early days of queer theory 'Families We Choose' (Weston 1991), Weston talks about how complicated defining kin and friends was for many gay people in the 1980s because of the powerful orthodoxy of biological ties and the exclusion of gay people from conventional means of creating formal families, such as marriage. As described in Chapter 2, intentional communities are virtually invisible within the orthodoxy of household formation and the social and emotional relationships developed within them lack formal and cultural recognition. This suggests a parallel with the experience of gay people particularly gay families, that has been unexplored in understandings of intentional communities (an area of potentially interesting future research).

Whatever the degree of difference in the reflections of the interviewees on the conventions of the family unit, there was a common emphasis on *friendship* being important. Friendship circles were often the way individuals had come to find out about a vacancy within their community. For those who had lived in their community a long time, friendships within their community had often lasted longer than one-to-one relationships. Most interviewees acknowledged that friendships born out of living together and working together in a community over a number of years had become highly significant in their lives.

Such emerging forms of friendship are not unique to intentional communities. Spencer and Pahl have written of the importance of friendship as a form of potential social capital. They evidence cases where friends take on family-like status (Spencer and Pahl, 2000). They use social capital more in the sense that Putnam & Leonard use the term (Leonard, 2004; Putnam, 2003) to denote a form of social glue that is, they argue, largely hidden and unrecognised in contemporary analyses of society. My research supports their thesis that such connections can be powerful and deeply felt relationships of equal importance to conventional ties associated with family and are under-researched and under recognised in contemporary British social and housing policy and practice.

I do not want to overstate the degree to which the individuals in even the more radically communal communities were able to resist and transgress conventional notions of family. There was evidence of tension in relation to individual's identities as members of the community when they talked about their place in their own family, or in wider society. For one interviewee, having insight about the nuclear family as an ideology and having been active in the counterculture movements of the 1970s, did not stop her feeling judged or stigmatised by *not* having a conventional housing lifestyle, especially as an older woman. This interviewee's sentiments resonate in the work of many cultural gerontologists exploring how older women in particular are subject to particular forms of ageist representation (Bytheway, 1995; Raisborough et al., 2014; Twigg and Martin, 2015b), something I discuss more in Chapter 8.

Similarly, narratives relating to bringing up children were also sometimes conventional. Some parents had consciously decided to, or had ended up, bringing up their children outside of community and had only engaged in community life once the children had left home. Positive stories of co-parenting with other community members coexisted alongside parent's stories of everyday conflicts with other parent's over styles of parenting and of the assertion of traditional family boundaries within communal settings. Such narratives of values and principles were also impossible to disentangle from the very practical challenges associated with everyday life that parents, especially single parents, talked about. Their stories were also about the practical quest for a quality of life for their children and a more liveable life as parents, which, for many, their communities made possible.

### **Habitus and reflexivity and the realisation of agency**

Bourdieu conceived of habitus as a relatively fixed set of dispositions and cultural values, born of familial upbringing and embodied by individuals in the form of practically knowing, of unconscious competence (Bourdieu, 1990). McNay provides an interpretation of habitus as generative and not foreclosing the possibilities for agency, (McNay, 1999). These examples of alternative capital seem to suggest the realisation of individual and collective agency within and in relation to individual choices to live in these communities. In some stories, individuals seemed not to have been limited by their early habitus (based mainly on familial legacy), but had found ways to *change* their habitus.

But how is this combination of reflexivity and agency possible for these individuals and not for others? Adams provides an explanation of how we might understand the relationship between the elements I have linked here - education, work and the disposition to realisation of alternative capital – which is through understanding the tension between habitus and reflexivity:

*In Bourdieu's scheme, the reflexive process, paradoxically, is itself a form of habitus, a required constituent of a particular field; and it is the scientific and academic fields that tend to generate reflexivity as a habitus-field requirement; though reflexivity can potentially emerge anywhere in 'crisis' situations. It is not a transcendent reflexivity however; it is simply a procedural requirement within that field; a necessary form of collective cultural capital, which becomes engrained in individual agency. Thus reflexivity is as much the habitual outcome of field requirements as any other disposition. Reflexivity becomes, in a sense, the very 'feel for the game' that it is initially defined in opposition to. (Adams, 2006: 515)*

Adams suggests that the ability to realise and make use of what I have described as alternative capital is part of the cultural capital associated with the field of education, specifically, 'the academic field' that this group of individuals had often excelled in. This makes sense; but it makes particular sense when linked to the specific historical context in which this generation of individuals experienced the education system in the UK.

Most interviewees had experienced their formative young adult and educational years in the 1960s and early 1970s, an era that has been recognised as marking a significant shift in social structures and relations in the UK and in North America and Europe in particular (Baker, 2014; Jolly, 2011; Savage, 2010; Woodspring, 2015). Stories of these individual's exposure to, or involvement with, what was then called *counter culture* movements, suggest that these experiences played an important role in how a number of interviewees had developed a reflexive and/or political sensibility about what conventional life offered. Access to higher education for some individuals in this generation seemed to enable both their becoming aware of alternative ways of life and also to contribute to the generation of the alternative capital that was instrumental in their adopting this way of life.

What is evident throughout this chapter is an ongoing interrelationship between wider societal change, changing generations of intentional communities and individuals reflexively engaged in both. Some individual's housing pathways showed how they had moved in and out of community – some experiencing tension between their radical and conventional sides - whilst other interviewees had experienced transformations in their lives early on (compared with their familial

legacy) and then remained in their community all their adult life. Therefore, habitus cannot be considered fixed or permanent, but is subject to change over time.

### **Changing communities over time**

I mentioned how some communities had become more formalised in the ways that they managed community living and recruitment practices over time. Most communities however, remained relatively dependent on individuals learning through practical day-to-day life about how the community worked, rather than writing such practices down. The knowledge involved seemed to resist representation in formal articulations and involved more implicit rather than explicit values (Certeau, 2002). It seemed more akin to what Nolas calls 'cultures of participation' (Nolas, 2011: 147). Seeing some community's practices in this light helps to bring out the value and the limitations of their cultures: informal and unspoken values can work as a force for cohesion, but can also obscure the *actual* everyday practices of participation and risks lack of transparency. As I describe in later Chapters, this lack of explicitness had implications for everyday life (Chapter 7) and how interviewees felt about living in the community into older age (Chapter 8).

In the nostalgia felt by some for the early days of community life and past political values involved in the founding era, there were echoes of the loss of community that Baumann argues is an increasing feature of contemporary Western capitalist societies (Baumann, 2001). There was, perhaps, a romanticisation of the past amongst the older communards as they recalled a bygone era that was part of their youthful lives. Some critics of nostalgia for the past caution against taking such recollections and perspectives without critically evaluating them (Weeks, 1995; Wright, 1996) and there were enough conflicting perspectives on whether community life had improved or not to suggest that there had been both gains and losses over the different generations of community life.

Changes in the *field* of housing consumption provide context to these changes. The older generation communities have existed through the changes associated with the demise of social housing in the UK (Hoggart, 1999) and the rise of neo-liberal global capitalism where UK housing (alongside with many other aspects of life) has become significantly more commodified, individualised and subject to increasing speculative investment by international institutions (Ball, 1983; Dodson, 2006; Flint, 2015; Heath, 2008; Kemeny, 1995; McKee and Muir, 2013; Rogaly and Taylor, 2009; Savage et al., 1992).

Social, cultural and alternative capital were not the only important forms of resources and dispositions involved in making life possible in the communities. A lot of what was explained about what it took to sustain everyday life in their communities successfully related to *emotional* work. In the next Chapter, I look at what my interviewees felt made day-to-day life in their communities possible.

## CHAPTER 7 - WHAT IT TAKES TO SUSTAIN EVERYDAY LIFE IN COMMUNITY

### Introduction

In this chapter, I move on to answer the second principal research question – what can current older members tell us about what it takes to sustain everyday life living in their intentional communities? I explore in detail how my interviewees talked about this and, more specifically, I draw on their descriptions of and stories about the day-to-day practices involved in managing and sustaining life in the community. I consider:

- What kinds of skills and aptitudes are involved in living successfully in their community on a day-to-day basis?
- How are such skills and aptitudes acquired by these members?
- What other kinds of work are being undertaken to facilitate day-to-day community living?

I draw on Reay's concept of emotional capital to consider whether the individuals in these communities are drawing on the kinds of emotional resources and investments that she added to Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus in her work on mothers, class investment in children's education (Reay, 2000; Reay, 2004) (described in Chapter 3, pages 50-52). I consider what interviewees told me about the relations and dynamics of their home and community spaces and how they made living together work (details of this are provided in Appendix 13). I start with tolerance.

### Tolerance and compromise in everyday life

The word tolerance came up frequently and interviewees often combined a number of emotional aptitudes in their responses, as can be seen in the quotes below. Where tolerance was spoken of, often 'acceptance' and being 'patient' were also considered important:

*Long suffering. [I laugh] Endurance. And tolerance. But I think they come, well that's part of living in a community anyway, no matter how old you are, that's probably the key, that tolerance. (Interviewee 1; Community 1)*

*Tolerance. If you can't develop a high level of tolerance of other people mess they may make - cos that's one of the things that gets people, um, some people can't stand the way*

*that other people do things that make a mess; child rearing is another one that can rear its ugly head - and I think tolerance is really important...* (Interviewee 19; Community 8)

*Patience, tolerance, um understanding of other people's problems.* (Interviewee 13; Community 6)

In these examples, tolerance was talked about generally but also specifically in terms of sharing spaces in everyday life. Other people's 'mess' was often given as an example of something each individual had to be tolerant of, including recognising that community rules, such as not leaving individual items in common areas like corridors, were not always adhered to. Another often cited example was tolerating other parents' views on how disputes between children should be resolved. Tolerance also involved acceptance of other members' priorities and proposed solutions when it came to making decisions within the community:

*You know, people have neighbour disputes and I think, here, you have to ... you really have to get along and let go of some of that crap and not get hooked up on it and sometimes you want to do something but other people don't so, okay, well it's not really that important. I'll go with what... We'll go with the flow. Go with what the community feeling is. Sometimes that's not easy and sometimes there are points, things you do feel strongly about but, by and large, I think we try and go with the flow. We try and go with the sense of the group. What the group want.* (Interviewee 11, Community 5)

In this quote, there's a strong emphasis on letting go and compromising, on 'going with the flow' and giving way to the needs of the wider community. It was essential that an individual could compromise on what they want and adapt their behaviour to fit in with the expressed needs and wishes of the wider community:

*there does need to be a tolerance of other people, there needs to be a willingness too, there needs to be a willingness to sometimes to, I think sacrifice is the wrong word, to put aside... [pause] some of your own [pause] (sighs) priorities for the greater good. Now that sounds a bit airy-fairy but there's sometimes, er, you have to have a little bit, yeah, less selfish, actually I suppose is what I'm trying to say. Um again, I'm not holding myself up as always being the model of being able to do that, but I think if I had to, er, that, that would be what I would look for but sometimes it's about not just what I want, but actually how does that affect the other people I live with do I need to modify what I want to encompass them in an ideal world.* (Interviewee 14, Community 6)

This interviewee uses the word *sacrifice* but then caveats it and talks about putting aside individual desires for 'the greater good' and being 'less selfish'. This was a core theme in most interviewees responses.

Interviewee 23 gave an account of how he had change his behaviour through living in his community, how he had learned to 'rein in' his spontaneity. He described how, when he was doing work on the house in the early days, he would spontaneously do things, such as sort out the flooring in the new toilet and how he had had to learn to consult the others. He considered it had been a 'hard lesson to learn' - though he acknowledged how essential it had been. He went on to explain that 'after four years I'm beginning to realise there are grey areas' and how he was 'ducking and diving with that', constantly balancing his individual impulses with the need to compromise with others. The ability to accept and manage this tension - what he described as the ducking and diving – seemed to be fundamental to successful community living. It illustrates the constant negotiation that went on between individuals and within individuals – balancing their personal way of doing things with the ways and priorities of others in the community.

### **Consensus decision-making**

This ability to be tolerant of others' ways of doing things was structured into the organisation of these communities through their decision-making mechanisms. All communities described having structured methods for decision-making, most of which involved regular meetings (often weekly) to raise issues, discuss options and come to agreement about areas of shared responsibility. The interviewees in nearly all of the communities (8 out of 9) talked explicitly about adopting a principle of *consensus decision-making*, whereby all individual members have to agree the proposed change or action before it can be implemented. Interviewees from Community 8 described how any questions, issues or problems raised by individuals had to go through a systematic process of consideration and decision-making; these were broken down into 'work groups' (for example, energy, domestic, buildings, new applicants) and all decisions from these work groups were 'brought up to' the main community decision-making meeting every week for 'ratification'. There were strict deadlines for member's written proposals to be ready in advance of the decision-making meeting. All proposals and decisions were recorded in writing.

Across the communities, the sophistication in how communities articulated the process for achieving compromise and consensus varied. Interviewee 18 described how in community 7 they had spent considerable time refining and improving on the concepts of consensus decision-making and *non-violent communication* (NVC) to ensure that everyone felt that they had their say, but also that decision-making did not get stuck (for example, if one member continued to oppose a change that the rest of the community supported). This was also considered important



for ensuring individuals or groups did not build up resentment. Interviewee 18 described how, in the previous year, the community had paid external facilitators to help them improve systems and processes for communication with each other. She admitted this didn't mean they had had no further problems; they had. What she described was a systematic process of *learning* from the problems, with the help of outside expertise. Given the financial pressures this community were coping with as a young housing Co-op in London, necessity had played a significant role in their developing systems for mitigating disagreement between members since their economic survival depended on it.

By contrast, there seemed to be more frustration about inertia and indecision within other, more mature and long-standing communities. There seemed to be less awareness and implementation of such contemporary theory and practice around group and organisational dynamics.

Community 6 had been around for nearly 40 years and yet frustration with their processes was apparent from a number of interviewees:

*If things go wrong we have meetings, once a month, um if things go wrong we tend to ... well I seem to think people tend to bury their head in the sand and hope that it goes away without addressing it. And I'm not that sort of person and it's been a frustration of mine all the way through living in this environment. I mean I like to act on things and get things done and sometimes we just oh it's just infuriating to me, not to everybody but to me, that, um, we can't decide on what we're going to do and how we're going to do it.*  
(Interviewee 13; Community 6)

Interviewee 4 (Community 3) talked honestly about how the community had experienced problems not being able to get members to move on in their conflicts. This had interfered with the effectiveness of meetings and work groups over the years:

*what you find is that Co-ops that are our age with people that have been in them for years who are also older, quite often have had relationships and children and quite often they're not getting on with each other anymore. So it's not unusual across the country to find that there is you know a pair of grumpy old gits [we both laugh] who basically still you know carrying on their divorce and you know splattering it over the rest of the community... (Interviewee 4, Community 3)*

This interviewee spoke of how the community had only recently – with the arrival of a new and younger member – taken on using some of the techniques of non-violent communication in their meetings. This interviewee talked positively about the influence of younger people coming into her community and bringing such skills.

The stories from Community 8 were about how they had matured their processes over many years to achieve effectiveness. I cannot offer a systematic comparison of the decision-making and conflict management processes within the nine communities, but the data above suggests fresher perspectives and methods have been brought into communities by younger members, when older members have been open to hearing about and trying them. In all communities, interviewees also spoke of conflicts within their community.

### **Conflict management**

In every interview there were stories of conflict and of disruptive individuals or households and sometimes these revealed some of the implicit values of the community, by making apparent the boundaries of unacceptable behaviour. For example, Interviewee 5 talked about how important 'consideration' for others was, in a similar way to the views of the interviewees described above and how these were not exactly rules but were, from his perspective, taken-for-granted values:

*It's one of the reasons we've come into contention with the person I told you about is that communal areas must not be cluttered with stuff. Communal areas are communal areas, they're not supposed to be cluttered with everything on the stairways and, er... whatever. Also, we ask people to be considerate at night time, not make noise at night time, um, I suppose as much as you would be in a block of flats or something, you make a load of noise you'd soon be, er... so, er, we have certain rules, er, on non-violence, um... we don't like heavy drug taking, er, just general anti-social behaviour, because we live so close together we can't have anti-social behaviour, we can't have, er, we'd be very strict on a guy beating up his partner or his wife, you know, we do have, er, just general, civilized rules which you have to have. (Interviewee 5; Community 4)*

Once again there seemed to be a delicate balancing act going on: between having rules and not having rules; between the vagueness of 'being considerate' of others and the phrase 'we'd be very strict' in relation to domestic violence. The interviewee talked of having 'general civilised rules' that would apply in any block of flats, but also emphasised there was an increased need for not tolerating antisocial behaviour because 'we live so close together'. Such 'rules' had never been made explicit in written form in his community.

Interviewee 2 (Community 2) was also reluctant to admit to any notion of there being rules within his community. Instead he talked about a reliance on 'respect for others' and of the importance of being able to 'get along together'. When I pushed him to explain what would make a new member intolerable, the interviewee offered the following:

*Interviewee: people have turned up here quite, you know, for what of a better expression, they're having a hard time with themselves; you know, they're kind of suffering in some way. And they weren't a part of the protest, they're just, they found something. And it's like those people can stay too, no-one has to be connected to a political movement. There isn't ...*

*Interviewer: But it's true though that if you disrespected the space, that wouldn't ...*

*Interviewee: Well the big thing here is, is that there is, there are quite a few of us who, who are in touch with nature in the sense that they, they respect nature. And that isn't, that is an energy here definitely.*

*Interviewer: So it would be hard to stay if you didn't do that?*

*Interviewee: It's if you make a mess, if you're loud and, um, you're into destroying nature, you won't survive here, no, just for the people who are here, yeah. Also, if you're a complete, you know, if you're destructive too, in the human sense as well, you're not going to survive here. (Interviewee 2; Community 2)*

So, once again, there is a reliance on informal notions of consideration for others and relationships of mutual dependence and support; in this specific case he considered these to be not just nice to have, but essential 'for survival'.

As with processes for decision-making communities had formalised the way that they managed conflict and disruption to varying degrees. I gained a sense that managing such difficulties successfully was made more possible where communities had developed more formalised systems and processes, particularly in cases where the community had agreed (by consensus) an individual was no longer 'playing by the rules' or 'being Co-operative' and had been asked to leave.

For example, in Community 4, a housing Co-operative, a long-standing dispute had led to a member being asked to leave, but he was still living there two years after the decision had been taken. Interviewee 5 described the impact of this:

*It's made the relationships, its put a lot of anger and a lot of, um, its disrupted the whole relationships between everybody, so we're kind of living under that at the moment. (Interviewee 5, Community 4)*

Another member of this community talked about the negative impact of this dispute on the sharing of resources within the community. They clearly felt aggrieved and were suffering as a result of the individual's transgressions, but were also both uncomfortable talking about it. They felt inert in terms of being able to act as a community, in part because there were no explicit rules that his behaviour was violating of and there seemed to be no legal means to challenge him staying.

A similar conflict had occurred in community 5 after an individual had been asked to leave. Once again, the conflict had taken a long time to resolve and the community had only solved the matter by paying the individual to leave. One interviewee described how, as a result of this conflict, the community had become stricter about sticking to their own formal procedures for new members' recruitment; not letting anyone in 'through the back door' as they described it. So having some formalised and explicit rules about both recruitment and procedures for the management of conflict seemed to enable communities to deal better with disruptive individuals with the inevitable difficulties that occurred between individuals within the community.

Interviewee 18, who had only recently joined her community (Community 7), compared her experiences of living in a community in the 1970s and now:

*There's this awareness about relationships which was really absent in the 70s. We were just bumping along and getting into conflict and just getting out of conflict and, you know, without any awareness, whereas in those 40 years the whole therapy movement has entered into people's way of thinking about things, so when people get into conflict here there's a structure to conflict resolution. ... and we have group meetings to talk about group dynamics to explore the issues that are happening between the people in the group. And we get people from the outside to come in and do workshops, for us to, you know, get clear what the vision, what we're aspiring to and you know, how to put structures in. So there's a lot of structure and awareness here that wasn't there in the 70s. (Interviewee 18; Community 7)*

So this structure and awareness - due to the shift in knowledge and practice arising from psychotherapy and organisational theory over the last 40 to 50 years - had been taken advantage of within her community to more successfully manage and more quickly resolve everyday conflicts.

## **Contribution and productivity**

Willingness and ability to contribute to community life was a core expectation of individuals living in all intentional communities, irrespective of form. The degree to which this expectation was *explicitly* described varied across the communities. There were no written guides in Community 2 (ecovillage/squat), except what was communicated via the communal blackboard, whilst some of the housing Co-operatives had a number of policies for introducing new members and explaining

expectations of commitment to work groups, for example. This seemed to be verbally explained to prospective members, rather than written down.

In all the communities, there was a range of work involved in the day-to-day running of the community: as a minimum taking part in decision-making (most often in meetings); contributing time to keeping the community going (for example, building maintenance, finance, land management, shared domestic work, recruitment of new members, organising social events).

Interviewee 15 described the expectation that new members contribute:

*you've gotta be able to be willing, I think, to contribute, you know, in some way, either like, er, you've got the finance group meetings or go to the land group meetings and arrange to do things, or the maintenance... So you need to just be willing to learn ...*  
(Interviewee 15, Community 6)

This interviewee felt very strongly about the importance of this principle of contribution. Later in the interview, she talked about how the community could not be compassionate about people's problems at the expense of the community:

*... In meetings I have to put my hand up 'Look, I do not want to be morally blackmailed!' that this person's living in you know, a mouldy house and mould on the walls and they're paying such a high rent and they've only got one room with a child... you know. I don't want to hear that. I want to hear - and that sounds really harsh - I want to hear: what can they bring to the Co-op? (Interviewee 15, Community 6)*

This was live issue for many of the urban housing Co-op's because they always had a waiting list of people who wanted to live in the community when a vacancy came up, so there was a competitive element to the process of becoming a new member.

A number of interviewees talked about how *much* work there always was to be done in their community and in one of the communities (5), this was also a strong feature in all interviewees' responses. There was a strong thread running through all their reflections about how important it was to be able to contribute, to ensure the community was productive. Interviewee 11 expressed this in terms of their and other communities he knew being 'hard working':

*I think in the early years, particularly, you notice that, you know, the whole idea of community was tied up with these myths about, um, hippies and sofas on the lawn and drug-taking and layabouts the communities I've been involved with, or visited ... I've visited quite a few, just aren't like that, um. Maybe once in a while, but the vast majority of them are people who work really hard and, same here, we all work bloody hard to*

*make it work, you know? No layabouts here, really so...(laughing)* (Interviewee 11, Community 5)

The interviewee marked a distinction between the 'myths' surrounding community living as an easy option, the association with 'layabouts' and 'the reality' which is actually 'bloody hard work'. The emphasis on the 'hard work' involved in community life seemed stronger in the rural communities. Here they had land and were growing a lot of their own food and, in some cases, had livestock to manage (for example Community 8) and if the community was small in numbers (Community 5), physical fitness was often a prerequisite for new members.

Both Communities 5 and 8 - rural communities with large areas of gardens and land –had developed an explicit agenda in recent years of trying to attract younger, fitter new members in order to keep on top of the work of the community. The emphasis on contribution was also strong in Community 7 (urban housing Co-operative); the community was young and had not had many years to accumulate financial capital so it was essential that all members contributed to getting the work of the community done since there was little money to pay external contractors.

So there was an element of *physical* capital required of new members in certain communities. For example, Interviewee 19 in Community 8 talked about the kinds of practical skills that boosted an individual's chances of being accepted as a member in their rural community:

*Interviewee: We've all, well most of us, have got practical skills: woodwork skills, plumbing, electric, er tree surgery, fencing, hedging er...*

*Interviewer: And is that just an advantage of being big in numbers?*

*Interviewee: It is an advantage of being a big number, though I have to say I'm talking men here, cos the women have got tremendous skills as well. You know there's a whole range of skills, we've got administrative skills too we've got legal skills, architect's skills...*

*Interviewer: You haven't consciously gone out there to seek these skills then? You haven't ever had a process of saying 'Oh we need to recruit a plumber?'*

*Interviewee: Um, no but it does clock into people's minds when we make a decision, you know, if somebody says I've got that skill then that's great, 'we are short of that skill' so it will sway decision-making processes sometimes when we do our applicant's meetings, um, well not sway the decision-making process but it will contribute... (Interviewee 19; Community 8)*

So a range of skills – both practical and administrative - was valued in this community. It was clear that a new member would be unlikely to be accepted as a member if they had no skills at all, especially given their waiting list of interested prospective members. What was also revealed in this quote was some sensitivity around the issue: the hesitation in the way that this interviewee

talked about their criteria for selecting new members. He retracted his first thought that having a specific set of skills would 'sway' the decision-making process and expressed it as being something that would contribute to decision-making. The quotes throughout this section show how current members were constantly having to weigh up what was needed to sustain daily life in the community in order to keep the community going.

## **Commitment and resilience**

I have mentioned how some interviewees expressed their belief in community living as a positive way of life, linked to dissatisfaction with conventional life (Chapter 6, page 116). For some interviewees, this was woven in with practical and political reasoning, as well as an emotional attachment to their specific community:

*The reason I carry on living here is cos I can't imagine not living in a Co-op. I'm really committed to Co-operative housing, well Co-ops in general. Um, I just can't ever imagine giving my money to a landlord and I certainly don't ever want to buy a house, so you know, it's kind of like where I should be and this is a well-settled Co-op and I can't think of another Co-op that would give me the same kind of thing... (Interviewee 16; Community 6)*

Another interviewee expressed how happiness and fulfilment were part and parcel of their commitment to their community and to this way of life:

*I continue to live here because I'm happy here. It's [pause] fulfils a lot, a lot of my needs. I'm very committed to the place, um. I'm quite proud of it, um. I think there's an alternative side to me that quite enjoys that alternative way of life, a bit unconventional (Interviewee 11; Community 5)*

Interviewees also revealed some of the challenges they had faced in maintaining this commitment: being perceived as 'wacky' or eccentric, or feeling judged unfairly by others. Interviewee 7 talked about how other parents in the school that her son attended held onto 'myths about what happens up here'. She talked about how these perceptions made her angry and how she felt other parents were immature in the way they sensationalised what might be happening in the community.

Another interviewee described how, in the early years of the community being set up, she had overheard two people talking about the community whilst queuing in the local shop:

*I was about 4th in the queue and she said 'Ooh have you seen that lot over there? They're all wife-swapping and taking drugs!' and I said 'Excuse me, I live there and I'm missing out on this...' (both laugh) can I just explain what's, there's not very many 'wives' in the street, um if there's drug-taking going on it's definitely not come to my notice, most of us are parents of some kind, or we're just getting on with our lives sharing looking after the houses, no different to you living in your street.' So I think once people started to understand it just took us to explain... Um my children went to the local school and they got ribbed a bit to start off with but that didn't last long. (Interviewee 17; Community 6)*

This example was taken from the past – in the late 1970s when the community was first set up - and local perceptions had changed considerably over time as the community had become more woven into the fabric of the local area and the community had become more conventional (also quote on page 123 about how the kinds of members they recruited had become more conventional). Other interviewees in this community talked about how they were no longer referred to as 'hippy street' and were more often referred to as 'pretty street' now because of the well preserved traditional features of the fronts of their houses.

Of course, the stigmas associated with living alternatively varied according to the degree to which the community itself was constituted around conventional versus radical notions of home and household formation. As described in Chapter 5, the CoHousing communities were built around a model of individual home ownership, where everyone had their own front door it was noticeable none of the interviewees from these two communities talked about being stigmatised.

In contrast, the experience of interviewee 2, living in the squat/eco-village, was one in which members had to deal with much more negative perceptions of the community. There was, however, some variation in the reception that they had received from local neighbours and landowners, once they had realised the group's occupation of the land was peaceful and respectful. Members of this community also had to deal with the threat of physical violence on occasions, either from bailiffs, or from groups of local people coming onto the land (since there was no secure perimeter to their community). Interviewee 2 told me about how he had been intimidated and pushed around by a group of young people who had come looking for trouble one night, but he was sanguine and philosophical about it, seeing the young men as acting out of ignorance and refused to be intimidated by it into moving on.

Resilience to the stigma associated with living unconventionally was more often a subtle business and one interviewee was very aware of the tension in her life between her idealism and notions of respectability. Interviewee 18 talked about how coming back to living in a community had



revived her idealism. At the time of the interview, she had been living for just eight months in the housing Co-op, having spent around 20 years bringing up her children in more conventional housing settings. The Co-op she lived in was one of the youngest communities in this research and I have shown how they struggled financially to keep the community afloat (Chapter 5, page 92) and to try and improve the building, which had previously been owned by an institution. She talked about how the rough edges of the buildings appearance and decor had not deterred her from moving in:

*so aesthetically it's pretty patchy um... I think that would put a lot of people off. I've got friends who couldn't possibly bear to share a bathroom with somebody else. The kitchen, it's actually perfectly clean but it looks awful and it's freezing cold in winter. But when I came I didn't see any of that. I did see that, I did think 'Gawd blimey!' when I looked at the ceilings and the strip lights, but much more than that what I saw was the potential here. And I had really forgotten about my very left-wing up-bringing and those years in the squat where we were... those years in the 1970s of idealism and peace and love and flower power as the 70s progressed and we were moving towards the Thatcher years and the whole peace love thing was disintegrating slowly. Still there was a lot of idealism about living together also about getting back to the land and stuff like that and when I came here I'd kind of forgotten all, you know, that person that I used to be. (Interviewee 18; Community 7).*

I see a number of important themes combined together in this quote. There was her individual sense of agency expressed in her seeing of the potential for a home in the place; she refused to judge the place by what she recognises as conventional standards and expectations (a lot of people would be 'put off' by how the home *looks*). There was resilience and optimism in the face of the challenges of the community to make their home comfortable and homely, her connection to her more idealistic youth and the values of counterculture that informed her younger years and her pride in 'actually *doing* something to create 'a model for urban living'. Additionally, she didn't feel exploited by paying high rents to a private landlord; she felt part of 'cutting edge stuff' and was excited about this aspect.

So successful community living involved balancing commitment to an alternative way of life, with dealing with the stigma associated with adopting a different lifestyle. This balancing was also evident in how some interviewees talked about how they managed interpersonal boundaries and personal space.

### **Balancing sociability, privacy and change**

There were many reflections amongst interviewees about how in order to live successfully in

their community day-to-day, it was important to balance being sociable with respecting individual personal boundaries and space. Many interviewees said that it was important to 'like people'; a number of interviewees spoke positively of being part of something bigger with other people and having more opportunities for sharing day-to-day experiences:

*for me, its people's people - people who like people - that's when you get on well. You want to share your skills, you want to be part of something, you don't want to just close your door you want to make sure that next door's OK as well. (Interviewee 17, Community 6)*

An integral part of this was also about having a sense of the boundaries of sociability respecting other people's private or personal space. One interviewee talked about the importance of respecting other members' physical and emotional space in terms of having proper social antenna:

*you respect each other's rooms, you know, um, if I ever go up to (name), her door will be open, but before I go through I knock, but you, to live socially you need antennas, alright? You need, if somebody comes in from work and they're stressed you've gotta be able to pick up on that very quickly or if they snap at you there might be a reason why they snap at you, they're tired, they're, somebody's upset them at work or something's happened. To live socially ideally you need the proper antennas. (Interviewee 5, Community 4)*

So members needed to have certain kinds of affective skills and aptitudes in order to live more collectively in this way. Another member talked about this in terms of people needing to *enjoy* the daily reality of living close to other people, of sharing space and negotiating with other people about decisions and ways of doing things:

*It's a good way of living, I think it brings its own tensions and dynamics but its also quite a joyful way of living and I think that's what I always said to [name of her co-parent] when we said 'Shall we stay or shall we go?' you know actually what it feels like is that you have to actually enjoy the process of community to make it worth staying, so it has to be... you have to have, there has to be a pleasure in the sharing I guess, that what it feels like. Because if that becomes a bore or a pain in the neck then there's no point, you know, that's when you go, I guess. (Interviewee 8, Community 5)*

A couple of other interviewees (18 and 14) explained how they enjoyed dealing with the emotional dynamics of the group, how they felt that this was what community life was about and why it was satisfying. Enjoying dealing with people day-to-day was vital in all communities.

Another interviewee (19) explained about how it often took time for individuals to achieve a

balance in their relationships with other people within the community. He had seen many people come and go over the 40 years he had been living in his community and talked about how individuals enjoying what they did within the community was an important part of getting along successfully:

*Sometimes when people come here they worry about not doing their 15 hours, or think that they're doing more than other people should be doing more to make them do a little bit less, this happens. But overall, over a period of time, I think it just works out nicely. Um, so long as you feel comfortable with what you're doing, um er, I don't tend to worry about other people's commitment any more I just enjoy what I do. I wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it. It's not so much work it's more like love-in-action; that's, that's a phrase which I now understand the meaning of. (Interviewee 19, Community 8)*

He seemed to be suggesting individuals needed to retain, or gain, a sense of their own individuality, they need to know their own needs and desires and not get caught up or preoccupied with what other members were or weren't, contributing. Another long-standing member of her community, Interviewee 7, Community 5, said something similar: it was important that individuals were able to recognise their own priorities and desires and be able to express them at meetings for example, but then also to be able to compromise if the rest of the community wanted something different. So negotiating successfully involved individuals freely expressing their desires and priorities – not making a priori assumptions about what the rest of the community would want - but then being able to compromise. Interviewee 7 said it was important that individual acts of concession were *noticed* to avoid build-ups of resentment; individual's compromises needed to be acknowledged if community life was to flourish.

These interpersonal dynamics were affected by the size of membership of the community and the amount of physical space available within each community. Community 8, for example, had around 50-60 members, whereas Community 5 had only 12 at the time of the interviews. Interviewee 20 (Community 8) talked about how he was able to balance intimacy and distance in relation to his likes and dislikes of other individuals within his community, how he managed the social dynamics:

*Not everyone gets on with everyone all the time. I always think there are four categories of people that you meet here, or that you relate to: there are those that you get on with very well, who you talk to regularly and eat with at meal times and you chat and so on. And then there are those that you get on well with but you don't chat to that much for one reason or another. Then there's a third group you only speak to when there's something that you need to speak to them about. And then there's a fourth group who you don't speak to at all, effectively; and I think that's how it is. (Interviewee 20, Community 8)*

So, for this interviewee, there were different levels of intimacy with other members of the community, according to who he liked most and who he liked less; a choice only afforded him because of living in a community with a larger membership. This is something that the practical literature about CoHousing says makes for successful community living. In their guidebook to CoHousing, McCamant and Durrett argue, based on their tour of many Scandinavian CoHousing communities, that communities of smaller than 6 households are harder work:

*because residents depend more on each other. If one person temporarily needs extra time to concentrate on professional interests, thereby limiting community participation, the others feel the loss. Residents must be good friends and must agree on most issues in order to live this interdependently. (McCamant and Durrett, 1994: 44)*

There was evidence of this in my interviews with members from smaller communities. In Community 5, for example, Interviewee 10 talked about how a new member would have to specifically like the group of people already living there:

*We're all friends, we get on really well together.... you need to feel that before you even contemplate living here... that's why we have this [new member] procedure because we do kind of get to know each other reasonably well (Interviewee 10, Community 5)*

So the emotional demands of day-to-day living were different in different size communities. McCamant and Durrett explained that the average size of CoHousing communities in Scandinavia, where the CoHousing concept originated from, was 40 to 100 people (McCamant and Durrett, 1994: 44).

Another key dimension that affected the emotional dynamics was the different amounts of physical space available to members and the degree of privacy afforded by spatial arrangements in the community. Some communities (1 and 6) were designed around private individual homes, with the only shared space being outside of these, which was a more individualised model allowing far greater degrees of everyday privacy (e.g. own kitchens and bathrooms). Community 2 also maintained separate household dwellings and had large areas of outdoor space between dwellings, though some groups of individuals gathered their dwellings together in smaller groups within the community. The boundaries between these groups and individual dwellings were not marked in any way. In most communities, private space was limited to an individual's room, or a household's set of rooms, with all other spaces being shared. So when interviewees talked about the emotional work involved in 'community living', they were dealing with varying degrees of

daily intimacy and varying degrees of space-sharing challenges.

### **Change and adaptation**

Two interviewees in Community 5 talked about the challenge of coping with change within their community and how in order to live successfully in their community, individuals had to be able to deal with people arriving and leaving:

*the flow of families moving and moving out 'it's a shifting dynamic... embracing new people coming in. [Name of another member] is really good at that. She doesn't ever seem to get tired of that kind of new volunteer or new members, you know, cos there is, you do sometimes feel like your home shifts, so when we were talking about norming, storming and performing and how that can shift so, you know, if new people come in the dynamic slightly shifts and you have to re-find your place in that. I mean that's how I experience it, you know, so maybe I experience that more as a single parent than I would have done with a partner who I might have sat down with and had a chat... ..that dynamic shifting, you have to come to manage it somehow (Interviewee 8; Community 5).*

Interviewee 8 talked further about the process where families leave the community and how they 'become their own family unit again' when they move away. She described how individuals and families left behind get hardened to that - 'you don't get attached to individuals'. This aspect of community living seemed to be talked about more by the parents as they described helping their children come to terms with change when other families moved out or moved in.

Other parents talked about this, but also considered it to be similar to large extended families, in terms of how the shape of the family/community changes all the time:

*one of the most strong characteristics here is that the place is changing constantly. Some of its yo-yo, to-ing and fro-ing back and forth to the same place again. Some of it is profound deep changes that make things different. All these changes are caused by individual humans, you know, they're not from somewhere else, they're what we do, as anyone else does, as their own families change, um...and I think the most important element is change. Which is why I think that people in community need to be able to deal with change. (Interviewee 7; Community 5)*

Different intentional communities had different rates of turnover of new members and this relative degree of turnover must have affected the perception within the different communities of this as an issue. Community 5, the smallest community of my sample and therefore more likely to have more intimate relationships with *all* the members of their community, was more affected when other members left compared with the larger communities. Members were less likely to

know each other well in larger communities and there was both physical and emotional distance between members.

These interpersonal dynamics and the management of individual and collective priorities were clearly central to sustaining everyday life successfully and without conflict; they inevitably raised questions about levels of intimacy and familial relations.

### **Intimacy and familial relations in day-to-day life**

I mention (Chapter 6, page 128-129) how important friendship was for some interviewees in their journeys to becoming members of their communities (social capital) and how some considered these relationships like family in importance, some describing lifelong bonds. However, there were differences in the way that individuals thought about the question of whether living in their community was like living with family. Interviewee 19, for example, who had lived in his community for over 20 years, alongside 60 to 70 other people (Community 8) felt that a sense of what he called 'familyness' was strong, but also felt that it didn't respond to all his familial needs. He made the distinction between the intimacy involved in one-to-one relationships:

*Interviewer: Do you feel it's like a family?*

*Interviewee: er yes, it's very much a family, as one of our members once said on a BBC television programme 'Cor, it's like being married to 40 people!' [we both laugh] and she was right you know, it is, you know, you've got relationships, you've got all kinds of things. All you don't have is that tactile um side of things which, you know, one misses. But one can live without that because the other side of the relationship issue is very strong in the familyness that's going on here, you know the closeness that you can feel with people. But then there is that special thing in a relationship where, I mean, you know, it's the anima and the animus, the Jungian thing, there's the, I didn't feel whole and now I'm in a relationship with a person I feel whole again, I feel there is a wholeness... (Interviewee 19; Community 8)*

Interviewee 17 in Community 6 was very clear that, even though she had brought up her children in the community and developed deep, committed friendships with other adults in the community, where holidays were shared and help given in hard times, there was a clear line between her biological family (which was traditional in form) and the rest of the community. For her, these clear boundaries made living in community possible. For another Interviewee (10) the word *family* had negative connotations, based on some of his more difficult life experiences, so he did not consider his fellow members of the community as family but more as good friends, which he felt was more positive and more important in his life. So there were varied responses to

my questions about whether being part of something like a family was something that played a role in sustaining everyday life.

One interviewee from Community 6 provided a very interesting analogy for the complexity and sophistication of these relationships of intimacy and distance involved in community living, compared with a conventional street. This interviewee had lived in shared living arrangements most of her life in the UK and abroad. When asked what it takes to live successfully in this community day-to-day, she replied:

*You need to be prepared for other people to know your business, because that's the other side of having the help there when you need it... I'm not saying everybody knows everything about everybody, but you know, you see people come and go, you know what your neighbour's underwear looks like because you [she laughs] there's a joint washer dryer; not everybody uses it but... and it sounds silly but there's an intimacy in that. Because you, you know, when the, when you're coming in to use the dryer, you take somebody else's out, you fold it (or some of us do) you know what the outer clothes are so you know what the other clothes are... yeah, I like that underwear analogy, because there's lots of people I know what their underwear [is like], but I've never seen them standing in their underwear [we both laugh]. So there's a level of intimacy but there's also a, er, you need to be able to step outside of that bit because I think if you don't if you don't, um... then... you're more prone to get involved in the, the clashes perhaps, you know. (Interviewee 14, Community 6)*

She provides a fascinating insight into the balancing act that individual members perform to navigate the intimacy of sharing washing machines alongside the distance required to maintain other personal boundaries.

This interviewee had worked in the field of mental health and as a professional carer for many years and perhaps because of this she seemed to notice the emotional work going on; the emotional work associated with care work. But were these emotional aptitudes and abilities these members had *before* they moved in to their community, suggesting evidence of *emotional capital* as an asset that enabled becoming a member? Or were these skills learnt *through* living in this way, therefore suggesting the somewhat different dynamic of *emotional work*?

### **Learning *through* community living**

What Interviewee 14 described seemed more like *emotional work* than *emotional capital*, because it was something that individuals seemed to *learn* through their experiences of sharing

space with others. One interviewee felt that he had learnt what he described as communication skills during the years that he had lived in his community:

*Interviewer: Is that something you feel like you've learnt here rather than arrived here with that ability to do that?*

*Interviewee: (long pause). I think I've learned it more since I've lived here, yeah, um. Definitely. I've learned a hell of a lot since I've lived here, um. Practical skills, communication skills, working together as a group, um, the art of listening to other people more and, um I've learned a lot from the women who live here. I think this is quite a women strong community. It has been for some time, more women than men. (Interviewee 11, Community 5)*

What he described was learning *by living* in community rather than necessarily having those skills in order to gain entrance to the community. Interestingly, like Reay in relation to the families she studied, he saw this as skills that were held more by women in his community (an area worthy of further research).

Interviewee 1 also talked about his process of learning when he came to live in his CoHousing community and how different it felt to living in a normal street where the boundaries between neighbours were taken for granted. He talked about how important empathy was:

*I gradually had my, er, concerns sort of answered in one way or another or made my compromises and I think a lot of it is that one makes compromises to actually manage to live together with a number of other people, far more than you do in say a lineal kind of street, where you know your boundaries, you know your boundaries are the fence at the front, the side and the back. Exactly what goes on next door may or may not irritate you but you know you have that in-depth kind of understanding that, that er, that my fiefdom is this border here....I think emotionally, I think it helps to be able to have a degree of empathy of being able to come out of your own thinking and just try and understand that somebody else who had a different view to you is not an enemy, they're not, there might not be a right or a wrong. (Interviewee 1, Community 1)*

What I see in these reflections is a kind of *learning as a way of life* centred around community living. Another example of this was revealed when Interviewee 7 described a group of communities coming together for a weekend to catch up with each other and play a volley-ball tournament:

*Imagine this place it's so hot that the lawn has dried out there's 100 people we had to cater for and it's a piece of cake because they were all community people. So we cooked the food, they paid a bit of money, covered the cost we put up a rota so who's preparing the veg, who's serving it, who's washing up, who's whatever because of the people who came they just slotted into it. We didn't have to explain to them because that's where*



*they lived. So for me, with nearly a quarter century of memories of how it ran, that for me was one of the epitomes of community life. (Interviewee 7, Community 5)*

This seems to be another potent expression of *alternative* cultural and social capital: they spoke the same language of Co-operative organisation; they shared practices of communal organisation - the rotas, the slotting in, the lack of a need for much explanation of how things would run. These were all aspects of organising 100 people participants could take for granted because of shared *alternative* practices operating in communities across the country.

Some of this alternative social and cultural capital has been generated consciously through active promotion and facilitation of networking and learning. For many years the 'Diggers and Dreamers' network has actively promoted intentional communities as a way of life and provided information about where communities can seek new members and new members can seek out communities. They also produce booklets, promote events and advertise other related information in support of their member communities. For many years a group of intentional communities came together around the annual 'Communes Conference' as it was called originally - which was hosted on a rotational basis by individual communities and included the volley-ball competitions mentioned in the quote above (Coates 2015).

Times have changed though and the inter-community event no longer takes place. Interviewee 7 thought that this was in part due to the ageing of the founding members of the communities and their waning energy, but was unsure if and why the younger members might no longer feel the need to continue the tradition. It is to the question of ageing within the communities that I turn in the next and final findings chapter, but before that, I discuss and present my analysis of the findings in this chapter.

## **Discussion of Chapter 7**

This discussion of the findings in Chapter 7 returns to the key questions outlined in the introduction: what kinds of skills and aptitudes are involved in living successfully in communities on a day-to-day basis and how have they been acquired by these members; and what other kinds of work are revealed in how interviewees talked about day-to-day life?

**Alternative capital: commitment to the principles and practices of sharing**

A key finding is how important it is that individuals can be tolerant of others and compromise in the interests of the wider community of members and how these values were structured into the organisation of these communities through their decision-making mechanisms (the principles of consensus decision-making and non-violent communication). Integral to this was an individual's ability to accept and manage the tension and the constant negotiation that went on between each individual's identity and their way of doing things and the identity and practices of the community.

Once again, I return to the concept of alternative capital. Whilst it varied in communities depending on the degree of communal sharing, interviewees in all communities articulated a set of principles and practices of *sharing* that were distinctive from orthodox contemporary daily life in UK households. What made this sharing of day-to-day decision-making and of physical spaces possible can be encapsulated within what I have previously described as alternative cultural capital (Chapter 6, page 125): a critical perspective and the ability to articulate a set of alternative notions to aspects of mainstream society, counter to the orthodoxy (resistant). In Chapter 6, I argued that members used this alternative cultural capital to gain membership of their intentional community; here I argue that this was also important in living successfully day-to-day within communities, especially communities with higher degrees of communality.

The examples I provided of the use of formalised principles and practices of sharing (for example, non-violent communication (NVC) and Sociocracy) lend support to ideas about how new social movements have found new and different techniques to traditional movements of the past (Laraña et al., 1994: 7-8). These principles and practices also connect intentional community living to the growth in other forms of collaborative forms of consumption optimistically seen as antidotes to the individualistic excesses of capitalism (Botsman and Rogers, 2011). This is another potential area of useful future research.

The stronger expressions of commitment described in this Chapter recall Kanter's seminal work on contemporary communal living in which she talked about how the sustainability of the communities that she studied was dependent upon high levels of commitment (Kanter, 1972). Kanter talked about how 'sacrifice' was an important factor in helping 19<sup>th</sup> century communities to remain 'successful' (defined as longevity), arguing that 'long-lived communities tended to require certain sacrifices of their members as a test of faith' (Kanter, 1972: 126). Kanter asked a lot of 'how' questions of the communities that she studied, including how to include a degree of autonomy, how to cope with individual uniqueness even 'deviance' (p64). She summarised the

key mechanism which held these communities together as *commitment*; this she defined as ‘a reciprocal relationship in which both what is given to the group and what is received from it are seen by the person expressing his (sic) true nature and as supporting his concept of self’ and she talked about communal life depending on a ‘continual flow of energy and support among members, on their depth of shared relationships on their continued attachment to each other and to the joint endeavour’ (p65).

Whilst some of Kanter’s interpretation of commitment remains relevant for a number of interviewees in these communities, there are differences in my findings. First, there is the individual awareness of the tension between individual and community needs (explicitly acknowledged as a constant balancing act). Second, there is the lack of explicit and elaborate ideologies and regular reinforcements of the community’s values and principles (as discussed in Chapter 5), in contrast to the communities that Kantor described, many of which were religious communities and had more clearly articulated intentions to separate from contemporary mainstream society. Perhaps what is revealed in these narratives of contemporary communards and the talk of commitment and ‘sacrifice’ is some continuity with what could be seen as an *idealised* relationship between the individual and the community (Allan and Phillipson, 2008; Cohen, 2002; Kanter, 1972) but balanced with more expressions of the personal tensions and conflicts involved in sustaining community life, particularly in some of the communities that represented more transgressive lifestyles.

### **Resilience and resistance to the doxa**

Experiencing stigma and having *outsider* status in the eyes of mainstream society, was dependent on the degree to which the community itself was constituted around conventional versus radical notions of home and household formation. Bourdieu talks about how we mark or distinguish ourselves in our tastes and this is part of our habitus. In some interviewees’ experiences of stigma, I see transgression of orthodoxies and resistance to contemporary neo-liberal housing norms of what home should look like. Some stories illustrated not only a sense of agency – determination to realise the potential of community living – but also acknowledged and came into conflict with conventional notions of the aesthetics and practices of homemaking within which her/their efforts were inevitably situated. From a Bourdesian perspective, some of these stories powerfully illustrate the doxa of homeownership; the symbolic violence of dominant norms operating on individual’s embodied sense of difference to the norm.

Interviewee 18's account of this tension in her life between her idealism - which led her to live in her housing Co-operative - and notions of respectability associated with home ownership or living more conventionally (quote on page 144), was particularly illustrative of this. What her example expresses is the relational nature of all social life. I have already mentioned (page 52) how Adkins argues 'there is no point outside of a system from which emancipatory politics can emerge' (Adkins, 2004: 7). This interviewee's striving to make community living work for her, calls to mind the new forms of classed relations emerging centred around the female body that Adkins and Skeggs speak of; increasingly mediated through the cultural media field and implicated in the creation of both individual identity and habitus. This feminist analysis of *embodiment* was also useful in understanding how physical capital was an important component of what made daily community life possible.

### **Physical capital and making a contribution**

Making a contribution was important in all communities, through decision-making, workgroups or workdays and playing an active role in the maintenance – both physical and emotional – of the community. For rural communities in particular, there was a lot of physical work involved in maintaining buildings or land and in achieving a relatively self-sufficient way of life. Concerns about the collective ageing of their membership within these rural communities had resulted in strategies to encourage younger and fitter members to join. I interpret this as the requirement to have a certain degree of embodied or *physical capital*, drawing again on the ideas of Skeggs (Skeggs, 2004).

Skeggs (2004) talks about the embodiment of capital in the self and how cultural practices can be stored in the self. Whilst Skeggs is interested in the cultural resources for self-making and how these are classed processes that reproduce the stigmatisation of working class ways of life and lifestyles. The concepts she uses seem relevant to the explicit community requirement for individuals to contribute and the more implicit requirement of physical well-being as a condition of living in some of these communities (Skeggs, 2004). Discomfort and cognitive dissonance arose within interviews where this was discussed; the extent to which an individual had to be physically capable in order to be part of the community was clearly something some communities had been grappling with for some time. This was becoming more of an issue as the communities' members aged and questions of care and support were becoming more tangible for older members, something I pick up in the next chapter.

### Emotional work

The findings illustrate the range and scope of emotional work and interpersonal dynamics that were crucial to sustaining everyday life: Tensions between enjoying being with other people needing privacy; balancing intimacy and distance in relation to individual likes and dislikes of other individuals. The degree of *emotional work* involved varied depending on the number of people living together and the size of the space that they occupied – the degree of collaboration (as discussed in Chapter 5, page 102) - supporting contemporary theories of CoHousing that address the aspect of community design (Field, 2004; McCamant and Durrett, 1994).

What also emerged clearly was how strong and important relationships were with other members of the community and how these strong ties were not limited to conventional family units or couple relationships. This adds weight to my earlier suggestion that these communities are working to challenge orthodoxy in redefining of notions of family and friendship (Chapter 6, pages 128-129).

Because there were so few explicit rules and structures within communities about the practices of everyday life and because many of the practices of the more radically communal communities were not those of the dominant social order, this emotional work seemed to be the glue that made community life possible on a day to day basis. I saw this as indicative of a process of constant accommodation of others that was similar to the dynamics explored in analyses of care work.

Emotional labour is used largely in the literature on nursing and care work. Here it is used to describe the work care staff do to manage their emotional proximity and empathy for client/service users, alongside the distance they need to maintain in order to function 'effectively' in the system of care. There is a distinction between emotional *labour* (which is paid and formally recognised within the public sphere) and emotional *work* (which is informal, often unrecognised, within the sphere of the private and sometimes described in the form of being a gift) (Staden, 1998; Warner et al., 2013). The narratives in this section suggest that part of sustaining everyday life in community meant members maintaining some reflective distance in order to balance their own emotional needs and the care of others. Sargisson has explored questions of distance and proximity within intentional communities and between the communities and the outside world,

using the concept of estrangement, which she argues is a vital element in allowing such communities to function (Sargisson, 2007). She describes how communities are constantly struggling to manage the tension between cohesion and stagnation, between retreat and engagement and this also operates at an individual level.

This emotional work was also expressive of an implicit ethics of care (Barnes, 2012; Bolton, 2000; Conradson, 2003) and was perhaps also an important part of shaping the habitus of their communities. How an interviewee described the boundaries of intimacy in her community (page 151) is particularly illustrative of this. The findings here reinforce what Sargisson has found: tensions between closeness and care of others and retreat and self-preservation, in the everyday life within communities.

In Chapter 3 (pages 52-53), I talked about how Reay develops Bourdieu's approach by bringing out the emotional resources involved in transferring symbolic, social and cultural capital and maintaining alliances and allegiances within families and classes within society. Reay cites Nowotny (Nowotny, 1981) and Allatt's definitions of emotional capital as including 'emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern' (Allatt, 1993). Reay sees this as being an important variant of social capital, but associated with the private rather than the public sphere (Nowotny, 1981). What some interviewees said about what it takes to sustain everyday life within communities suggests an accumulation of what could be described as emotional capital, in the way that time, attention, energy and concern seemed to be focused on ensuring that individuals and households got on with each other sufficiently to sustain the collective work and identity of the community.

This constant accommodation of other members seemed to constitute a form of considering others that was over and above the established and normative framework used by conventional households. The work of Warner, Talbot and Bennison is also useful for understanding this. Drawing on redefinitions and reconceptualisations of community (as more fluid and less fixed in location) and of care that highlight the complexity of identifying boundaries in care work, they explore the forms of caring that are 'located in spaces that are ambiguous and that are not easily designated as either public or private' (Warner et al., 2013). They adopt Hochschild's distinction between the notions of emotional labour and emotional work: the former being care work sold for a wage and often in the context of institutional employment (nursing and care work in employment) and the latter as similar acts in a private context that is more autonomously

undertaken and therefore associated with 'informal' care work in the home. They draw on the conceptualisation of the difference between paid care work and gift gestures of care (p311) and apply these concepts to their study of what goes on in the affective dimensions of everyday life in a café, arguing that:

*'care work' is undertaken in everyday mundane ways in sites not formally associated with caring, by people who have no formal or informal responsibility or duty to care...(and) affective community spaces are characterised by the small, the everyday and the humane... Vital forms of care that are central to people's lives happen in places that are neither work nor home, public nor private. (Warner et al., 2013: 320)*

This focus on the blurred nature of the affective cafe space seems to me to be highly relevant to my findings, where I have shown that exactly the same blurring takes place: the intentional community space is both work and home, both semi-public and private. In the reflections of interviewees, I see evidence of the emotional work that Warner et al (2015) describe. Warner et al also argue that what they see in the cafe that they studied is an ethic of care that is in contrast to the more formalised and documented version of care which characterises contemporary understandings of 'care practice' and can result in a lack of such unquantifiable qualities as kindness (Phillips, 2009). This ethic of care is characterised by experiences of 'human warmth and empathetic listening, a non-judgemental stance' (p321) that resonates with the many kinds of emotional skills and aptitudes that interviewees described being important.

So, emotional work seems more useful than emotional capital in this context because emotional capital has been described more in terms of social mobility and social change, enabling parents – particularly mothers - to invest affective energy in their children to enable them to progress within society and particularly at school. The work I see going on here seems to be something which members are learning from each other – there's a collective learning-to-live-together going on that, in some communities, draws on a diverse schools of thinking including psychotherapy, educational development, contemporary political activism, community development and the Co-operative movement.

The concept of emotional work seems able to encompass a further dimension to what it made it possible to live in these intentional communities – the work involved in *learning* what it takes to accommodate more collective forms of living together. This could be seen as a component of habitus. It could also be seen as a community of practice, in the sense that Wenger-Treynor describe this process as 'learning citizenship as an ethics of living in systems, by worrying about

how your actions in that system affect the learning capability of the whole system' (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014: 272).

### **Hidden solidarities**

The stories told of emotional relations of support and reciprocity within many communities challenge the more pessimistic accounts of the disintegration of social ties and people's sense of loss as traditional familial connection has loosened in contemporary times (Putnam, 2003). This concept of loss has also been described by Baumann as liquid modernity, where social bonds are fragile and weak, individualism reigns supreme and any redistributive agenda is drowned out by rampant consumerism (Baumann, 2001).

I found some examples where long-standing community members felt similar parallel losses within their community. However, on the whole, I found varied types of robust, enduring but 'hidden' solidarities (Spencer and Pahl, 2006: 191); hidden because they are not recognised in normative UK conceptualisations and categories and therefore difficult to recognise and name. Spencer and Pahl's research dispels 'some of the myths about people having become literally displaced, dislodged in the face of globalisation and lacking any place-based roots' (p195) and my findings lend support to their conclusions. Roseneil talks of relations in which traditional notions of biological family and conjugal couples as principal care givers, have given way to recognition of networks of friends as increasingly significant (Roseneil, 2007). Weeks argues for recognising not just what has been lost in changing social patterns of connection, but what other forms of connection have been won (Weeks, 2007). This research corroborates aspects of what these authors have found: that complex and rich combinations of familial and friendship ties make up, enable and make possible day-to-day life in most intentional communities.

As discussed above, with reference to the work of Nolas and Certeau (Chapter 6, page 132), the informality of such affective dynamics and hidden solidarities is both its strength and its weakness: care may be given freely, but without formal discussions or understandings that are explicitly shared, it cannot necessarily be relied on. I saw this in the way interviewees felt uncertain about their futures in their community if they were no longer able to contribute, something I now turn to in Chapter 8.



## CHAPTER 8 – MOVING INTO OLDER AGE IN INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITIES

### Introduction

In this chapter, I describe my interviewees' perspectives and reflections on ageing and their expectations about living in their community into the future. I wanted to understand how they felt about ageing in general, but also specifically whether they were planning for older age with other members of their community and how they expected mutual support would work moving into later life. I knew from the literature that there was evidence amongst members of intentional communities in Northern Europe and the USA of high levels of satisfaction amongst older residents of senior CoHousing communities, but there was no UK-based academic research on intergenerational communities exploring questions of ageing (pages 34-37).

I therefore asked a number of questions of my interviewees:

- How did they feel about ageing in general?
- What were their individual expectations in relation to living in their community as they aged?
- What was spoken of and what was not, in relation to ageing?
- What did they think made living in the community possible into the future?

A summary of the common themes that emerged from the data is provided in Appendix 14 and the next sections of this chapter present the key findings. I begin with a key finding: how little ageing had been discussed within their communities.

### Not talking about ageing

Most of these interviewees were open and willing to talk to me about questions of ageing. There was some sensitivity about telling me about experiences that had involved other members: interviewee 18 recounted a story about the death of a fellow member, but was cautious about it, concerned about how the deceased's relatives might feel about him describing the events. However, a surprising finding of this research is how little members talked about ageing *between themselves*, even in the communities where the majority of members were over 60. Most

interviewees told me they had given little thought to the kinds of support the community might offer them as they age.

Not talking about ageing and its implications for individuals was described by Interviewee 21 as 'the elephant in the room' in his community because four out of nine members were in their 60s and one member already had health issues. He described how they hadn't really 'thought it through' in relation to the houses they planned to build as part of the CoHousing development: they had considered features of disability accessibility, but hadn't thought about why they planned two-storey houses and whether or not they could accommodate stair lifts for example.

Interviewee 7 was the only interviewee who had tried to initiate a conversation about the implications of ageing within her community. She talked about the 'resistance' she had met as she had tried to get her community to discuss their needs as they aged and how the community might need to change. She had given up because she could see it was too hard for people to 'go there':

*I've kind of given up on it a bit as I've given up on it I think that one or two people have come to look at it. And, you know, it's hard to grow older and I watch individual people struggle with enormous issues with it [pause] and [laughing gently] I think, like any close relationship you have with anyone, part of you is full of compassion, part of you wishes they'd just get on with it, for fuck's sake! [Said in exasperation, but with humour; I laugh]... I mean you're laughing because we all recognise that in relationships (Interviewee 7, Community 5)*

Interviewee 14 told me that she had joked with other communards, those she felt closest to, about how they'd have to all look after each other, but hadn't actually shared her practical thoughts about how they may address the problem of increasing dependency. She thought that they could invite new members into the community who might be interested to take on a caring role as 'part of the deal of living here'. She talked about it being '*one of those jokes that's slightly more than a joke*' and was keen to point out that '*this is just me, this is not anybody else, there's never been any kind of formal discussion about it, but it doesn't seem to me an unlikely thing.*'

So, despite all the alternative cultural capital involved in adopting community living as a lifestyle, the implications of ageing seemed simply too hard to talk about. However, interviewees were willing to discuss their feelings about ageing in the interviews.

## **Feelings about getting older**

In many of the responses there was acknowledgement of ageing as a physical process of slowing down, whilst not *feeling* 'old' per se and there were many expressions of resistance to this physical change:

*I think it's something I've probably avoided confronting because I still feel young - feel young at heart, um. But obviously at the same time I recognise I am slowing down a bit and, um, er, but I still go running every day and am still quite physically fit and, um.*  
(Interviewee 11, mid 60s, Community 5)

One interviewee – who had got together with his younger wife and had kids in his late forties – expressed surprise at his age:

*Um what am I now, I'm 60, so you all of a sudden think '60, wow, hmm'. Until now I felt about 30, until last year you know, but I'm no longer 30ish, I'm now 60, 'oh okay...'*  
(Interviewee 12, Community 1)

Interviewee 19 (in his mid-60s) recognised he was 'slowing down', but talked about his determination to 'carry on doing the things that I do' and to fight the ageing process. He thought it was the 'doing things' within the community that kept many of their members relatively fit into older age:

*I am slowing down, but I still carry on doing the things that I do as long as I can do that I will carry on doing it. I can still get up ladders, so that's fine, um, I mean I'm not that terribly unfit, I mean, look at, look at our elders here, I mean look at (name of another community member) who is 82 I think, I mean he can still climb a ladder three stories high. He's still a fit person. He doesn't smoke. He doesn't take drugs, He doesn't drink, totally, at all, teetotal person, fit as a fiddle. I think it's doing things here that keep you fit, even though you might be getting arthritic or whatever, you know, you just fight it. It's great.*  
(Interviewee 19, Community 8)

So he seemed to consider his life in his community enabling him to fight the ageing process.

Interviewee 9 (in her early 70s) had to think hard to answer the question and admitted that, like Interviewee 19, she was not ready to 'go there':

*Mmn, I'm not sure I want to go there. I just can't bear the thought of being um [pause] incapacitated in any way, you know, um, a nuisance to anybody. Not just not being a nuisance to anybody but getting to a point within a community like this where you're beginning to not function like you used to, be able to, you know [pause] I think it's quite a frightening area to go to, you know, it's [pause] so quite honestly I don't know what the future will bring [pause] but at the moment I've just discovered U3A, University of the Third Age I'm doing so much with them, you know, I'm just really loving it you know - exciting*

*classes and things, long walks and stuff - so I'm not prepared to get old yet!* (Interviewee 9, Community 5)

In this thoughtful reflection, punctuated with frequent pauses, we see the same determination to stay physically active to stay engaged with the world beyond the community. But also an honesty about the *fear* of being incapacitated or 'being a nuisance', another significant theme in my interviewees narratives that I pick up on later in this Chapter (page 168).

One interviewee, in her mid-60s, was consistently positive about her personal experience of ageing. Her feelings about the process were very much tied up with the difficulties she had faced during her younger adult years:

*I'm alright with it. I am. Funnily enough I'm, I'm probably healthier at this point in my life than I was in my 40s ... (laughs softly) and that's true. I've also recently lost, lost quite a lot of weight, which has really helped, um, with my general health. I teach and practice yoga and meditation and so I, I'm actually really well at the moment, both physically and, you know, I've got my aches and pains... but, because of what I did in my 30s and 40s and yes, it took me to a place that was fairly, or very unpleasant, but there was a lot of good times as well, so, see that's another group I'm part of, I'm an active member of AA and NA... So, yeah, there was a time when I certainly didn't think I'd live to be this old [laughs] and that sounds dramatic but it's true.* (Interviewee 14, Community 6)

This example illustrates how important personal life histories and the particular social and emotional context of earlier life are in the shaping of an individual's experiences of moving into older age. Interviewee 22 (also in her mid-60s) also spoke in terms of feeling lucky to be part of a generation who felt able to be active into older age:

*I do sort of movement stuff really, dance and movement, I'm always 35 years older than anybody else doing it. I'm doing a course at the moment and there's one bloke who's in his mid-fifties but everybody else is a lot younger. I sing, I play with a band, I do things sometimes I think 'Am I going to have to stop doing these things because older people don't do them?' um, but I think that I'm just lucky to be part of the generation where people are going on doing this. I mean, I went away last weekend to [town in Wales] and I met a woman who is, I think, a bit older than me and she's just started learning circus skills and trapeze work and I thought 'My God!' you know she was about to start belly-dancing and, there's lots of people doing this sort of stuff* (Interviewee 22, Community 9)

So alongside this interviewee's strong narrative about 'doing things' to stay healthy and fit, there was an additional reflection on feeling that she was part of a 'generation' that had defined itself in terms of being more active in older age than previous generations, of transgressing what might be expected of them. This interviewee summarised well her varied feelings about ageing:

*(laughing) What do I feel generally about getting older? Well, sometimes I feel a bit miserable about it, sometimes I feel very indignant that it's happened to me, sometimes I feel sort of vaguely guilty like I ought to have been able to stop it happening and sometimes I feel kind of philosophical about it. (Interviewee 22, Community 9)*

This variation in how she felt seemed important: in single interviews there was a limit to how deep an understanding I could reach of each individual's complex relationship to their ageing selves through simply asking them how they felt about it. More was revealed when we discussed whether they expected to stay living in their community as they aged.

### **Talk of staying put – communities as good places to age**

Some interviewees were unequivocal about their chosen community and talked eloquently about the joys of their situation. Interviewee 19, aged 65, when asked if he expected to stay in his community, had no doubt at all:

*Yes. I've got acres to play in, it's playground, that's what it is. It's beautiful! The orchards are gorgeous. The grounds are fantastic. There's freedom and space out there. You can lose yourself in this place. We are located in the middle of a village but I have found that sometimes I haven't been out of the gate for a week cos there's so much going on. We have lots of children, always, if they're not living here they're family. Um, we have foreign visitors, Wwoofers, which is always nice because these young people are travelling and they're students and they're travelling and learning and engaging in lively conversations - they keep one alive you know! So as an elder, now, I am engaging with loads of people including children and I don't have grandchildren of my own so, God, I would hate to be stuck in a flat somewhere! And I don't watch TV I don't want to watch TV, you know. Life out there (points out the window) is my television and that's it for me, so I wouldn't want to be anywhere else really [laughs] (Interviewee 19; Community 8)*

I quote him at length because he draws out so clearly all the aspects of community living that, as an elder, he sees as contributing so positively to his well-being. Interviewee 14 was also quite clear when asked why she continued to live in her community and talked about the importance of her friendships, of the support and how 'enriching' she finds living in this way:

*I'm not holding up my way of life as better as people that live in the nuclear family, I'm just saying it works for me ... and on a, on a very personal level, [interviewee no.17], as I say again... is one of my best friends she's right there, so... as a single person, if I've had a bad day or, or, or a good day and I want to share that with somebody... she is one person, but there's lots of people in the street and I believe in the sharing, both of our lives and our feelings and our emotions and the fact that it does enable us to live a little bit more lightly in the world? You know we share some things, not all, but even you, if you talk*

*about tools and washing machines and all those kind of things it enables us to do that, but mostly I think it's... it's enriching.* (Interviewee 14; Community 6)

Their expectations of living in their community into older age were almost entirely positive and what they described reinforced the sense of their communities being good, supportive places to age in.

Interviewee 13, in her early 80s, mentioned receiving care and support from fellow members of the community as a *reason* for choosing to continue to live in her community, but she was the only interviewee to do so. Often, interviewees were more ambivalent about staying in their community into older age.

### **Ambivalence and talk of moving on**

Over half the interviewees (n=12) talked about how they had considered moving on. It took interviewees more time to be able to articulate why they continue to live in the community, than to account for how they first came to join the community. It was often in the process of reflection that ambivalence emerged. Many respondents using phrases such as 'I ask myself that question sometimes...' or 'that's a good question...' often making reference to the conflicts and difficulties they had had to deal with, which I have described in Chapter 7.

Some interviewees hankered after a particular missing element in their community - such as the more 'spiritual focus' (Interviewee 22), 'more private space' (Interviewees 4 and 6), or even a desire to move from their rural home with its acres of land to a 'purpose built eco-village in the city' (Interviewee 7). One interviewee had recently experienced ill-health and taken time out from the community, spending a month travelling round the country and this had precipitated a change in his feeling about his community and his commitment to it:

*A month ago I went off and did my thing, that opened my eyes, I just didn't want to come back in some respects, like I was telling you, it took me a while to come back and now I am back I'm kind of thinking about things, it's really peculiar, I've been thinking about this since I've come back I'll be quite honest with you. I'm not thinking of leaving, not thinking of leaving, I'm certainly thinking of cutting back and having much more time to myself* (Interviewee 10; Community 5)

Many individuals were not necessarily committed to staying in their community and were to some degree unsure about whether living in this community was where they *really* wanted to be going forward. interviewee 22 wondered if she was in the right community:

*sometimes I think that what I'd like is to go and live in one of those communities where they run a centre or something, like in (name of another intentional community), cos I don't want to stop, I'm quite active. I mean I'm having a bit of a rest from work whilst I work out what I want to do but something like that, where the public comes in, a community like that would be good (Interviewee 22, Community 9)*

Often significant changes in interviewees' personal circumstances precipitated a period of reflection or doubt about this, such as a child leaving home or a parent dying, or close friend within the community leaving. Changes of this sort are common to many peoples' experience of later life and bring about periods of reflection about choices in life and transitions (Grenier, 2012; Tinker, 1997). Some of these reflections and expressions of ambivalence also seemed to speak of a dissatisfaction, a restlessness, a hankering for something better, that had been evident in accounts of how some individuals had come to live in their community in the first place (Chapter 6, page 116). This is something that past researchers of members of intentional communities have described as 'characteristic' of 'freedom-seeking' communards (Rigby, 1974).

Another important dimension was that communities were not static entities, but were changing all the time, especially at their beginnings. As described in Chapter 5, Community 9 was one of the youngest communities, planning to be a CoHousing development, but operating in the interim as a shared house where each individual had their own room but all other spaces were shared. I have mentioned how Interviewee 22 felt ambivalent about her community, but this was also because the community was moving on to a new phase. Even though she had signed up to being part of a CoHousing development, she was ambivalent about it:

*I thought 'what's it going to be like when we're all in our little houses? Are we just not going to see each other except at meetings? Where's the sense of community going to come from?' because I know, OK, you have group meals sometimes but what if somebody doesn't want to join in? Does that mean we are just neighbours?... once again you can't answer it, you have to see what develops, but I thought 'It's not enough for me', I kind of want to be somewhere where I am working with people to build something, but not just a community where you then become lots of people with your own front doors (Interviewee 22; Community 9)*

This is particularly interesting in relation to questions of space and the emotional dynamics relating to boundaries of the private and the communal, particularly in relation to CoHousing

communities, presented in Chapter 7 (page 146-148). This interviewee was recognising how the proximal relations would change once each individual household had their 'own front door' and there would be less time and space when members of the community came together. She was concerned this more privatised arrangement wouldn't be enough for her as she aged. Her ambivalence was born of an interplay of her changing needs, as she had recently retired from formal work, as well as the changing shape and relations within the community she was part of.

So ambivalence was present in some of these communards' feelings about continuing to live in their community. Changes were often underway in their lives, like the arrival of grandchildren in places far away, or meeting a new partner, or retiring from work, but were also intertwined with changes underway in the communities.

There was another, slightly different, expression of ambivalence from Interviewee 18. She spoke of times when she felt 'wrong' being an *older* member of a newly formed housing Co-operative:

*Part of me that thinks I ought to be living a different life, so being [her age - early 60s] I ought to be living in my own home that I have paid off, I ought to have sorted my pension out better, should have made sure more was being put in the pension pot... you know, my ex-husband is pretty well-off, does pretty much what he wants with his life, is married, very happily married, my daughter-in-law's parents are very, very wealthy.... So when we all get together, you know when [name] and [name] got married, or whatever, so then this is the worst thing about this, is I feel wrong, like I don't own my own home and people of my age, school teachers of my age, ought to own their own home, that's what you do, that's the right thing to do I've done it wrong because I don't, cos I let the house go [referring to her having sold her house]. I'm too weird and too odd and too old to be doing this. So if you're 30 or even 40 it's OK, but being 60 it's, you know, so that stereotype of what a middle-aged, or moving-into-old-age, woman ought to be doing... and in a way it was better in the flat in (London) cos 'this is a nice little flat' and people could come round and it was, you know, but this is, you know, way too weird [we both laugh] and... that's by far the worst thing. (Interviewee 19; Community 7)*

I have quoted this at length because of the link between her perception of the stigma associated with her way of life and ageing. She also illustrates the markers of distinction that Bourdieu foregrounded in his work on cultural capital and that researchers in housing studies have drawn out in relation to housing tenure and choices (Chapter 2, page 22 and Chapter 5, page 105-107). Some of her 'feeling wrong' is about a relative status within her particular family and her not having achieved the conventional milestones as an older member of her family. It is also about her being single and not owning her own home. As she explained by reference to how much more culturally acceptable it had been for her to *rent* a flat, on her own, it was not just about her



having a home to live in; it was specifically about her not *owning* her own property and *sharing* with other people that caused her to experience this stigma.

In Kanter's seminal work researching intentional communities in the 1970s, she pointed out the quality of commitment needed to sustain a successful intentional community was not easy to achieve (Kanter, 1972). In the ambivalence expressed by these interviewees, I see evidence of how tentative individual commitment to their communities could be and how hard it is to resist orthodoxy; how any number of changes that affected these individuals during later life could alter the strength of their commitment. Another factor a number of interviewees thought likely to impact their relationship with their community was the increasing possibility of experiencing illness, frailty or other forms of physical decline.

### **Fears of decline and dependency**

Sometimes linked to ambivalence about continuing to live in their community, was a preoccupation amongst interviewees with the possibility of their becoming more dependent in old age and becoming a 'burden' on the community. One interviewee (in her late 60s) talked about her fears of becoming 'unimportant':

*I don't think I want to live here as an old lady looking at all the work that needs to be done and worrying about it feeling frightfully unimportant cos I can't do it [pause]*  
(Interviewee 7, Community 5)

This fear of becoming unimportant clearly links to what was described in Chapter 7 about the importance of physical capital in living successfully in some communities (page 155) and to the earlier narratives of resisting ageing. Community 5 seemed to be a particular site of concern around these issues because it was both rural and had a high proportion of members over 60 (around 70%). Interviewee 10 from Community 5, in his late 60s, described a fear of dependency that was particularly strong:

*the only thing that I am concerned about slightly is that I never liked putting on people and I've always been so independent, certainly since I split up from my second wife, in '94, I had to, I think for my own survival, I had to come to terms with things and... from that I've kind of grown emotionally in some ways and I don't like people doing things for me, fussing about and all that kind of stuff, I like being me; I like being me* (Interviewee 10, Community 5)

There was something powerful in his assertion 'I like being me' and about his *identification* with being a fiercely independent person, which he was unwilling to let go. I mentioned (page 165) this interviewee had recently experienced ill health, which had made him think about the future. He expressed a particularly strong aversion to the idea that the community might be a place where he could be supported during ill health by his fellow members, saying that if he was '*not making an input to the place I would leave*' because he wouldn't want '*people running around doing stuff for me. I'd feel really bad about it*'. Later on in the interview I asked him the question 'if you couldn't live here, where would you live?' His response shows how he thought about his relations with other members of the community and with his biological family:

*I'd 'throw myself at the mercy of the council: 'I'm retired, I've got nowhere to live - help me out' you know [pause] 'Find me somewhere to live, do something for me!' I wouldn't care where I go, cos I hope I'd still be independent of mind. All I'd want is a bed and a roof over my head you know... I wouldn't throw myself at the mercy of my daughter, I wouldn't do that. I don't want to be a burden on anyone. If I'm going to be a burden I'll be a burden on the council, they've been a burden to me many a time [we both laugh]* (Interviewee 10, Community 5)

So he set very clear limits on *receiving* care from anyone; instead, the only entity he can conceive of relying on is the state, in the form of the 'local council'.

Another interviewee, in his early 80s, was also adamant he would not become dependent on anyone. He considered the community had been lucky because it had never had to face a situation where someone had become totally dependent on the community:

*I think we've been very lucky in that respect. And I don't want it to happen to me either [pause] I wouldn't want to be dependent. Actually, I mean I have sort of made a pact with myself that if the Dr says to me one day 'We're sorry about this [his name] but you've got terminal cancer or something' I'll say 'Good, good, now I know when I'm going to die and I can just prepare for it'. All I shall say to him is 'Alright Doc, just keep the pain away'. I mean I think it's a waste of money keeping old people alive long after they've [pause] served their useful purpose. I would apply the same rule to me. I mean I wouldn't say you've got to do it, it's very much a personal decision, but I've said it enough to people not to turn away from it (laughing).* (Interviewee 20, Community 8)

Another expression of fierce determination not to become dependent on fellow members or anyone else and a strong belief that his existence is only valuable if he is 'serving a useful purpose'.

The reluctance of these interviewees to *receive* support from other people within their intentional community, whilst talking of their communities as supportive places to live (in Chapters 6 and 7), seemed odd. Especially since there were many stories of mutual support that did go on in these communities when individuals were ill, or experiencing hardship, or dying.

### **Stories of care and support**

All the interviewees at the time of the interview, apart from one, were fully able-bodied, but they told stories of care and support provided for others in their communities, including supporting individual members who had experienced: periods of mental breakdown (Communities 5 and 6), physical incapacity after an accident (Communities 6 and 9), financial difficulties and being unable to pay rent for a period of time (Communities 4 and 5). Stories also emerged of how supportive these communities had proved to be for some older members who had had terminal illnesses and died.

Interviewee 16 talked of how the community had helped a member (in her early 70s) who had fallen and hurt herself quite badly, needing a few months to recover:

*if somebody's ill, people will go and offer you know 'Do you need anything?'... you can get caught up in the petty arguments and that kind of thing, but actually when the chips are down people are there for you, you know. I don't know if you've spoken to [name], she recently hurt herself and she had loads of people putting cards through the door and offering help, you know, that kind of thing that's when it's really good. (Interviewee 16; Community 6)*

Almost exactly the same was said by Interviewee 22 about a period of time when a fellow member was incapacitated. So other community members provided support when things went wrong for an individual. In these stories similar principles and practices seemed to apply: the provision of care and support was not formally discussed or agreed within the community, rather practices of support evolved as circumstances required them. There was also no sense of *obligation* on other members and yet, where members had known each other a long time, support was taken-for-granted.

The unspoken nature of these reciprocal exchanges suggested that mutual care was, like a number of the other implicit arrangements and values held within these communities, another element of community life that was left open, not systematised. The lack of explicit conversations about ageing and potential dependency, particularly in those communities where older members

are in the majority, suggested a fear of articulating what was expected or what was owed – a fear perhaps of acknowledging what ‘the community’ owed its members. A key message from these findings was that there were difficult balancing acts involved in mutuality and reciprocity.

The quote below from interviewee 5, in his early 70s, illustrates how tentative such expectations of care and support were. He talked of two other members who had died whilst living in their community and who had lived there for many years and were ‘very respected’ by other members:

*When both of them got ill they were still looked after. Cos that’s a really interesting question, because..., possibly at some point I’m gonna deteriorate and the question is, er..., I think they would look after me [he laughs a lot at this point] I don’t know, I’m not sure [pause] because I don’t get on with my brother. My brother lives just in [London suburb] and I don’t get on with him and his family, I’ve got no great relationship with them, so this is my family in a funny way. (Interviewee 5; Community 6)*

In all the long-standing communities, fellow members had died and there were also some very moving stories of how the community had come together, often with the individual’s relatives, to support the individual to have the best possible death:

*It was a beautiful situation. The coffin was put in the library, an open coffin there was a 48 hr vigil by the son and the father with candle-light and, er [pause], er[pause] the deceased favourite items and cook-books were put around the room and an old Dansette record player and all her lovely records we were encouraged to go and sit for an hour and play a record it was very moving. (Interviewee 19, Community 8)*

Interviewee 8 told me the story of how her co-parent, with whom she had moved into the community, had died a few years ago after battling with cancer for a few years and how the community supported them when they needed it. She felt the community had acted like her ‘family of choice’ at this difficult time:

*...her request was to have her funeral here. And the community came together and we had a ceremony, cos (another community member) is a ceremonist, yeah, I mean it was a, it was an extreme time but it was a time when you knew you were amongst like-minded people, family really but a chosen family, rather than family that you might end up with, you know (laughs), so yeah, it does feel like a family sometimes. (Interviewee 8, Community 5)*

These stories of support and care reinforce the concept of fellow members being ‘chosen family’ for some individuals (Chapter 7, pages 128-9); people they felt they could depend on them for

care and support at times of need. No care is unlimited though and this was also true within the communities.

## The limits of care

Interviewee 18 (newly moved in to a young community) described her 'gut feeling' being that she would have to leave if she got infirm, not because of others saying that, but based on what she felt. She said for her it was not like family, 'it's very much like friends'. Therefore, there were limits to what she expected of fellow members. There were obvious differences depending on how long an individual had lived in their community and whether they had time to build up social and emotional bonds with other members.

In most interviewees' reflections about what could be expected in terms of support and care there was also some mention of the limits, even where mutual support was expected:

*I suppose it's a bit like family because I think the people are now familiar, it's a familiar kind of feeling you know that if you're in trouble that people will help you out, there's no question about that, at all. [pause] I think living like this I think there would be, there might be extreme situations when we couldn't support somebody. I mean, supposing for example that one of us really starts going a bit senile or having some form of dementia, I don't think we could go beyond a certain point (Interviewee 22, Community 9)*

The limits of care were often articulated in terms of dementia; losing one's mind seemed to be commonly accepted as beyond the capacity of the community to cope with. Community 5 had accepted into their community a mother of a member who had dementia. She had lived there for a few years before going into a care home, but the interviewee who spoke about it considered the experience hard work for the community and there would be reluctance to offer such support again.

In the stories I was told, I also noticed there wasn't was any personal care provided by one member for another, unless they were in a conventional relationship. One member of Community 6 had paid a friend of a member to live with him as a care assistant, to help him in the years before his death, a friend who then came to live in the community after he died. So the limits of care seemed to be articulated around senility and dementia and personal care was not spoken of. These limits seemed to be shared across communities and taken on board by individual members no matter how long they had been part of and been contributing to their community.

## Intergenerational living

### Positive experiences

All interviewees reflected positively on intergenerational living. One interviewee talked in terms of it enabling her to relate to young people in general, young men in particular, in the world beyond the community:

*there was at that point about half a dozen young teenage boys living in the community, that's right. Somebody was talking about how, you know, the threatening thing of the group of teenagers on the corner in the hoodies what I was trying to say was, because I knew those kids, I'd seen them growing up, er, they're my next door neighbour, I had a relationship with them which was very non-threatening and very non-scary because I knew them, whereas if I'd been a single woman of my age living in a little house and I'd seen the same group of lads on the corner, then yeah, I might have been a little bit apprehensive and walked on the other side of the road. (Interviewee14, Community 6)*

Another interviewee (aged 70) talked of how much he valued the relationships that he had developed with a young single mother and her son, who were community members:

*I take him to school and we go out and have coffee together, we, um, emotionally support each other and... we just are good friends and emotionally support each other... I've never had children and I've never been good at relationships full stop, so its lovely. And [name of the child] he said can I be his granddad I said 'I can't be your granddad cos I'm not blood', I'm not, but, um, he respects me and I watch over him and like to think that he's gradually growing up as a well-rounded human being and he's happy at school and its, um..., I just like to think that he's stable and whatever else is happening for him and his family that, er, you know he's developing into a good citizen [he laughs; slightly tongue in cheek]. (Interviewee 5, Community 4)*

Interviewee 17 recalled how important it had been, as a young single mother, having older women living so close by who had also been working single parents since her parents had lived too far away for daily contact. She acknowledged that a relationship of intergenerational support could develop in any street, but she felt the design of their community better enabled the frequent contact and the ease with which neighbours could drop in. This reinforced what I found in Chapter 7 that spatial proximity was significant in enabling or constraining social interactions especially mutually supportive ones.

### Age-related tensions and ageism

However, there were age-related tensions, particularly in the age-rich communities. In most communities, there was limited space for the number of new households or members wanting to join, so, in some communities, there was competition between older existing members and younger potential members. In the four communities with the highest proportion of older members (6 with 70%; 8 and 9 with 30%; 6 with 15%) and interviewees explained that there had been conversations within the communities about this.

Interviewee 7, in her late 60s, thought there was more tension than simply competition for space between younger and older members. She explained she had recently received an email from 21-year-old who had asked 'am I going to feel a bit out of it?' given the community was mainly over 60s. She had wondered whether she ought to move out to make room for young people to move in:

*I think this is really quite important and links with your whole topic because I have thought perhaps I ought to move out so there's room for a young person to move in then I thought 'Fuck me, this is my home!' (both laugh) and er [pause] but I think there's a tension there...in trying to attract people. If I was 23 I wouldn't move in here [pause] cos I think that most 23 year olds wouldn't choose to live with people that are predominantly older. (Interviewee 7, Community 5)*

Interviewee 8 (the youngest interviewee at aged 50, who had two children of school age) in Community 6, talked about how having older people in the community obviously reduced the space for families and how having more other families would be positive for her in terms childcare swaps and shared lifts into town, for example. But she didn't want to see *less* older people in the community and she didn't think of her fellow members as 'old':

*they don't feel like older people in the way they think you know, if i think about [name of Interviewee 9] being a similar age to my mum, well my mum's world and life experience is, the way she lives her life, is completely different. So you know, [name of Interviewee 9] is part of U3A, she's just done volunteering at the global centre she quite often goes and visits family in Europe and she used to go to Africa a lot she's very open and very keen to stay in the world and keep her brain alive she gardens for hours, you know. So I don't feel like I'm living with older people; I feel like there's less room for families, but I don't feel like I'm living with a bunch of old people. (Interviewee 8, Community 5)*

What I see in this quote is, once again, the alternative cultural capital identified in Chapters 6 and 7 manifested in another form in relation to ageing members: it is all about what you *do*, your

commitment to the community expressed through *activities*. The emphasis is on being *active* in this member's positive view of her fellow communitarian; her age is treated as incidental.

This aspect of the habitus of these communities was becoming problematic and uncomfortable to talk about as members reached the point where such contributions could not continue to be taken for granted. There was a tension and a dissonance that had not been fully acknowledged within the communities, but was apparent in some narratives of interviewees. One area where this manifested itself was in recruitment of new members in some communities.

All of the four age-rich communities seemed to have come to a fairly explicit consensus that they should be trying to attract younger members, particularly families prioritising these groups over new potential members who were older. Most interviewees articulated this shared belief in terms of the needs of the community being more important than the needs of specific individuals:

*We still are quite an ageing community. Um, but the last few houses that have become vacant, I think there's been certainly a feeling to try and bring in new families with kids um, er, because of that. Because when we had our, whatever they're called, the meetings when we decide who's gonna be offered a house and we try and look at, as well as the needs of the individuals, the needs of the community and certainly, on my behalf anyway I know a couple of the others, we felt we need to bring some young blood, some young energy in. (Interviewee14, Community 6)*

This prioritisation of younger people and families in the age-rich communities signified an intergenerational tension that was hard to discuss explicitly and openly, as well as to address.

One interviewee acknowledged the discomfort being felt about these intergenerational balancing acts within his community and within the wider intentional community movement:

*We are actively seeking young members we will prioritise a young family over someone who is over 60. That's purely because again, we have been accused of being ageist on that principle and um, a complaint went to 'Diggers and Dreamers' about that... And I think we have to look at the larger picture, of a community with, that is going to survive on into the next 50 or 100 years, it needs to be renewed with new energy continually, um with new younger people with children growing up (Interviewee 19, Community 8)*

So this interviewee argued in support of their decision to prioritise younger new members but acknowledged it was controversial.



One interviewee made a joke about her experience of looking around at communities with a view to moving into them. As is often the case with humour, something more heartfelt and difficult was being revealed:

*because when you look in Diggers and Dreamers, I quite often look to see if there's any communities that want people like me, they always say they want young people with building skills [we both laugh] and that's what this group wanted when they got me, but really they didn't need somebody with building skills they needed somebody with admin skills which is what I've got, which was quite lucky. Nobody says we want old women with admin skills! (Interviewee 22, Community 9)*

This raises a key question about the tension between the kinds of values that some communities stand for, such as equal opportunities their perceptions of the practical requirements for ensuring the survival of the community in the longer term. The communities' strategies for dealing with these difficult balancing acts and ageing seemed to be built around problematic concepts. First there was denial (not talking about it). Second there was some degree of over-simplification: youth was being automatically equated with physical ability and older age with disability in a way that didn't fully acknowledge how work actually gets done. This failed to recognise, for example, how much community work time can be committed by older, retired members who no longer have to work outside the community. Interviewee 19 (quoted above) acknowledged this in his interview: older members tended to do more work in the community than younger ones because they didn't have to go out to work.

So narratives swung between recruitment strategies based simply on age and denials of the need for their communities to consider and plan for old age in all its manifestations. As Andrews points out, this denial of old age risks being in and of itself a form of ageism (Andrews, 1999). There was also some negativity about the idea of senior-only communities.

### **Attitudes towards senior-only communities**

There was often a discomfort, even distaste, about the idea of communities of only older people:

*I don't want to live where it's all old women, or men, of the same age. I personally don't think that's healthy. I go to visit friends who live in one of these villages and I think 'God, I like people! I like going to gigs and I like meeting young people and old people, I think it keeps you healthy (laughs) the brain as well (Interviewee 17, Community 6)*

Other interviewees also disliked the concept of senior-only communities. They not only felt that senior CoHousing wasn't for them, but that it was 'unhealthy' for older people.

Only two interviewees considered senior-only communities more positively. Interviewee 1, who had come to live in his CoHousing community in his 60s, only 7 years before, talked about how his attitude towards senior-only CoHousing had changed as he had moved into his 70s. He said that when he was in his 50s he had thought '*there's no way I'm moving into an old person's ghetto*' but his thinking had moved on as he had found himself the oldest member of his community, with few other people of his generation around:

*Well I'm a few years older now and I kind of look at it and say 'well, it's still a bit ghettoish but [pause] is there a place for it?' and yes, there is. But for myself it's nice to be kept young by having young people about and having a lot of involvement. And the kids around I think it's good for the kids to grow up with a complete range of people that they are able to talk to, be familiar with; the grandparents kind of thing, around all the time you can talk to them. And I think that's great. (Interviewee 1, Community 1)*

However, he also went on to talk about how he had found it '*difficult being the only one in the village*' and how he would:

*quite like somebody (his age) because maybe there's a similar take on life. You know when you reach the seventh decade there's a different take on life. (Interviewee 1, Community 1)*

He weighed up the merits of intergenerational living with the comfort of being around people with 'a similar take on life'. Interviewee 14 had a different but again more positive view of traditional supported accommodation for older people. She talked of how she had been listening to her elderly mother recently:

*my mum was saying, you know, as older people often do, well, you know, 'I hope I never have to go into a home' that kind of thing and I'm thinking, well, you know, I've lived like this [in community] all my life, I don't think I would mind a couple of other friends of mine who are a bit older, one in particular has just moved into a fabulous supported accommodation place, it happens to be in [city nearby], right on the end of [name] Road I'm thinking that wouldn't worry me, er, obviously, er, I would have to scale down ...but, but I think I would live in some other form of community in some form or another. (Interviewee 14, Community 6)*

For her, there wasn't such a strong demarcation between intergenerational intentional communities and those communities that are purpose-built for older residents; she seemed to treat both as acceptable forms of communal living.

## **Discussion of Chapter 8**

In this section I discuss my findings relating to ageing in community, weaving my interviewees' reflections on ageing into the themes that emerged within the earlier chapters. I start with my analysis of the key finding – that these older community members had not explicitly discussed with each other what might happen, what they might want or need and how they might adapt their communities to meet their needs as they aged.

### **Unspoken dilemmas of ageing and habitus**

I found it surprising how little discussion had taken place between older members about how they might work together within their community to support each other moving into older age, particularly in the age-rich communities. There had been no discussion about strategies, like adapting their communities to better suit an older membership, or planning for how the workload involved in running the community might be differently organised, even sub-contracted out. Jokes and humour were also used to deflect any serious conversation about future needs these jokes and seemed to be a kind of defence against the difficulty of addressing the questions being asked.

The denial of ageing and discomfort with speaking collectively about what their future needs might be as they age have been found to be common amongst adults in the UK (Barrett, 2014). Baker has also revealed the scale of denial in the USA amongst older people of all backgrounds about imagining themselves growing older and needing help in daily life (page 31), but it surprised me given how transgressive many interviewees views were about such matters as family, or work, or about sharing. What had happened to the alternative capital that seemed characteristic of their attitudes in realms other than ageing? Early on Sargisson argued that more utopian intentional communities provide the opportunity for 'thinking differently about something that we might otherwise take for granted' (Sargisson, 2000: 103) and there is no doubt that some communities provide this in relation to housing and household formation, but in

relation to ageing, I found little evidence of developed critical thinking in relation to planning mutual support into older age.

One aspect of the habitus identified in most communities seemed relevant in understanding this: their reliance on implicit rather than explicit values and practices. I highlighted this common aspect of community living in Chapter 6 (page 132): knowledge was often not formally articulated, values were more implicit than explicit and were more akin to what Nolas, drawing on the work of Certeau (Certeau, 2002), calls 'cultures of participation' (Nolas, 2011: 147). This common culture made explicit conversations about strategies and tactics for managing the impacts of ageing less likely. So the difficulties and fears were not openly addressed and the resulting obfuscation and confusions in principles and practices left communities open to accusations of ageism.

It also surprised me how normative most narratives about ageing were, drawing on conventional narratives of ageing identified in the cultural gerontology literature of the global North. Individuals often talked about how they were surprised by being, or ignoring, or not feeling, old, or finding it hard to recognise their own chronological age, responses that corroborate a view that has become significant within cultural gerontology that there is a 'mask' of ageing, an outward appearance that feels at odds with an individual's identity (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1995).

Interviewees narratives also drew on dominant discourses of active or successful ageing (Martin, 2007) in which independence and self-reliance are highly valued (Lamb, 2015). Individuals were not immune from the dominant discourses of ageing that consider it a process primarily of decline and demise and in which the potential for contribution is not recognised (Gullette, 2015). Fears and powerful aversions to dependency are part of dominant discourses of active or successful ageing in the global North (Age UK, 2012; Pruchno, 2015; Reed, 2003). But what had happened to their critical reflexivity in their reflections on ageing; to their alternative capital as they considered their own ageing? Some older members seemed to be struggling to reconcile their own fears about ageing with the habitus of their community, or indeed with their own sense of identity as contributors to community life. This parallel tension and anxiety was, not surprisingly, most apparent in the age-rich communities.

A number of writers in the field of cultural and critical gerontology point to how complicated the relationship is between notions of active or successful ageing and their implication in the

reproduction of ageism, neo-liberal discourses of self-reliance and consumerism (Andrews, 1999; Marshall, 2015; Pruchno, 2015). In the age rich communities studied here, older members seem to be treading a very fine line between these competing influences and their reluctance to address these matters explicitly with other members was evidence of denial and discomfort, resulting in contradictory and ambivalent feelings.

A number of interviewees talked about how they hadn't come to terms with the physical effects of ageing some felt a strong attachment to the spirit and time of their youth with the spirit of counterculture in the 1970s, which Woodspring has described as 'boomer narratives' (Woodspring, 2015). This reinforced the findings from earlier chapters about the importance of generational concepts and experiences in shaping the habitus of individuals and their experiences of ageing.

What some interviewees seemed to be expressing in their narratives of active ageing could also be seen as their positive feelings of agency within what was, for them, their 'third age' as distinct from the 'fourth age' (of dependency and vulnerability) - which are described in the cultural and social gerontology literature (Bond et al., 1993; Lynch and Danely, 2013; Lloyd, 2015; Twigg and Martin, 2015b). Nearly all interviewees expressed determination to stay independent and most were still very active in planning and shaping their lives. They were either choosing to stay in their community as an active choice, or searching for something different - often a different kind of community, or a different location – and feeling more ambivalent about staying in their community in the future.

Such ambivalence is not unusual amongst older people living in many different kinds of households across the U. It is now widely recognised that older people in the UK are diverse in their needs and desires and do not necessarily want to stay put, as policy-makers have suggested (Bigonnesse et al., 2014; Caro et al., 2012; Oldham, 2014; Peace et al., 2011). Similarly, fears of loss of independence and of becoming dependent have long been reported by older people and continue to be so (Fontana, 1977; Hockey and James, 1993; Ward et al., 2012). My findings suggest that intensity is added to such fears, particularly amongst members of rural and younger intentional communities. The habitus of these communities is formed around the importance of *contributing* and *participating* (Chapter 7), especially in rural communities. Any suggestion that a member might *not* be able to contribute *physical capital* represented a dissonance with this core cultural value and set of practices.

### Positive places of care and reciprocity

There were also narratives expressing unequivocally positive views of their communities as good places to age in, offering older members useful roles they enjoyed, social and emotional connections, a sense of belonging and a way of life that they found enriching. These positive thoughts were expressed by individuals who had spent more than a decade living in their communities and had strong, intimate familial relationships with other members of their community. This shows that personal life histories and the particular social and emotional context of earlier life were important in shaping each individual's experience of moving into later life (Calasanti and Neal, 2015). Individual identities were shown to be complex and changing throughout an individual's stories of their housing pathway, entwined as they were with the influences of historical specificity and generational cohort (Jolly, 2011: 366).

There were also many stories of older and ill members receiving care and support from within their community. These stories provide evidence to the growing numbers of older people seeking to join intentional communities, that such places have the potential to offer a quality of mutual support and friendship in hard times. The much-reported CoHousing community OWCH (Older Women's CoHousing) in London makes much of mutual support in their publicity<sup>9</sup>. However, once again, generational capital was important: such experiences were mostly within the older communities, where individuals had lived together for a number of years, a reminder of the importance of shared biographies in understanding the dynamics of caring (Barnes, 2012). Barnes also talks of the importance of reciprocity in care under such circumstances: 'while giving care is not based on an expectation of exchange, the sense that it is within the context of a mutual relationship in which reciprocation is likely means that caregiving is not experienced as a 'burden'' (p90).

I described the thoughts of one interviewee in particular, who openly reflected on whether or not he had accumulated enough good will within the community to expect a similar level of care and support from his fellow communards. No wonder these communities, especially the age rich

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.owch.org.uk/reading/>

communities like his, were finding it difficult to openly discuss such deeply personal matters and fears.

Wenger's work on the different kinds of social networks that older people draw on seems relevant here:

*reciprocity between non-kin, as described above, tends to be specific and immediate. In long established communities, however, a generalised ethos of helpfulness may be observed which approximates to generalised serial or long-term, delayed reciprocity and receiving help may depend on being perceived as having been helpful to others (Wenger, 1993: 33).*

All the communities within my sample seemed to offer just such an ethos of helpfulness in abstract and the stories of care and support supported this in practice, but care was also contingent on shared history and friendship over many years.

The unspoken nature of these reciprocal exchanges were like a number of the other implicit arrangements and values held within these communities; another element of community life that was left open, not systematized. This meant they had strengths and weaknesses, as discussed in relation to Nolas's work on cultures of participation previously (Chapter 6, page 132). The strengths were in the general ethos of helpfulness and the physical proximity (close neighbours) which enabled everyday care to be shared amongst members. One of the weaknesses for the future of the communities as their members aged, was the uncertainty about what support individuals could expect if they needed it; there were imagined, but not explicit limits to such care.

### **Intergenerational tensions and other challenges**

I described as difficult balancing acts the intergenerational tension over vacancies in some communities and the value dissonances within the age rich communities in particular. Economic and generational capital played a role in this. In Chapter 5, I described how the long-standing communities had accumulated economic capital in the form of either financial value and/or affordable rent and living cost. This had contributed to stability in the membership because, over the years, it had become more difficult for individuals to leave, in part because the alternatives had become considerably more expensive.

A Bourdesian analysis leads me to question the whole framing of such questions. Instead of seeing this problem as one of competition over resources between generations – a common

contemporary discourse (Moody, 2007) – we should ask why the housing Co-operative communities, offering such secure and affordable housing, have not been more successfully reproduced in UK society in the last 30 to 40 years? And why during this time, other forms of intentional community living – such as CoHousing - have overtaken this more established and successful model? In Chapter 5 (pages 103-105), I argued that social-ownership communities represented forms of practical or critical utopias (Bourdieu, 1998; Sargisson, 2010), illustrating how stable and affordable housing *could* have developed in the UK after the 1970s if the ideology of individual home ownership had not become so dominant (International Cooperative Alliance, 2008). This is relevant to these intergenerational dilemmas.

My theorising of social-ownership communities as having been enabled by particular historical conditions, helps explain some of their contemporary challenges around ageing too. A number of individuals in this study who moved into housing Co-operatives during their early establishment, had lived almost all their adult lives in their housing Co-operatives. These individuals represent a generation of members who never left, never owned property like so many of their peers and therefore occupy an unusual position in the housing field as they move into older age. Their conflicts and problems are new, including the intergenerational tensions over the balance of young and old members I have mentioned, along with the new problem of how to adapt their communities to meet the changing needs of members moving into what is been described as the fourth age (Twigg and Martin, 2015b).

Thirty to forty years on, what made it possible for these communities to be born and for individuals to join them, has shifted. I have shown how the forms of capital involved in sustaining these communities in the context of neo-liberal marketisation in housing, family life and systems of care and support in the UK, are constantly altering. As long-standing members increasingly experience what Woodspring has described as ‘deep time’ – the post-work, post-children, extended period of life afforded the current boomer generation (Woodspring, 2015) - and the spectre of dependency associated with the ‘fourth age’ comes closer (Peace and Holland, 2001; Price et al., 2014), it will be interesting to see if the balancing acts and unarticulated relations of reciprocity that have sustained their communities so far, will make it possible for older members to stay. Only time will tell.

### **Ageing as a general field?**

Finally, I want to reflect on the difficulty of combining ageing within a Bourdesian framework, drawing on what has been learnt from feminist theorists. Adkins talks about gender as a



generalised field in its own right, cutting across specific fields, such as housing, or care for example (Adkins, 2004). Perhaps ageing is similar: ageing cuts across all dimensions of life. Categories of young and old are, like male and female, inadequate to the task of understanding, deeply divisive and reproducing of enduring inequalities. Like gender, ageing is complex, elusive, contested and societal understanding of it derives from a long history of biological determinism. There is a lot of taken-for-granted knowledge and critical sociological imaginings are relatively recent newcomers in the theorising of ageing (Bytheway et al., 1989; Fontana, 1977; Hockey and James, 1993).

In Chapter 3 (page 49), I talked about the difficulty of operationalising a Bourdesian framework in empirical research adding the dimension of ageing into my analysis has complicated matters further. Bourdieu did not speak of ageing and nor do many academic researchers outside the specific field of cultural or social gerontology. But one of the methodological questions that has emerged for me in the course of undertaking this research is the extent to which ageing is present in all that we study; how, therefore, are we to take account of its effects and impacts? That's a good question for future methodological research.

## CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

In this thesis I have argued that, in the context of contemporary discourses of housing and ageing challenges in the UK, critical exploration of notions of choice in relation to home and community in later life is timely. Intentional communities represent, to varying degrees, alternative and transgressive choices to dominant norms and contemporary interest in them is growing. In order to understand them better, I have undertaken qualitative interviews with 23 members aged over 50 living in nine communities about their housing pathways and their reflections on how they came to live in their community. I have used a Bourdesian theoretical lens through which to explore agency within a social context and elaborate the kinds of social, cultural and other capital involved in becoming members and in sustaining everyday life – what Bourdieu describes as the habitus of social groups. I have also listened to interviewees' thoughts and feelings about the future, exploring the possibilities and difficulties of ageing in their communities.

In this concluding chapter I pull together the findings and analysis of previous chapters to distill the answers to my research questions and provide an overall argument based on what I found. I also point to where there are uncertainties and more questions have emerged. I make the case for my contribution to knowledge and discuss its importance for past and future research and policy and practice in the field of housing and ageing.

Rather than repeat the four principal research questions I set out on pages 17-18 and answer each in turn (which risks repetition of my analysis at the end of each chapter), I weave the answers that emerged from the findings into the story of this research, its context and my position in it and by doing so try to answer the original questions. I start by returning to where I began: continuing the story of what motivated me to initiate this research and what the research has taught me and anyone else considering living in an intentional community into later life.

### **Is living in an intentional community possible for anyone?**

At the beginning of this thesis (page 13), I listed the many questions my friends and I had about what living together in an intentional community would involve, what we would need to consider and plan for and how we could best anticipate problems and obstacles by learning from others. The nub of the practical question we were asking was: could we do it? Could we give up the

customs and practices of household formation that we have been used to through our lives and live more communally? And could it work to make our everyday lives better as we age?

What this research has taught me first and foremost is that it is meaningless to talk of intentional communities as one phenomenon. There are two vital distinctions in the types of communities (Chapter 5): first, based how much money an individual has to have in order to become a member (economic capital); and second, the degree to which the community is designed around traditional forms of households and boundaries between private and shared space (collaboration).

The first determines the degree of inclusivity or exclusivity of intentional communities, with social-ownership communities (such as housing Co-operatives) being more inclusive and individual-ownership model communities (such as USA-style CoHousing) being more exclusive. CoHousing communities in particular will continue to be challenged by the theorising of community as quests for safety that result in exclusivity (Baumann, 2001; Ruii, 2014; Ruii, 2016; Young, 2010). They will need to consider explicitly their political intentions and invent pragmatic adaptations –as LILAC in Leeds has (Chatterton, 2015) and as Sargisson has shown them to be able to (Sargisson, 2009) - if they are to be more inclusive.

The second critical distinction, the degree of collaboration - sharing of spaces, resources and daily routines between individuals or households within the community – is a spectrum, however. The findings suggest that certain demarcations are important in distinguishing between communities: fully collaborative communities share daily cooking, daily work and weekly decision-making (activities), as well as spaces (kitchens, bathrooms), facilities and resources (equipment); less collaborative communities tend to share resources, spaces and equipment, but not so much daily or weekly activities.

Having made the case for these two critical distinctions, the answer is that anyone *could* live in an intentional community, though it depends what type of community is being considered or imagined. What is likely to stop an individual from doing so in the first instance is quite simple: the lack of awareness of more collaborative forms of housing in the UK, where no central source of information exists and there is no relevant category within the UK census. More fundamentally, what is likely to stop an individual taking up this choice are two deep-seated and taken-for-granted assumptions in UK society: that individual home ownership provides the best and most secure form of housing (the ideology of home ownership); and that independence and individual control are valued more highly than interdependence and collaboration with others in day-to-day

life (the ideology of individualism). The experiences of members of long-standing social-ownership communities studied here challenge both these assumptions.

What this research has found is that diverse individuals can come to live in diverse forms of community, from diverse familial backgrounds, with or without conventional forms of cultural capital (such as formal educational achievement) or social capital (establishment networks or status) (Chapter 6). However, it is likely they will hold some of what I have called *alternative capital* - building on the work of Adkins and Skeggs (Adkins, 2004; Adkins and Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs, 2004) and Sandberg (Sandberg, 2008). They are also likely to have the capacity to realise their own potential for agency - derived from the work of McNay on agency (McNay, 1999; McNay, 2008) and Adams on reflexivity (Adams, 2006). I argue that alternative capital involves having a critical perspective on mainstream society and the ability to imagine and articulate alternative values and to act counter to the orthodoxy (agential and resistant). Alternative capital enables individuals to question orthodox choices in life and to alter their expected housing pathways (Clapham, 2005) and re-imagine who can be considered part of their family or their household, at whatever stage of life they have reached.

The other ability they will likely need, linked to alternative capital, is to learn to collaborate and to share (Chapter 7). My research has shown just how much *emotional work* (Warner et al., 2013) is required by individuals in order to live successfully together on a day-to-day basis, though this is crucially dependent on the degree of collaborative living as previous researchers in this field have shown (Jarvis, 2015; McCamant and Durrett, 1994). In all these communities, there was daily engagement and negotiation with others and a constant accommodation of consideration for others. This emotional work was made more complicated by the lack of established norms for more collaborative forms of living and where rules about public and private space were not explicit.

Within communities of people significantly bigger than a conventional family or household, individuals are likely to need a set of affective skills (social and emotional antenna) and collaborative skills (sharing and working with consensus decision-making) that those of us brought up in traditional forms of housing and in conventional households are unlikely to have had much opportunity to develop.

Finally, the other factor that will likely be important is the social and emotional ties over time that members already share. Quality of *friendships* will likely be as important a form of social and

emotional glue as traditional family relations (Roseneil, 2004; Spencer and Pahl, 2006) in helping the emotional work involved to feel enriching and enjoyable, as well as demanding and challenging.

### **Are intentional communities, good places to live in into later life?**

Assuming the above caveats and distinctions are taken into account, the question of ageing in community introduces another fundamental dependency: the answer depends on how long the communities have been established (Chapter 5) how long individuals have been members (Chapter 6). Generational economic capital held in social-ownership communities can make life more affordable and more liveable and offer stable and secure housing to older individuals as incomes start to decline. It can also result in older members having little viable or affordable alternative to remain living in their community, because of the lack of expansion in the numbers of such communities since the 1980s (Chapter 5).

Social capital, built up through being a committed member, making years of contribution to community life and sharing life with fellow members, can also make mutual support and care in times of need more likely and more reliable. But, it seems, community life cannot offer immunity to the paradoxes and tensions within dominant societal discourses of successful ageing (Pruchno, 2015). Many of the individuals in these communities experienced ageing as unfamiliar territory, with disquiet and uncertainty. Some seemed to experience loss of their feel for the game of community living (Chapter 8). The best intergenerational communities to age in are likely to be those that can transparently strike a balance between their commitment to sustaining their community in the longer term and acknowledging and planning for the likely needs of their diverse older members (Glass and Vander Plaats, 2013; Peace et al., 2011; Woodspring, 2015).

Also mutual support cannot, it seems, be an assumed benefit of community living moving into older age. The stories retold here of care and mutual support during times of individual vulnerability revealed that care ethics can be a strong ethos within intentional communities, including unquantifiable qualities as kindness, human warmth and non-judgemental support of others in times of need (Phillips, 2009). But, on the whole, such reciprocity is rarely explicitly articulated or negotiated and is given more as a gift (Warner et al., 2013). Therefore, it is not an entitlement and cannot be taken for granted. The informality of such relations of unspoken reciprocity was both a strength (adaptive and given freely) and a weakness (uncertain and

dependent on interpersonal dynamics), marking a contrast with ethics of care associated with conventional care settings (Barnes, 2012) (Chapter 8).

The research showed that communities can be great places to age in: providing members with a sense of connection, belonging and purpose, as well as an affordable and sociable way of life. As a way of life, it compares favourably with the alternatives on offer to many older individuals in conventional settings in the South of England, including the social and emotional isolation increasingly associated with home ownership. The ambivalence expressed by many older members about staying in their communities into later life also suggests that any intergenerational community wanting to consider itself a good place to age, ought to more explicitly and transparently consider what contribution to the work involved in keeping the community going is reasonable to expect of individuals as they move into later life. This is particularly so as individuals encounter the diverse challenges associated with what cultural gerontologists call the fourth age (Twigg and Martin, 2015b). Such negotiations do not seem best left unspoken - not just for older members, but for existing and potential younger members of communities.

### **Uncertainties and remaining questions**

There were some questions that were not answered, or remained unclear. Is educational achievement significant in making choosing community living possible? There was the higher representation within my sample of people with post graduate qualifications and with experience of being teachers. But, as I made clear in Chapter 3, my methodological approach was not about statistical representation. There were individuals who had lacked educational achievement but who also held alternative cultural and social capital and were able to critically reflect on their expected choices and pathways in life (their habitus) and to some degree, change them. Such reflexivity has been associated with the field of education - what Adams calls a form of 'collective cultural capital which became engrained in individual agency' (Adams, 2006: 108). However, my findings only complicated my analysis: alternative capital seemed to emerge from diverse circumstances within these interviewees' lives; there wasn't one set of conditions or backgrounds that such critical imagining and agency could be ascribed to.

Likewise, I did not feel my findings completely fitted with Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The more I listened to my interviewees accounts and perspectives, the more difference I found, encouraged by the life history approaches such as those used by Plummer and Andrews

(Andrews, 2007; Plummer, 2001; Plummer, 2003). Even when I stood back to consider the common affinities, dispositions experiences, there were always individual exceptions. I struggled throughout the analysis process with this tension between seeing the commonalities, but not reducing differences in individual's lives to the point where they are unrecognised or unacknowledged.

I was left with an outstanding question in relation to habitus: were my interviewees' lives examples of agency as elaborated by Bourdieu – as the *changing* of an individual experience of habitus (based on familial background and class origins etc.) through the process of living in intentional communities? Habitus was conceived to help understand the layers of values and experiences (structured experiences) that cohere social groups. Its value is in doing this more subtly than social theorists of the past; it allows for the unconscious embodiment of values in individuals that then enable or constrain their choices in life (Chapter 3, pages 45-47). Bourdieu acknowledged that habitus was not fixed, describing it as 'durable but not eternal' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). So was my conceptualisation of alternative capital – born of many interviewees stories of their transformations of their expected lives - part of identifying a mechanism enabling the individual *changing* of habitus? I remain unsure.

### **Reflections on the strengths and limitations of my methodology**

The main strength of my research approach was that I found Bourdieu's concept of the different kinds of capitals that combine to generate habitus useful in helping me to draw out the commonalities and differences of the members of intentional communities. Habitus was useful in unravelling the interrelationship between the individuals and the communities – offering a useful conceptual lens with which to explore agency in social context. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field was also useful in contextualising the communities and community living as a lifestyle as set within dominant discourses, policies and practices of housing in the UK. Another strength was Bourdieu's insistence that researchers explore what is not being said, what is left unspoken in what individuals choose to talk about in interviews.

I have shown in my concluding arguments above how my approach was enhanced by the development of Bourdieu's framework in the work of critical feminist theorists. These include McNay on agency and her view of habitus as not fixed and having the potential to be open to change (McNay, 1999; McNay, 2008); Skeggs, who describes how alternative cultures of respect are often denigrated and go unrecognised by the dominant symbolic order (symbolic violence); and Adkins and Skeggs who recognise individuals' work to make their lives more liveable within

the established symbolic order (Adkins, 2004; Adkins and Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012). I am not sure Skeggs would recognise my interviewees stories about their pathways to becoming part of these communities as having the equivalent disadvantage and misrecognition that the working class women of her studies do, but I have shown there were women in my sample who experienced the kinds of stigma that Skeggs and Adkins rightly shine a light on.

Much of analysis became clearer through seeing my data in the light of the insights of critical housing theorists such as Flint and Savage et al. They have used Bourdieu to illuminate the political nature of housing distinctions (like tenure) within the context of a neo-liberal market economy (Flint, 2011; Flint, 2015; Flint and Rowlands, 2003; Savage, 2012; Savage et al., 1992). These theorists have helped to build a useful conceptual framework to consider what interviewees said about the resources, aptitudes and skills that made choosing to live in an intentional community possible for them and to outline and explore the struggles over power and recognition in the unequal field of housing that both communities and individuals were subject to.

A Bourdesian framework was also a limitation: I could not have made sense of what I found without engaging with contemporary theorising about emotions. Reay offered me my first insights into this lack within Bourdieu (Reay, 2000; Reay, 2004) but it was conceptualisations of the emotional work involved in caring for others in everyday locations and in part public, part private spaces (Warner et al., 2013) that most helped me make sense of my findings. I struggled to account for this less visible and less articulated work involved in community living using Bourdieu's conceptual framework. So those that have theorised relationships of care and reciprocity and friendship (often from a feminist perspective) enabled me to bring another lens to the prism of my analysis (Barnes, 2012; Bolton, 2000; Martin, 2007; Milligan and Wiles, 2010; Roseneil, 2004; Wetherell, 2012). This lens sharpened my focus on the complex tensions and balancing acts involved in the successful navigation of relations of reciprocity, individual bodily change and changing identities in the process of ageing in the particular landscapes of intentional communities.

Also, my analysis could not ignore the temporal element that ran through all my interviewees' accounts. I understood early on that whilst I could try to grasp what made it possible *overall* for these individuals to live in intentional communities, whatever tapestry of understanding emerged from my analysis could not ignore the threads of time (McLeod and Thomson, 2009; Thomson, 2014) – the becoming and the being and the imagined and expected future. Initially, I was



daunted by this: the time dimension only added to the differences I could see within the tapestry of habitus I tried to weave. I worried: did the ageing dimension made my research project over-ambitious? I have suggested (at the end of Chapter 8) that within a Bourdesian framework, perhaps ageing needs to be considered as a generalised field in and of itself, as Adkins has argued for gender (Adkins, 2004), but this was a bigger question than I could explore in this thesis. In my defence, I have tried to provide an analysis that reflects and takes account of the dynamic and changing nature of the communities and the individuals I have studied.

Face-to-face interviews with my research participants proved epistemologically and practically appropriate, providing relevant data that allowed me to gain understanding of the housing pathways of participants that could reveal their background and resources (habitus and capitals) and their stories of life-choices, of struggle and resistance (agency and identity). I recognise a number of limitations with the single interview: it provides a limited perspective at a fixed moment in time. Narratives of the past cannot be simply read as constituting the past, so I heeded Andrews warning not to derive too firm a set of meanings from stories and of the 'memory fault-lines' inherent in talking about both past and present (Andrews, 2007: 610). I did my best to clarify any inconsistencies in interviewees' stories where they became apparent during the interviews.

In addition, for some participants the stories may have been told many times over. So I acknowledge what is told is as much part of the interviewee's current identity making in the context of the interview, as it is an account of past decision-making (Wetherell, 2009). The emphasis for me was on hearing these perspectives and stories and exploring with the interviewee what they think made their life-style and home choices possible and *interpreting* these perspectives. I acknowledged my own role as an interviewer in what was revealed, or, importantly for Bourdieu, what was not explicitly acknowledged (Mason, 2002: 78-79).

An example of this emerged in relation to the questions I asked about what each individual felt about ageing in their community. Many interviewees acknowledged this had not been discussed in their community and was the first time they had talked explicitly about it. So I was aware of stepping into territory that might have implications for the communities when the research was fed back, but also that I was playing a part in the early co-construction with my interviewees of narratives of sense-making about their future (Dunne et al., 2005; Mason, 2002; Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002; Seale, 1998). One interviewee hoped that my asking these questions would be the

catalyst for more open discussion within her community, so my role as interviewer was not neutral, but was part of ongoing 'contextually located social action' (Dunne et al., 2005: 33).

There were limitations based on the samples. First, my sample of intentional communities was limited to one source of information about the population of intentional communities (Diggers and Dreamers website). From this population I selected only the South of England communities, which I argue has legitimacy because of the commonality of the housing context. I recognise that this purposeful sample of 46 communities in one region represented a specific sub-set of the wider field of intentional communities and that, without an established quantification and typology of all such communities in the UK (which does not yet exist), it is not possible to know what kind of sample it constituted. I continued, throughout the course of my research, to search for further national sources of information about communities. The UK CoHousing network website was also valuable for Cohousing communities, but Diggers and Dreamers remained the principal UK-wide source.

My sampling of interviewees was also limited to those willing to participate and in communities that were open to the research. This opportunistic or volunteer approach meant interviewees were, to some extent, self-selecting, but this approach has been accepted as a legitimate (Seale, 1998: 139) for a field that is under-researched. Also, whilst I started with a goal to interview individuals over 60, I ended up with interviewees aged from 51 to 84. I mitigated the effects of my early respondents being younger by consciously seeking older members where I could (discussed on pages 61-62). Another known limitation was that all communities were intergenerational (none were senior-only). This is likely to limit my interviewees to those for whom intergenerational living is a conscious choice, which perhaps reflects in interviewees' attitudes towards senior-only communities (Chapter 7).

In relation to participants' consent, my initial plan to secure written consent from each of the key contacts in the communities had to be revised because it was unworkable. Key contacts were willing to participate, but were not keen to be involved in a process of exchange of written documents. In the end, their consent was achieved verbally. Such is the messiness of the practice of research in the field, even in better resourced research projects (Hallowell et al., 2005).

Finally, I want to conclude this section with a word about my methodology and invisible utopias. Qualitative research continues to be valued in some academic fields and not so valued in others; a focus on such a small and unusual part of UK home life might be considered by some to be of only passing interest and irrelevant to the big social and housing problems of our time. My argument,

encouraged by Bourdieu and Sargisson and Wright (Bourdieu, 1998; Sargisson, 2004; Sargisson, 2009; Wright, 2010), remains that by shining a light on these unnoticed yet remarkable experiments in community living, I have helped to refract light onto the housing choices we have all learnt to take-for-granted and to question just how limited those choices have become, particularly into older age.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

I have filled a gap in the small but growing interdisciplinary body of international and UK academic literature that aims to understand intentional communities, drawing out what can be learned from the perspectives of older members and using an enhanced Bourdesian theoretical approach. This focus and theoretical approach have not been undertaken before in this field. Furthermore, this study includes housing Co-operatives, a long-standing form of intentional community that has been under-researched in the UK literature on intentional communities, which is increasingly focussed on CoHousing (Glass, 2013; Jarvis, 2011; Jarvis, 2015; Ruiu, 2016; Scanlon and Arrigoitia, 2015).

A further contribution is the application and extension of theory. I have developed Clapham's notion of housing pathways to diagrammatically present the topical life histories of my interviewees. I have drawn on the work of critical feminist theorists engaged with Bourdieu, to extend the range of capitals he developed, as I realised the factors that were influential in the shaping of interviewees' lives and choices suggested *alternative* hierarchies of value, social status and forms of distinction. I have developed and applied the concept of *alternative capital* to explain this. I have developed the idea of *liveability capital* to make sense of the security, stability and affordability individuals had accumulated in social-ownership communities, drawing in the established concept of liveable lives.

As Bourdieu suggests, I have emphasised the importance of historical specificity in explaining the factors determining what made certain choices possible to certain individuals at certain times and I have extended this to include a fuller sense of the temporal dimension in the formation of individual identity-making over time (McLeod and Thomson, 2009), using the concept of *generational capital*.

I have analysed my findings by drawing on additional insights from the disciplines of cultural and critical gerontology and ethics of care. Engagement with contemporary theorising about ageing

and caring has enabled me to bring another lens to the prism of my analysis, bringing out the less visible and less articulated emotional work involved in community living.

## **My doctoral journey**

I started this thesis explaining how I came to be researching this topic; my very personal and practical interest in what makes living in an intentional community possible into older age. Visiting existing intentional communities has opened my eyes to the variety in the world of intentional communities in the South of England and to ways of living and sharing I would not have thought feasible or sustainable before I started this research.

The research has also crystallised some very important ideas, caveats and principles and practices for me and I hope contributed to *practical* knowledge about living in intentional communities, by opening up the kinds of decisions, choices and compromises that have to be made to develop such projects and to sustain a more collective way of life in the context of an increasingly individualistic society. The research has made me more thoughtful about these communities and what they mean. I have also appreciated the value of spending time learning from people who are open and willing to discuss their experiences of living in intentional communities, often choosing this way of life in opposition to housing conventions; especially older people, who have many interesting stories to tell.

The journey has also helped me to acknowledge the complexity and intensity of academic research. When I started, three years sounded a long time to conduct what seemed like a small, focussed piece of research. Yet the writing up period alone has taken more time than I could have imagined at the outset. I now understand the intensity of undertaking such a carefully framed and considered analysis of any phenomenon. Immersion, reflection, digestion, cogitation, obfuscation, conversion, reversion, diversion, frustration, revelation, exhilaration, distillation, revision and finally fleeting moments of conclusion, best describe for me the contorted journey involved.

I have also come to see something of what Savage calls 'the messiness and indeterminacy of the research process itself' (Savage, 2010: x), to recognise that research is, itself, socially constructed and therefore the rules and conventions of its processes open to dissection too. This has entailed a further opening of my mind. I hope that it's not the end of my journey in this respect.

## **Going Forward: impact and future research**

At the start, I expressed a commitment to producing research that could be of value to those who had the generosity to participate in it. This seems all the more important to me, given that I am researching a set of practices that lack recognition in mainstream UK culture and are largely ignored in housing policy and practice. Whilst I hope that some of what I have written here is useful from a practical point of view, it is more likely that subsequent adaptations and versions of the knowledge gained through this study will meet this commitment.

In terms of impact, once again, future work based on this is more likely to reach wider audiences than a thesis. However, my engagement with two sets of ESRC seminar series (Home Space? Public and Private in new welfare settings Collaborative Housing and Community Resilience), a Parliamentary launch of 'Cohousing: Shared Futures' (a report from a two-year knowledge-exchange programme involving cohousing practitioners and academics) and several national and local conference presentations, bodes well for future interest.

In relation policy recommendations, these seem paradoxical in a PhD: the detailed and nuanced explorations required for a PhD do not fit easily with the executive summary style of recommendations policy makers seek. Nevertheless, in a nutshell, this research suggests that there is enough potential benefit within intentional communities, particularly social-ownership ones, to warrant the following recommendations to government:

- a) Include intentional communities and other types of self-determining collaborative housing arrangements as a category in the UK census, so this way of life becomes a more visible choice for a wider range of people
- b) Facilitate intentional communities having a higher profile in the range of housing choices available in the UK, building on the relevant recommendations made in the HAPPI report (HAPPI, 2009)
- c) Focus policies on building greater governmental support for intergenerational community-led housing initiatives, including addressing the three most significant obstacles to the development of all types of intentional communities - finance, land and planning
- d) Re-introduce development support for social-ownership model communities (including housing Co-operatives), as a proven method providing truly affordable, stable and secure homes for people not interested in, or unable to afford home ownership.

Important research questions are also worthy of further attention, not least of which is the question of how older members of long-standing intentional communities will manage their care experiences moving into their fourth age. How will a balance between independence and

interdependence in such communities be maintained when members become less able? A longitudinal study of existing members would help us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these different ways of living as ageing makes its varied impacts. Again, this could build understanding that could also shed light on what works and doesn't work in contemporary housing choices for older people.

Further research questions suggested by my study include the exploration of ethnicity (page 110) social class (page 111) and sexuality (page 129) amongst the population of people living in intentional communities, which would address the deficit in such communities not being recognised in the UK census. Aguilar has recently made an important contribution to addressing unintentional exclusions in her work on food choices and social class in intentional communities in the USA (Aguilar, 2015) and I have mentioned how the ESRC seminar series on Collaborative Housing has also acknowledged the need for such research in the UK (page 110).

Some important housing policy-orientated research questions also arise from this research. In what ways have housing Co-operatives worked in the UK context and what factors have operated to limit their wider uptake? What more could they offer, especially for people who could benefit from the flexibility of a social-ownership model, building on Jarvis's observations from Christiania in Denmark (Jarvis, 2013)? As CoHousing becomes more widely accepted within the UK housing context, can it only succeed if it remains aligned with ownership models of housing provision, or can mutual home ownership models like LILAC, offer more inclusive alternatives? Which forms of intentional communities achieve the low-impact environmental goals they aspire to and how can this be known?

Finally, if the boomer generation is showing increasing interest in new ways of living like CoHousing, it is important to further research why and how such interest is being engendered and what makes new developments possible and what the specific benefits for older people are. The research questions that have driven the present study address a significant gap in what is known, but there are many more gaps in this under-valued and under-explored alternative world.

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## APPENDIX 1 - Literature Search Strategy

**Main initial source:** SCOPUS search in 2013-14: limited to only social science & humanities. Followed by a new search in 2016 (results below in blue font).

Fundamental parameters:

- intentional communities: exclude religious focus/studies; only English-speaking;
- not looking at 'community': too broad a literature, need to be more specific
- not looking at 'housing': too broad a literature, specifically: communal/collective housing, and only where includes older people (can be intergenerational); 'housing and choice' AND older people/ageing
- not looking at 'ageing': too broad. Limit to 'ageing AND housing'; 'ageing and communal living'
- not looking at 'utopia': too broad a literature, need to be more specific.

SEARCH TERM	RESULTS	RELEVANT	DETAILS
"Intentional communities" in Apr 2014 In Mar 2016	74 104	26 +2	
exclude psychology & non-English Ignore learning disabilities; mainly religious; In 2016 also excluded: Environmental Science (9), Business, Management and Accounting (4), Computer Science	64 69	26 2	Varied Range from ecological & urban to therapeutic; some 'elder'  New on: social capital (Putnam), Italy; foodchoices and race, USA; motivations & curation, USA/Panama; food & farming in a Krishna IC, USA; spiritual ICs, USA. Selected 3 relevant.
"housing cooperatives"	645	9	Too much technical housing
exclude non-English; subject areas: psychology; environmental science; earth sciences; energy; business studies; economics; sources: Encyclopedia of Housing & Home; Journal – Child Welfare; Journal of Extension;	103		Still a lot of urban & regional studies and policy orientated
Add: "older"	16	9	International inc. Singapore, Sweden, USA, - selected where older people are the focus
"community" AND "home" AND "older people"	139 8	27	
exclude non-English; subject areas: psychology; environmental science; earth sciences; medicine; biochemistry; health professions	215		Majority are nursing and focused on treatments or care approaches
Exclude subject area: nursing	62	27	Selected focus on meanings of home and community or neighbourhood, some

SEARCH TERM	RESULTS	RELEVANT	DETAILS
			international; home as situated/place, ethnic minority groups; excluded learning disabled, narrow policy or care approaches. Others found via <i>Soc Sci &amp; Medicine</i>
<b>"Cohousing"</b>	40	6	
exclude psychological; human sciences; de-growth theories	30		Selected focus on describing or analyzing current cohousing developments, mainly in N Europe and USA.
<b>"senior cohousing"</b>	25	6	
Exclude environmental psychology; & papers already reviewed	21	6	Significant new articles; all European or USA; none in UK (already found Scanlon etc.)
<b>"Pensioners" OR "seniors" AND "communal housing"</b> Then tried , "Old* people" AND "communal housing" Then tried , "ageing" AND "communal housing"	1	0	
<b>"communal groups" OR "communes"</b> Limited to English language, social sciences, and UK	48	0	Selected 0. Many about Paris commune, or regional planning 'commune' as technical term for admin zone; many international, not UK;
<b>Housing AND choice AND old people (35);</b> exclude non-English and Singapore (32), and Medicine, earth, environmental, computer, decision sciences,	19	7	Selected those related to choices of older people about housing; UK & most relevant from USA; Encyclopedia of Housing = x2 and Housing Care & Support journal = x2 – need to access Univ of Brighton
<b>Housing AND choice – limited to UK and English language (76).</b>	76	7	Vast majority are about social housing choice, so picked the ones discussing wider discussion of choice in public policy (3) and those focused on old age (1) or home ownership (3)
<b>TOTAL REFERENCES:</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>Of which, 84 were accessible.</b>

**KEY JOURNALS WHERE RECENT CONTENT WAS REVIEWED:**

- Journal of Housing for the Elderly (International but mainly USA-based)



- Housing, Theory & Society (International but a lot of UK)
- Urban Research & Practice (international but a lot of UK).

## APPENDIX 2 - Individual Research Participant Information Sheet

### Study title: Why and how do older people live in 'intentional communities' in England?

#### Invitation

My name is Andrea Jones and I am a PhD researcher at University of Sussex. You can find out more about me and the context of this research at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/profiles/68612>. I'd like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and ask any questions you wish.

#### What is the purpose of the study?

The study aims to first, map the extent to which intentional communities like the one you live in include older people (namely, people aged around 60 or over), and what types of communities tend to include older people. The second goal of the research is to find out why older-aged members get involved and what kinds of resources they draw on in order to adopt this way of life and home setting. This second stage will include one or two interviews: the first interview will take about one to two hours (depending on how much the individual has to say), and the second is optional (taking place 1-2 weeks later) will take about 10-15 minutes, probably over the phone. The stories that I hear in these interviews will be used in my PhD research project and publications.

#### Who can participate?

I am inviting you to take part if you are aged around 60 or older and living in an intentional community. I aim to listen to the stories of at least 15-20 people like you from across England, but this number depends on how many people can take part.

#### Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, then please complete the consent form attached below. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

#### What will happen if I decide to take part?

Step 1: We will arrange a mutually convenient time and place for a first face-to-face interview and I will bring an audio recorder to record our conversation and a camera (if you agree to this). The first interview will last around one to two hours and will not have fixed questions; instead I will be asking you to tell me some stories from your life related to why you came to be living in your intentional community and what it takes to sustain living this way, day-to-day. I will prompt you by asking about specific aspects, such as what specific resources you need to have. I *may* take photos to help communicate aspects of what I learn from you *but only with your agreement*.

Step 2: After our interview, I will email you to ask you if you want to receive an audio copy of the interview. I will be re-listening to the interview a number of times to analyse what you have said. I will select quotes that are particularly relevant to my analysis.

Step 3: If you ask to receive the audio copy, about a week after I have sent you it, I will arrange to speak with you to discuss any further questions you may have, and also to see if you have

thought of anything further to add, or anything further you think I could do to answer the research questions.

**Will the location of my community and what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

I will take all reasonable and all possible steps to ensure the confidentiality of your information in the conduct of the research. This is something I will discuss with you at the beginning and end of the research, when you have seen the photos and had time to reflect on any elements that might identify you to others. All recordings, transcriptions or photos will be securely stored on a hard drive that only I have access to and all your responses will be stored under a pseudonym in order to make anonymous your information. Only I will have access to your real identity and the real identity of your community. All personal details will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Your participation will have the benefit of helping to further our understanding of older people's experience of intentional communities in England. It is also expected that the research will help inform policy-makers and housing providers about this under-researched and under-developed area of life. Unfortunately, there are no financial rewards for you giving up your time to take part.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The information I collect in this study will be used in writing my PhD thesis, and sections of it may also be used in conference papers, blogs, publications in academic journals, or books. I will retain the data until the research is complete, when the ESRC will require me to archive the data.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

I am conducting this research as a PhD student at the University of Sussex, in the school of Education and Social Work. My research study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) who will take an interest in the results of the research and archiving the data.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sussex Ethical Review board. The approval reference number is ER/AJ263/1.

**Who should I contact for further information?**

If you require any further information in the first case you can contact me (Andrea Jones) at [aj263@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:aj263@sussex.ac.uk), or by phone on 07906 575005. If you have any concerns or complaints you can contact my supervisor, Suzy Braye, on [s.braye@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.braye@sussex.ac.uk).

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you wish to take part in this study, you can opt in:

- ➔ Email me at [aj263@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:aj263@sussex.ac.uk) and
- ➔ Phone me on 07906 575005

I will get in touch as soon as possible to arrange a mutually convenient time and location for our interview.

**THANK YOU** for taking the time to read this information sheet.

**Date:** September 2014.

## APPENDIX 3 - Individual Research Participant Consent form

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions or anything is not clear, please ask me before you decide whether to take part. I will give you a copy of this consent form and the information sheet to keep so you can refer to them at any time.

<b>Your name &amp; Your preferred contact details:</b>	
<b>Your community name:</b>	
<b>Your address:</b>	
<b>Please read the statements below and indicate your answer.</b>	
<b>1.</b> "I agree to take part in these interviews. I have read and understood the information sheets and I have had the opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered satisfactorily."	<b>YES:</b> <b>NO:</b> (please tick one)
<b>2.</b> "I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can choose not to participate in part or all of the discussion and I can withdraw at any stage without being disadvantaged in any way."	<b>YES:</b> <b>NO:</b> (please tick one)
<b>3.</b> "I understand what I say may be used in the research report, but that no name or details will be given from which I could be identified."	<b>YES:</b> <b>NO:</b> (please tick one)
<b>4.</b> "I understand my personal information and my community's information will be kept confidential and will be stored securely. It will only be used for the purposes of this research study and will be safely archived when the study is over."	<b>YES:</b> <b>NO:</b> (please tick one)
<b>5.</b> "I agree to allow the interview to be audio-recorded, for the sole use of the researchers and the recordings safely archived when the study is over."	<b>YES:</b> <b>NO:</b> (please tick one)
<b>6.</b> "I agree to photographs being taken, for the sole use of the researchers, and the photos I have consented to being used will be safely archived when the study is over. All other photos will be destroyed."	<b>YES:</b> <b>NO:</b> (please tick one)

**Your signature:**

**Date:**

## APPENDIX 4 - Classification Questions for Interviewees

1. Age?	
2. Educational attainment: What is your highest educational qualification?	
3. What category best describes your ethnic group?*	
4. How would you best describe your 'profession'/work role during your working life?	
5. What was your average income during the last decade of your formal working life (using the following categories)?	
Less than £20,000	
£20,000 but < £40,000	
£40,000 but < £60,000	
£60,000 but < £100,000	
£100,000 and over	
6. What is the value of any property you own?	
Do not own a property	
Less than £125,000	
£125,000 but < £250,000	
£250,000 but < £500,000	
£500,000 or more	
7. What is your current income?	
Less than £15,000	
£15,000 but < £30,000	
£30,000 but < £60,000	
£60,000 but < £150,000	
£150,000 or more.	
7.1 Does this include the UK state pension?	
7.2 Approximately what percentage of your current income, if any, is from another pension (such as occupational pension)?	
8. Any other significant financial resources available to you, not included above?	

## APPENDIX 5 - Interview Topic Checklist

### **EXPLAIN:**

- a) Information sheet – reminder of their rights, given to read and then keep?
- b) Consent form – given to read; received back signed?
- c) Classification sheet – explained and ready to give at the end of the interview?
- d) Audio recording – explanation given about it's OK if I don't speak...

### **BACKGROUND:**

1. Can you tell me briefly about your life, where you grew up, and where you have lived before living here?
2. Can you tell me a bit more about how you came to be living in this community?
3. How has living here changed since you have lived here?

### **LIVING HERE NOW:**

4. How many people live in this community now, and roughly what ages are they?
5. What is your private space and what is shared with the community? + Is this the same for all members?
6. Who owns this community?
7. How much does it cost you, and other members, to live here? + How is this worked out?
8. What is the process that a new member has to go through to become a member of this community?
9. Are there any specific values that members have to 'sign up' to? + Are they written down?
10. Are there rules, and if so, are they written down? + Do they apply to everyone equally?

### **YOU, AND HOW YOU FIT IN:**

11. Why do you continue to live here?
12. What the best and worst aspects of living here?
13. What does a typical day living here look like for you?
14. What personal or emotional skills have you needed to have in order to live here?
15. If you had to summarise, in a nutshell, what it takes to live successfully in this community, what would you say?
16. Do you have a particular role in this community?
17. Do other members of the community feel like family?
18. Does your age play a part in how you fit in? + Did you, or could you have, lived in this way when you were younger?

### **FUTURE:**

19. How do you see your future living here?
20. Have you talked with the other older members about getting older here and what it might mean?
21. How do you feel in general about getting older?
22. If you couldn't live here where would you live?

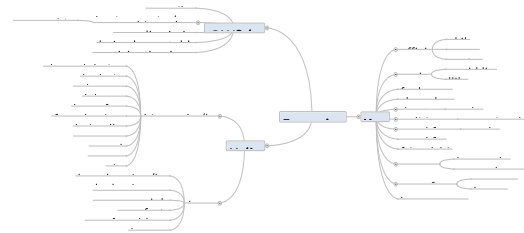
Anything else that you would like to add?

Anything else that you would like to ask me?

## APPENDIX 6 – Detailed Processes for Interview Data Preparation

Step in data organisation and interview data preparation	Details of how
1. Named & saved the recording	using iphone recording app 'Audio Memo'
2. Transferred audio file from my iphone to my PC	Via iTunes (due to size of files); ensuring .wav file format, ready for NVivo
<i>For the first x12 interviews:</i>	
3a. Listened through the interview and transcribed it into a Word doc, and anonymised it as I went along	Using Dragon Voice Recognition Software (VRS) to re-speak the interview, instead of typing; into MS Word
<i>For the subsequent x11 interviews:</i>	
3b. Listened through the audio recordings (only) and anonymised the audio recording as I went along	Using 'Audacity' software
4. Saved the anonymised audio recording	In .wav format files, making them importable into NVivo
<i>For all x23 interviews:</i>	
5. Uploaded all the anonymised transcripts and recordings into NVivo, ready for coding	
6. Printed the x12 anonymised transcripts, as an additional analysis method supporting the NVivo-based analysis.	

## APPENDIX 7 - Emerging Themes from Interviews about Why and How





**WHY?**

- efficient way to live
- skills sharing
- can work part-time
- cost of living is cheap
- sociable way of life
- avoid living alone, or loneliness
- 'like people'
- feels more 'natural', part of 'tribe'
- share household tasks with others
- done it a long time
- established way of life
- political values and choices
- committed to the principles of communal living
- good for bringing up children
- good for single parents
- good food; eating with others
- friendship and emotional support
- pragmatic or serendipity
- better than other choices available
- went along with a partner's wish to live this way
- use of resources/physical landscape
- access to a lot of space/land
- beautiful place to live
- become attached to this specific house/land

**HOW? (individual)**

- biography/background (social & cultural capital)
- through being part of social and political movements

- by being young in the 1970s
- educated about communal living
- 'alternative' family history
- lots of educational capital to none
- from having lots of political motivation to none
- being 'left'ish', 'Guardian readers
- unconventional OR conventional
- travellers of the world
- experience of ruptures
- risk takers
- by tolerating/being patient with other member's behaviours
- by having sophisticated understanding of human communication/emotions
- use non-violent communications (NVC); ideally...
- comfortable with lack of control
- comfortable with 'outsider' status; handle 'stigma'
- know your individual self

**HOW? (organisational criteria)**

- contributing to the community
- having equity/money OR having no money; co-ops loosely applied; ownership CoHousing is required, though can be mediated
- ownership OR renting (different models)
- non-discriminatory practices & values; open-minded
- being 'acceptable' to existing members; fitting in; pass the 'test'
- participation in meetings; take part in democratic decision-making.

## APPENDIX 8 - NVivo Coding Results

### Codes by frequency of references and of sources

Name	Description	Number of Sources Coded	Number of Coding References
HOW community	HOW the community is organised	25	847
Aging & generation	Talk about aging and generational aspects	25	609
what it takes - personal traits, aptitudes, skills needed	The kinds of behaviours, attitudes, aptitudes needed to live more communally	25	318
WHY live, now, originally	What interviewees say explicitly about why they live in the community	25	304
HOW individual	What interviewees say about how they live in the community	26	243
Identity, recognisable lives	The individual describing themselves, presenting, staking identity claims	25	173
Governance & rules	What rules and organisation make the sustaining of the community possible	23	141
Belonging including notions of family	How individuals express their sense of belonging, their thoughts about 'family', attachment, recognition	26	127
Space and boundaries, private & community, design & architecture	Different physical space e.g. where's the front door? Boundaries e.g. Negotiating who can go where?	24	124
Care in community	Stories of caring, across ages, mutual support etc.	19	84
Ideals, principals narrative	The ideals and principles and politics the individual articulates	21	74
Interstitial activities or strategy, cracks & gaps in dominant systems		19	62
conflict, disputes, resolution		14	50
Stories from, ideas of other communities	Stories that are told about other intentional communities	20	49
group dynamics, emotional		17	46
decision-making inc consensus		14	46
Agency, escape...		13	46
intergenerational, relations between younger & older	about pros and cons of intergenerational living	17	45
moving on or not	moving on or not in old age, as result of old age	17	45
coop experience, years, organisational ageing		16	44
membership or allocation process		15	44
family identity, single parent		15	43
attitude to ageing		17	42
Affordability & cost		17	41
Generation 60s and 70s	How the ideas of 1960s and 1970s shaped their thinking	17	41

retirement from work		10	39
frailty & illness & physical limits		13	38
class, inequality, access, diversity, gender (capitals)		11	37
class, occupational, work identity		23	34
children		12	34
negotiating boundaries, personal and physical		12	34
financial management		9	34
efficiency, organised		7	34
active ageing		12	33
personal boundaries		15	31
Historic conditions of possibility community	Factors outside the community that have shaped the existence of the community	17	30
Sharing common values	How having, or not having, common values make the community work (or not work)	15	30
rifts, splits and breakdowns		15	27
alternative, counter culture		7	27
rejection of conventional values		14	26
dying, death & illness		13	26
political, activist, networks	How political networks got them involved including environmental etc.	18	25
ambivalent		12	25
cooperative		11	25
limits of alternativeness V convention		12	24
time capacity of members		12	24
founders & non-founders	how being a founder or non-founder member impacts on how the community works	12	23
destabilised concepts of families of choice, queer		10	23
Class & inequality & access & diversity		8	23
village metaphor		8	23
Stigma & stereotypes		11	22
traditional, normative		11	21
rural urban factors		12	20
current activism and politics		12	20

friendship & relationship networks, through other people	How friendship & relationship networks got them involved	16	19
friendship		11	19
members coming and going		7	19
escape from...		13	18
free or v low cost		12	18
Tolerance		11	18
tribe, being part of something bigger	talk of tribes	9	18
creative		2	18
making your contribution		10	17
flexibility, adaptability		8	17
cohousing	relating to the cohousing model	6	17
the disruptive one		9	16
self determination		2	16
balance alternative V conventional		12	15
attitude towards money		11	15
nature, the environment	living closer to nature	11	14
design impact, architectural		10	14
implicit rules, values	implicit rules, values not written down	10	14
partners, couples within the community		8	14
legalities		7	14
generate income		1	14
serendipity, happenchance, luck	chance playing a part in their becoming part of the community	11	13
sociable		11	13
strategic planning	planning for the future of the community at key stages	10	13
political drive & energy		10	13
risk taker (my words)		9	13
early communard experiences, motivations		9	13
children		9	13

new, forming arrangements		3	13
acceptance, go with flow		10	12
1970s alternative lifestyles wave		9	12
understanding of members' difficulties		6	12
cope with or like change		8	11
birth, early family influence & shaping	How the individual's family and life circumstances helped pave their way into community	7	11
council or social housing estates		6	11
world traveller experiences		10	10
breakdown of conventional life	talk of breakdowns in conventional life	8	10
buildings maintenance		7	10
balance older people V younger, families		6	10
cooperative with others		6	10
fighting the system, playing the system	part of fighting the system, widest sense	6	10
downsizing		8	9
gender		8	9
productive, contributing		7	9
epiphany, moment of decisiveness		6	9
being single		6	9
squatting		4	9
land, house		8	8
comfortable, known, belonging		6	8
Compromise		6	8
skill set		6	8
proximity in day-to-day life		4	8
closing your door, open door, privacy control		4	8
food, home-grown		6	7
gender		6	7
friendship		6	7
seeking tribe or clan		6	7

their skills brought them into contact	skills required to be part of their community	6	7
unconventional, alternative		6	7
inadequacy of rental		5	7
1980s inc coop & HA dev, inc London-centred support agencies		4	7
anarchic	anarchistic practices	3	7
Not put self first		5	6
skills & other sharing, lighter footprint		5	6
relatives, biological family links		5	6
accepting care		4	6
able to let go		4	6
friends within	friendships within the community	4	6
Gives purpose or role	Examples of how living in community provides individuals with meaningful activities, sense of role, purpose	3	6
put self-first, follow heart		3	6
political activism		3	6
understanding		5	5
finding the front door - recognisable homes	First visit and me trying to find the front door	5	5
excitement		4	5
rent arrears		4	5
not fearful		4	5
natural, evolved	non-explicit orientation to looking out for others	4	5
wisdom, maturity		4	5
cohousing wave		3	5
limits of care		2	5
learning		4	4
locks & security		4	4
methodological, interviewee memory		4	4
institutional character, features, feel V homeliness		4	4
give and take		4	4
freedom		4	4

committed		4	4
Assertive		4	4
Senior communities	Talk of senior designed or only communities	4	4
working together		4	4
wellbeing		4	4
open mind		4	4
no pension		4	4
sugar daddy figure		4	4
sociable	being sociable with other people	4	4
single parent		3	4
security, holding, protective		3	4
current support systems		3	4
disability access		3	4
honesty		3	4
utopia used		2	4
spiritual	spiritual inc religious & broader inc. personal development	2	4
investment in eco technologies		1	4
joyful		3	3
listen to others		3	3
educational		3	3
enjoy sharing, enjoy the process		3	3
spiritual		3	3
staying in one place		3	3
no option to own		3	3
outdoor space		2	3
neighbours		2	3
counter loneliness		2	3
caring, supportive		2	3
aging bringing less fun, more structure		2	3

Occupy movement	related to the Occupy movement	1	3
policing		1	3
traveller V roots		1	3
social antenna	sensitivity to other's state of mind, or being	1	3
social housing	social housing including housing associations	2	2
prepared to take part in difficult conversations		2	2
sense of self		2	2
supportive		2	2
reflective (my words)		2	2
proximity to city		2	2
public sector sell-off sites		2	2
maturity		2	2
physical ability for practical work		2	2
willing to take part		2	2
Patience		2	2
commitment		2	2
connection to wider community		2	2
energy efficiency		2	2
determination, grit		2	2
friends or neighbours	some members are friends, some are just neighbours	2	2
food sharing		2	2
like people		2	2
money		2	2
look beyond surface of people's behaviour		2	2
learner		2	2
involvement, purposeful activity		2	2
humour		2	2
know neighbours		1	2
manages volunteers		1	2



different ways people use the space	1	2
dissatisfaction with normal life	1	2
cleaning, domestics	1	2
restless, uprooted,	1	2
security, safety	1	2
sympathy	1	1
still have a voice in coop	1	1
storage	1	1
trust	1	1
unconventional	1	1
politics and policies	1	1
playground, playful	1	1
open relationships	1	1
national	1	1
comradery	1	1
bringing or buying in care	1	1
anti-social, loner, introvert	1	1
anyone can	1	1
considerate	1	1
cutting edge	1	1
eating collectively	1	1
enriching	1	1
money for loanstock	1	1
let go of pettiness	1	1
live with human shortcomings	1	1
illness, personal challenges	1	1
having own kitchens & bathrooms	1	1

## APPENDIX 9 – Ethics Approval Certificate July 2014



University of Sussex

Certificate of Approval	
<b>Reference Number:</b>	ER/AJ263/1
<b>Title Of Project:</b>	Why and how do older people choose to live in intentional communities in England?
<b>Principal Investigator (PI):</b>	Andrea Jones
<b>Student:</b>	Andrea Jones
<b>Collaborators:</b>	Prof Suzy Braye
<b>Duration Of Approval:</b>	n/a
<b>Expected Start Date:</b>	21-Jul-2014
<b>Date Of Approval:</b>	14-Jul-2014
<b>Approval Expiry Date:</b>	21-Jul-2015
<b>Approved By:</b>	Jayne Paulin
<b>Name of Authorised Signatory:</b>	Stephen Shute
<b>Date:</b>	15-Jul-2014
<p>*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.</p> <p><b>Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:</b></p> <p>Amendments to protocol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.</li> </ul> <p>Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.</li> </ul> <p>Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.</li> </ul>	

## APPENDIX 10 – Example of a Profile of a Community (Anonymised)

**Type & location:** An urban CoHousing project, started in **early 2000s; land & house acquired in (date); most members moved in (date)**. Set in a quite central part of a city in (the South of England), but with unusually large area of land around it, on which the community intend to build as a second phase of development.

**Number of people in community:** (under 10), of whom most re adults are living on site, (couple of) teenagers, about half are over 60 years.

**History:** developed independently using the capital invested by members. They were a group for (around 10) years before they bought the land, meeting every month. The early vision of the community was much larger: about 25-30 families were involved at the start and the vision included home-schooling and a central play area for kids. Over the years the profile of those involved changed and got older. The monthly meetings had periods of great frustration because of the difficulty of making links with the different authorities controlling the buying and selling of local land, the rules and regulations surrounding land acquisition, planning, and the general lack of awareness of groups of people trying to create a home together as opposed to as individual households or as traditional property developers. The group had periods of time when they stopped, and it was during one of these inert phases that one member of the group became aware of this site/house coming up the sale. They always had mix of people who had no financial capital and either wanted to or had no option but to rent, and others who had financial capital and had the option to pursue a more ownership-based model. It was the people with individual financial capital (mostly from having equity in a house that they owned) who organised to buy the land. Then this core group invited others to join them once it was clear that the purchase was likely to succeed. When they finally bought the house they had a period of time doing basic renovations before they moved in. They have managed to live together temporarily communally for a few years whilst they seek planning permission for the individual houses.

**Physical layout:** the house is set within an area of land which is surrounded on all sides by housing developments; it has mature trees so feels like a slice of rural space in the middle of an urban area. The building has a long history and renovation is taking time and investment of money to meet modern standards including disabled access. The current group live in this main building temporarily – they each have a private room and share the rest - while they are planning to build on the garden area. Once these individual/household houses are built they will have the main house as the ‘common house’ (CoHousing term).

**Organisation & tenancy:** this is an ownership-based CoHousing project, they are legally a not-for-profit company, with each individual as ‘Director’, plus they are a cooperative organisation with recognised Constitution and rules relating to democratic decision-making and membership rights and responsibilities. It is one member one vote. The CoHousing organisation owns the land and the house and they are currently working on their planning application to build further homes on the site. During this temporary phase (before the individual houses are built) each member is both tenant and a partner in a not-for-profit company, which owns the land and the house. There have been various incarnations of the organisation, so they are still working this out.

One of the distinctive features of the membership of this coop is the transitional stage they are at.

**Cost:** Each member invested around £25-30,000 to buy the plot and the old house, and the repair work was covered by a mortgage of around £250,000. Currently (temporarily) each member is renting their room, charged at enough to cover the cost of the mortgage plus some extra to build up capital for the organisation. The average cost per tenant is £300 per room (includes mortgage plus repairs) and around £70 per month for utilities and bills. This includes rent, utility bills including internet, costs of running the communal facilities (e.g. washing machines).

Once the new houses are built, each member will end up being like a lease-holder to the CoHousing company (once the individual houses are built). Each member will have to pay in whatever the cost of building their individual house costs (average about £100,000 each). The exact financial mechanisms for achieving this have not yet been worked out.

**Rules & how things run:** The structure, policies and procedures are not finalised and each stage of developing the policies and procedures tends to occur as and when these are needed. They do sometimes have communal meals but only occasionally. They have minimal rotas so far, mainly for everyday cleaning. They intend to more of the organisational structure and rules once the new houses are built. There are some roles that have evolved and some are compensated for it, some are not. They have ground rules for the meetings. e.g. 3 minutes' silence at the start of their regular meetings ('because things can be quite heated'). For all meetings minutes are taken and there is a chair who acts to control the course of the meeting. Members describe their intention to try to develop an inclusive feeling about the meetings, and describe how they aspire to making space for quiet people to speak as well as those who are confident in such spaces.

**Ideological focus?** They claim to have none, except a vague orientation towards being greenish, leftish, and often having worked during their careers/working lives in some sort of community service, including public sector organisations.

**Selected highlights from how they describe themselves on Diggers & Dreamers at Sept 2014:**  
*Not included in order to protect anonymity.*

## APPENDIX 11 – Summary of the Interviewee’s Profiles, including Classificatory Identity

	Community Number (& location & organisational type)	Age categ	Years lived in this IC	Gender	Self-described Ethnicity (R to D = Reluctant to define)	Highest education attainment	Self-described work or profession	Average income during last decade of formal working life per annum	Value of any property owned	Current income, inc. state or occupational pension per annum	Other information relating to housing history and how they got by	Partner/Marital status	Had children
17	6 urban, coop/cohousing	60-64	40-44	F	White British	Degree	Public sector manager	£20,000 but < £40,000	Do not own	£30,000 but <£60,000	Still working FT	Married	Y
20	8 rural, coop	80-84	40-44	M	British	MPhil	Lecturer	Less than £20,000	Less than £125,000	£15,000 but <£30,000	Gets state & occupational pension (about 30% of income) & other income (30%)	Did have partner; now single	Y
6	4 urban, coop	55-59	35-39	F	Missing (White)	Missing data	Nurse	Missing data	Do not own	Missing data	Gets occupational pension	D/K	Y
15	6 urban, coop/cohousing	60-64	35-39	F	White British	BSc Hons	Varied; RSW, & Health service	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Gets state pension & disability benefits	Was married; now single	Y
4	3 urban, coop	55-59	30-34	F	Mixed Euro	MA	Varied; teacher; activist	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Gets benefits; long-standing chronic ill health	Partners in past; now single	Y
16	6 urban, coop/cohousing	50-54	30-34	F	White British	Degree	Teacher	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Still working PT	Married	Y
19	8 rural, coop	65-69	25-29	M	British	Masters	Academic/lecturer	£20,000 but < £40,000	£125,000 but < £250,000	Less than £15,000	Gets state & occupational pension (about 50% of income); works PT	Has partner	Y
7	5 rural, coop	65-69	20-24	F	White British	BA Hons; PDES/FL	Varied; Educator, researcher	Less than £20,000	Less than £125,000	Less than £15,000	Gets state pension; <u>owns property</u> within the IC	Single	Y
9	5 rural, coop	70-74	20-24	F	White (South African)	BA	Varied; professional	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Gets state pension only; on housing benefit	Partner (within IC)	Y

							Secretary; therapist						
11	5 rural, coop	65-69	20-24	M	White British	BA	Writer/editor	£20,000 but < £40,000	£125,000 but < £250,000	£30,000 but <£60,000	Gets state pension & occupational pension (about 5% of income); still working FT	Partner (within IC)	N
13	6 urban, coop/cohousing	80-84	20-24	F	British	Teaching qualification	Varied; Teacher; legal; Parole & Youth work	£20,000 but < £40,000	Do not own	£15,000 but <£30,000	Gets state & occupational pension.	Was married; now single	Y
12	1 semi-rural, cohousing	60-64	15-19	M	White Euro	MA	Teacher	£20,000 but < £40,000	£500,000 or more	£15,000 but <£30,000	<u>Owns property</u> within the IC	Married	Y
14	6 urban, coop/cohousing	60-64	15-19	F	White British	A Levels & NVQ4	Varied; Training in Mental Health	£20,000 but < £40,000	Do not own	£15,000 but <£30,000	Gets state & occupational pension (about 15% of income)	Was married; now single	N
5	4 urban, coop	70-74	10-14	M	White British	none	Varied; hairdresser; postal work	£20,000 but < £40,000	£125,000 but < £250,000	£15,000 but <£30,000	Inherited share of property which sold; gets occupational & state pension	Single	N
8	5 rural, coop	50-54	10-14	F	White British	PG Dip	Varied; housing/youth worker; Counsellor	Less than £20,000	£125,000 but < £250,000	£15,000 but <£30,000	Gets bereaved widowed parent's pension; <u>owns property</u> within the IC	Has partner (gay)	Y
10	5 rural, coop	65-69	10-14	M	Welsh/Polish	O'Levels	Varied; Engineering	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Gets state pension only	Was married; now single	Y
1	1 semi-rural, cohousing	70-74	5-9	M	White British (R to D)	PG Certificate Education	Management	£20,000 but < £40,000	£125,000 but < £250,000	£15,000 but <£30,000	<u>Owns property</u> outside the IC Not enough value in it to buy into this community	Widower	Y
2	2 semi-rural, ecovillage	55-59	1-4	M	White British (R to D)	Missing data	Varied; film making; activist	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Owned property in the past; gets state benefits despite being nomadic	Was married; now single	Y
3	2 semi-rural, ecovillage	55-59	1-4	F	English/British	OND Hotel & Catering	Varied; housekeeper; dinner lady	Less than £20,000	Do not own	Less than £15,000	Owned property in the past; sold to go travelling; rented since	Married, lives with husband	Y
18	7 urban, coop	60-64	1-4	F	White British (R to D)	BA Hons	Varied; Teacher, Writer	£20,000 but < £40,000	Do not own. Did in past.	Less than £15,000	Still working PT; gets state & occupational pension (about 35% of income)	Was married; now single	Y

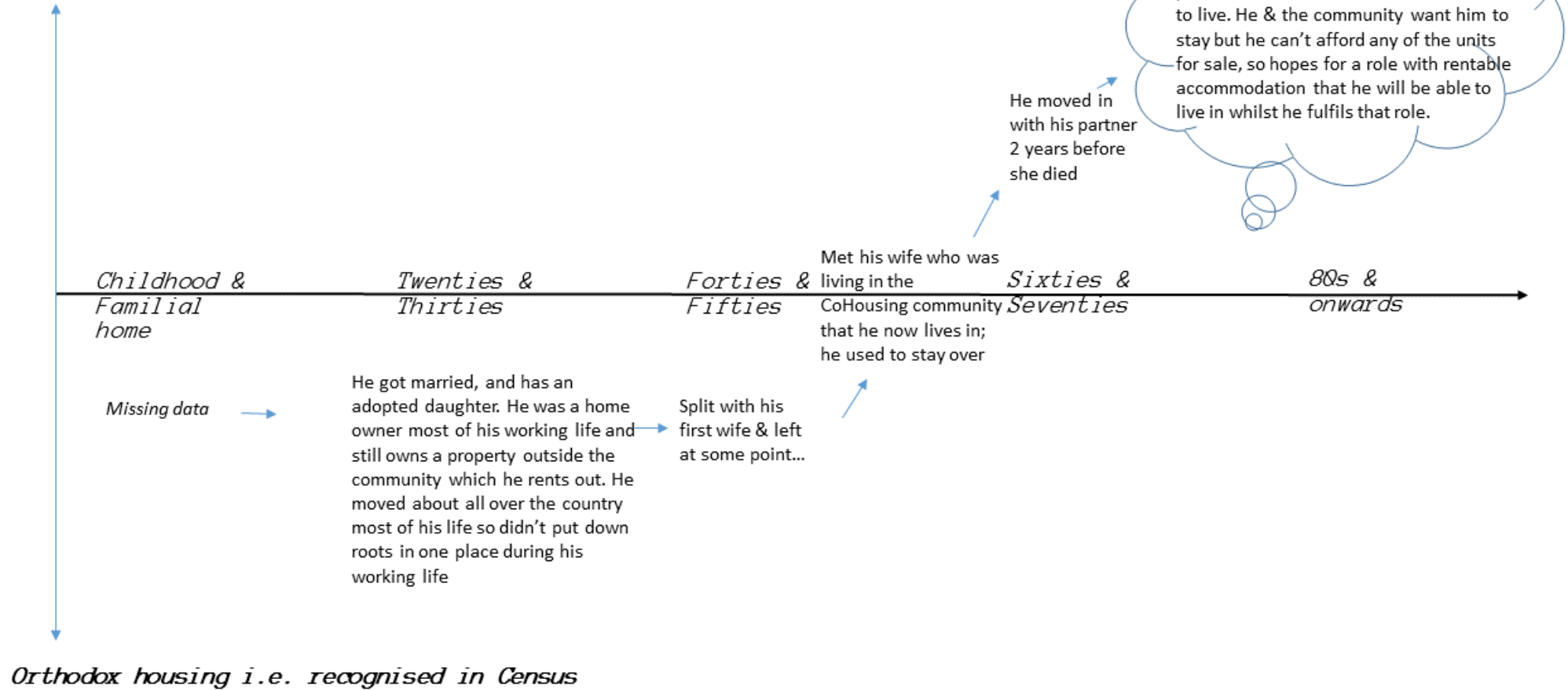
21	9 urban, coop/cohousing	65-69	1-4	M	White British	MA	Public sector management	£20,000 but < £40,000	£125,000 but < £250,000	£15,000 but <£30,000	<u>Owens property</u> outside the IC; gets state & occupational pension (about 25% of income)	Was married	Y
22	9 urban, coop/cohousing	65-69	1-4	F	White British	Post-grad certificate	Varied; librarian; teacher; charity & local authority work	£20,000 but < £40,000	£125,000 but < £250,000. Rents it out.	Less than £15,000	<u>Inherited property</u> ; gets state & occupational pensions & other income sources (about 65% of income)	Single	N
23	9 urban, coop/cohousing	60-64	1-4	M	White British	Degree	Teacher of arts/crafts	Less than £20,000	Less than £125,000	£15,000 but <£30,000	Still working PT	Has partner	Y

## **APPENDIX 12 – All Interviewees Housing Pathways**



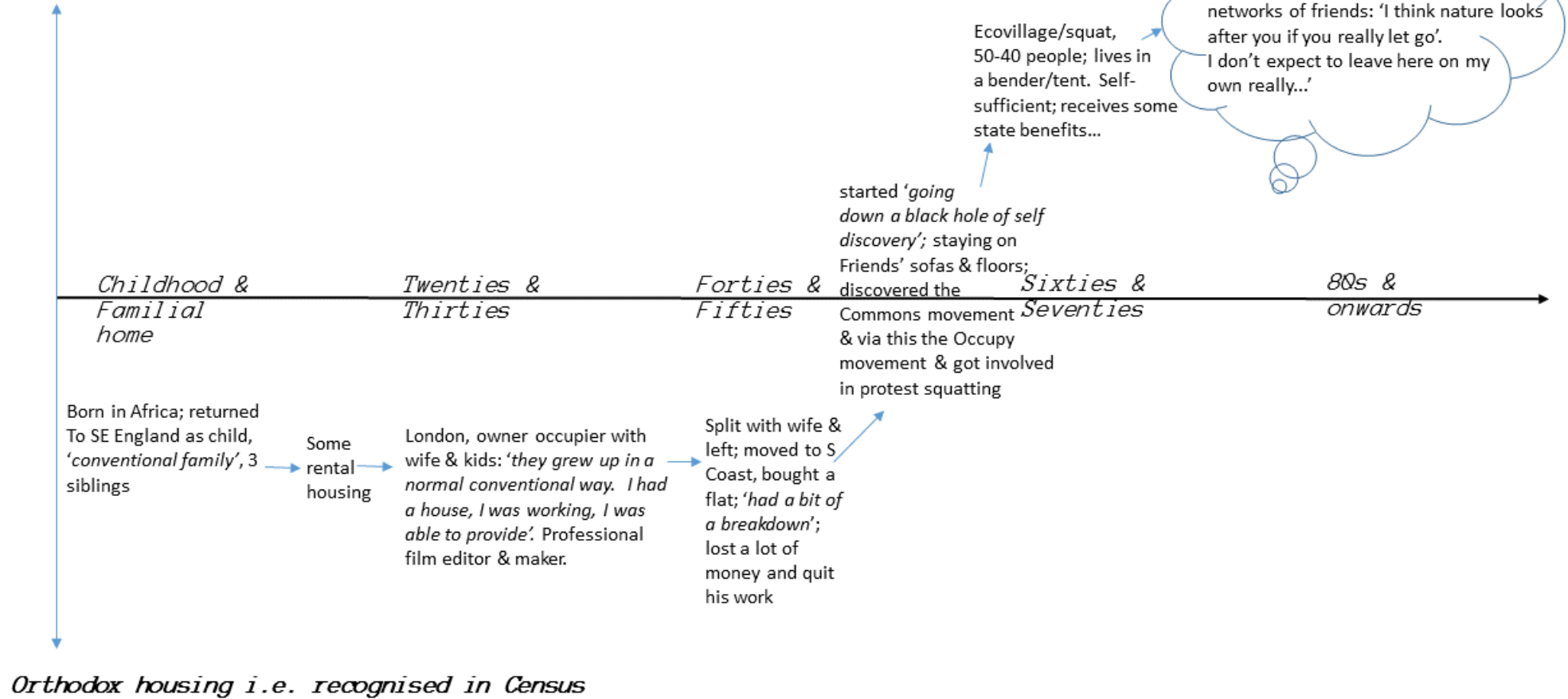
**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 1, COMMUNITY 1**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



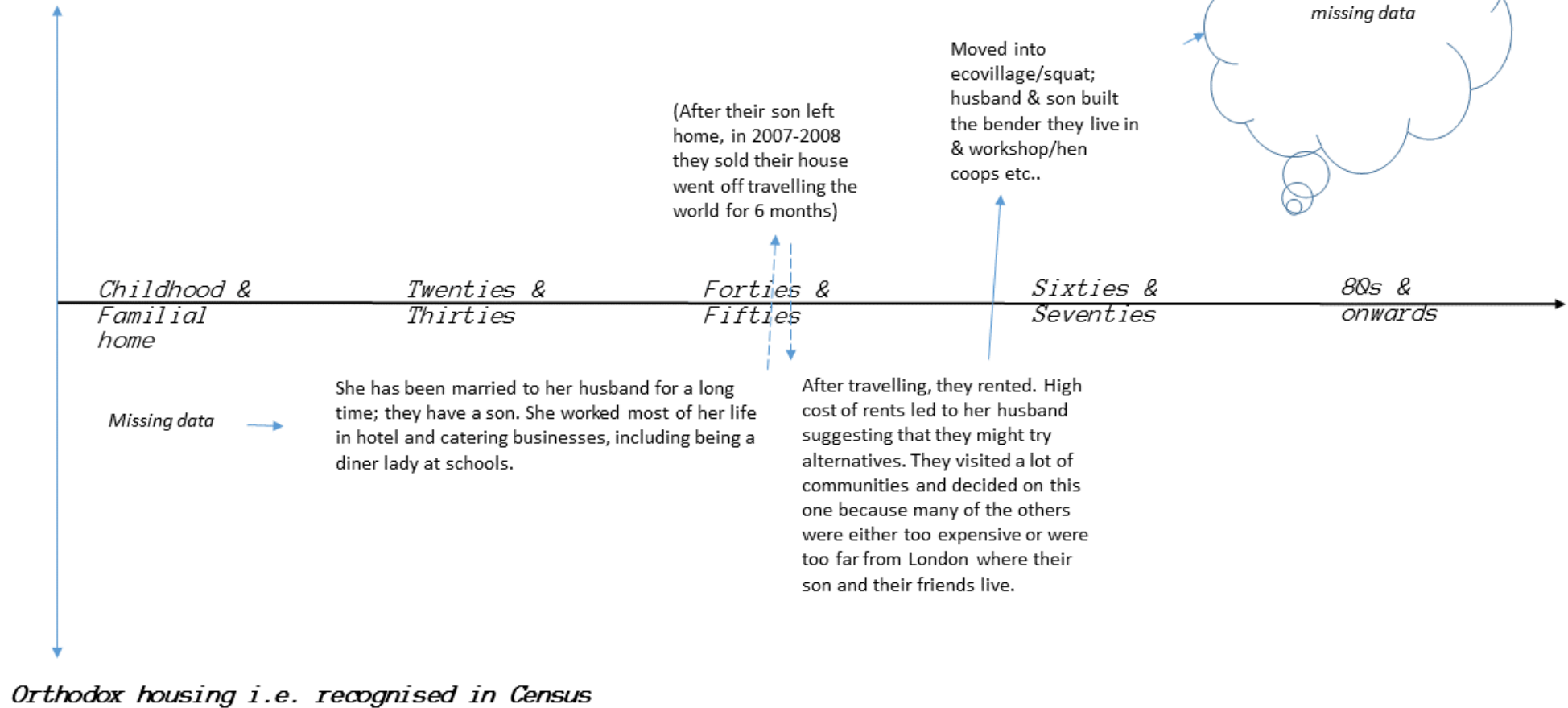
**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 2, COMMUNITY 2**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



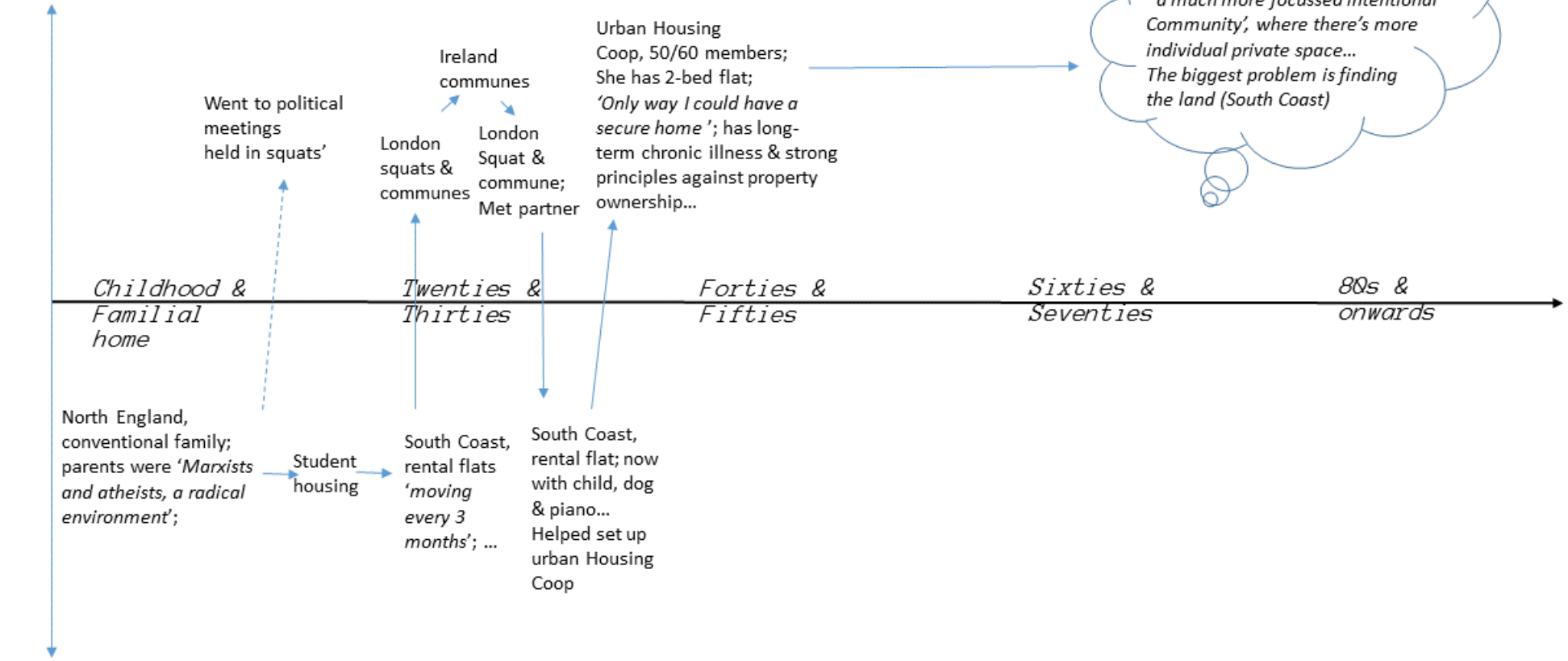
HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 3, COMMUNITY 2

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 4, COMMUNITY 3**

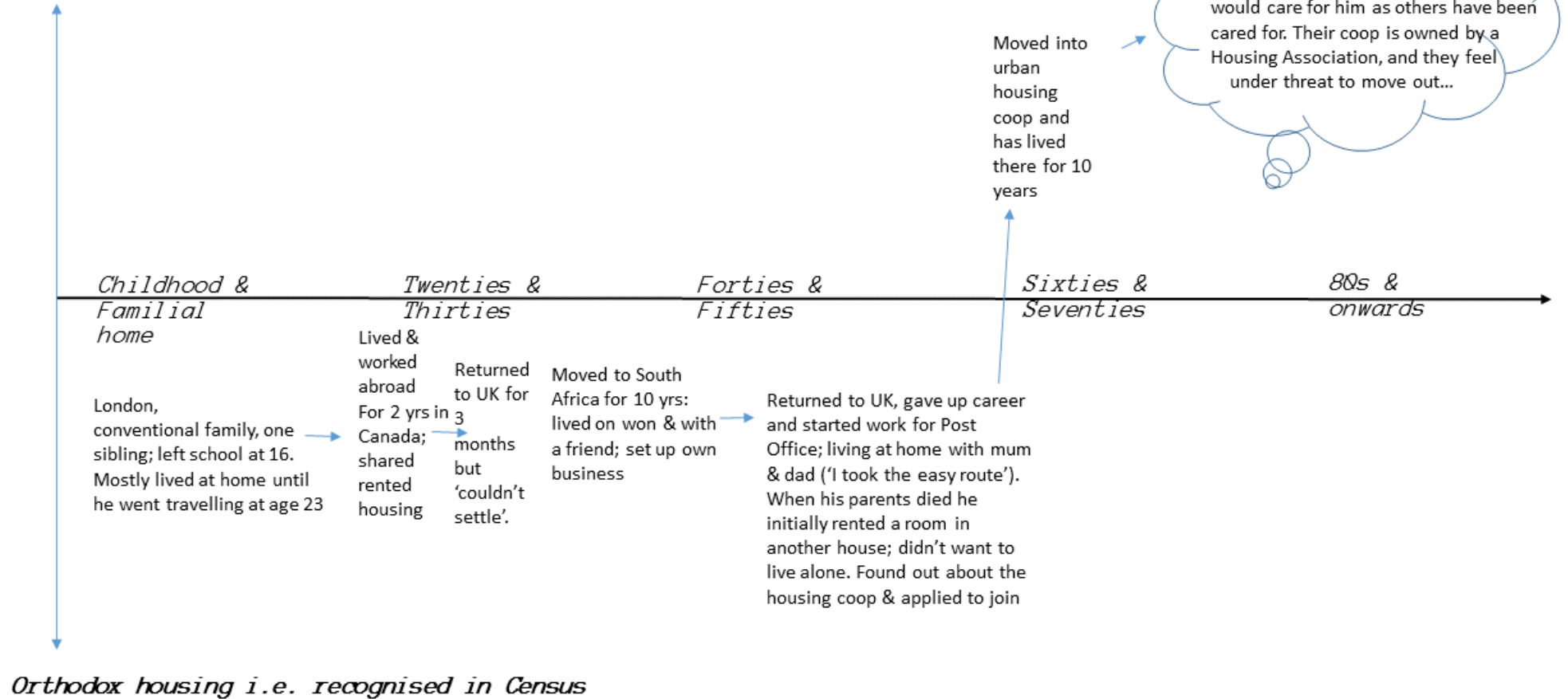
*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



*Orthodox housing i.e. recognised in Census*

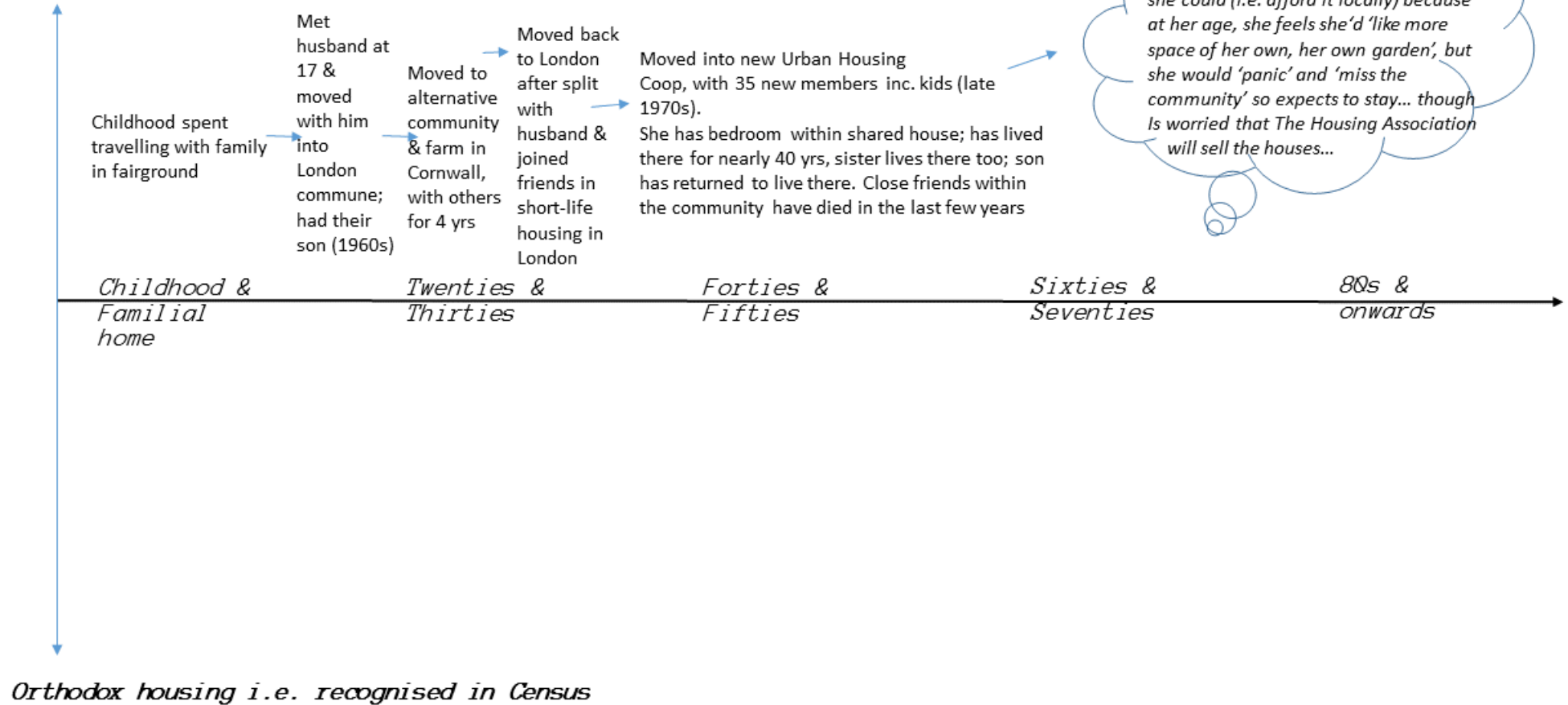
**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 5, COMMUNITY 4**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



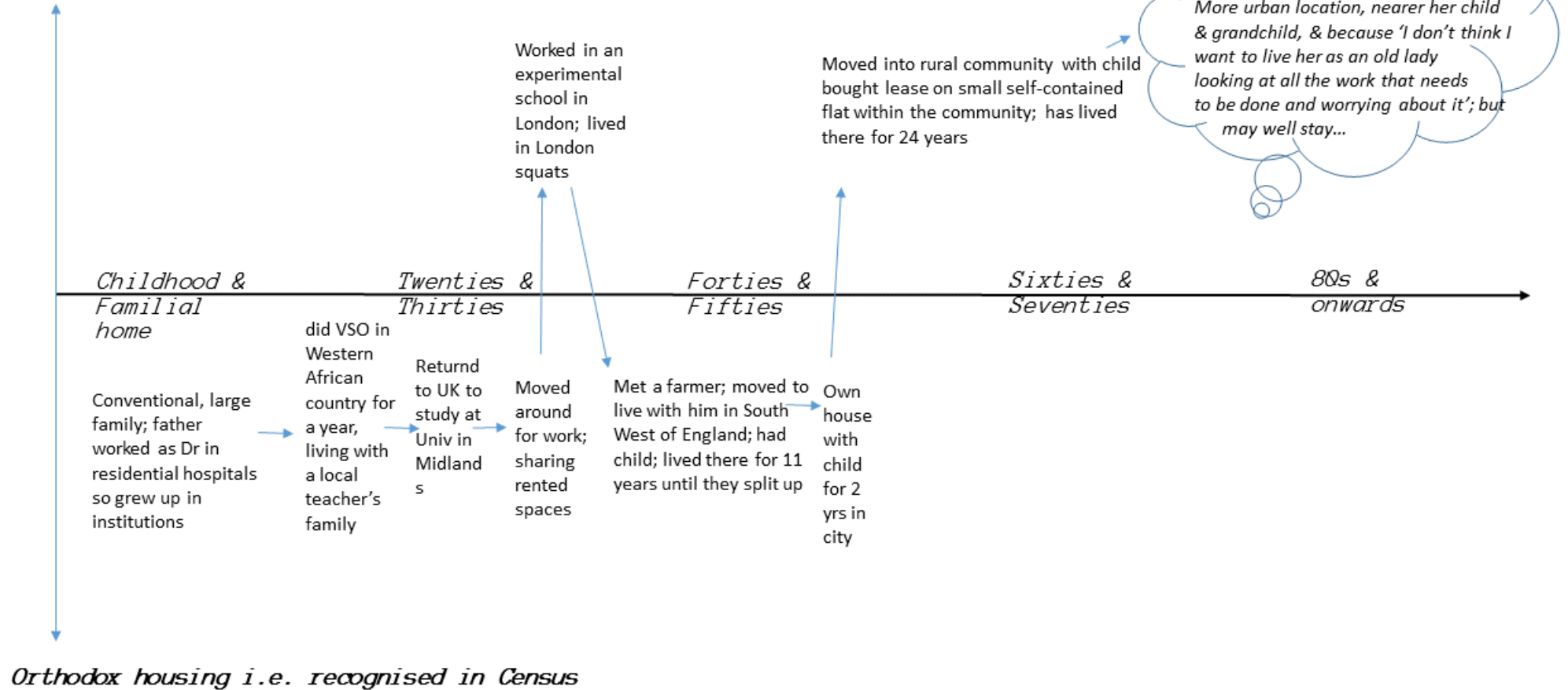
**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 6, COMMUNITY 4**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



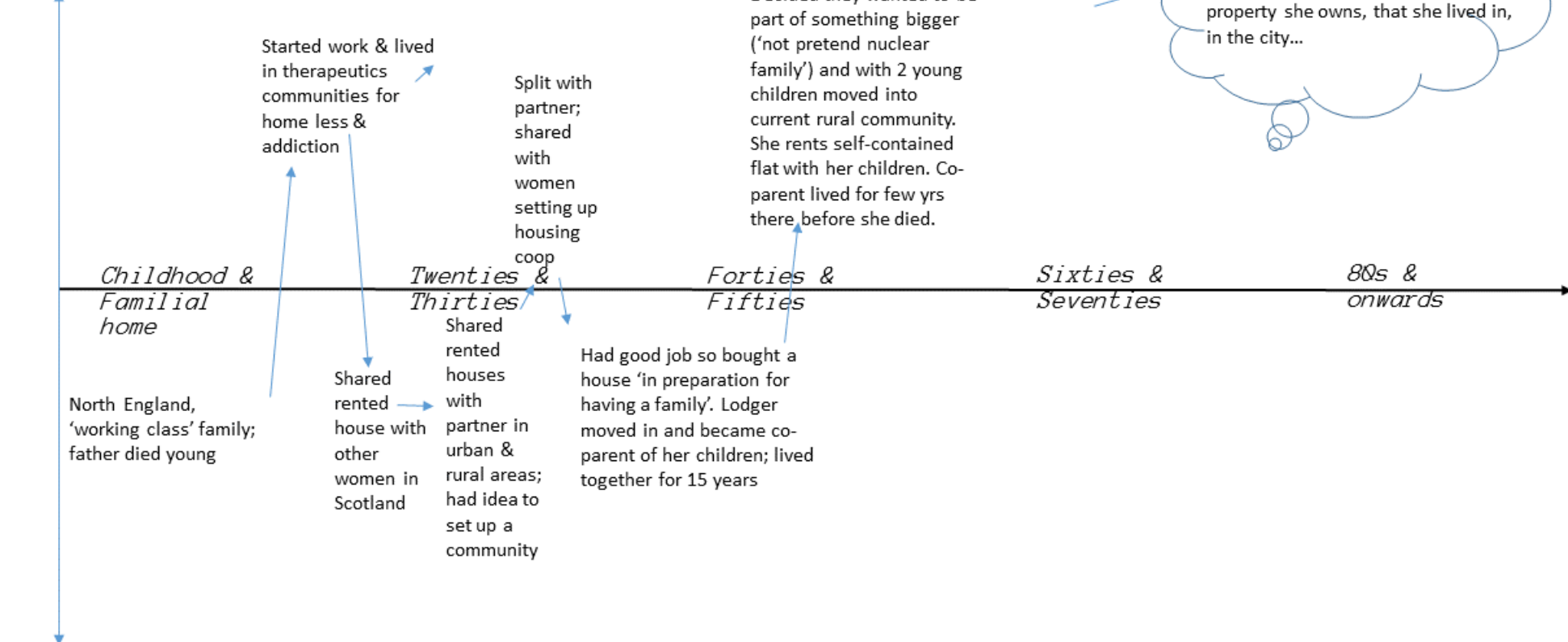
HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 7, COMMUNITY 5

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 8, COMMUNITY 5**

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*

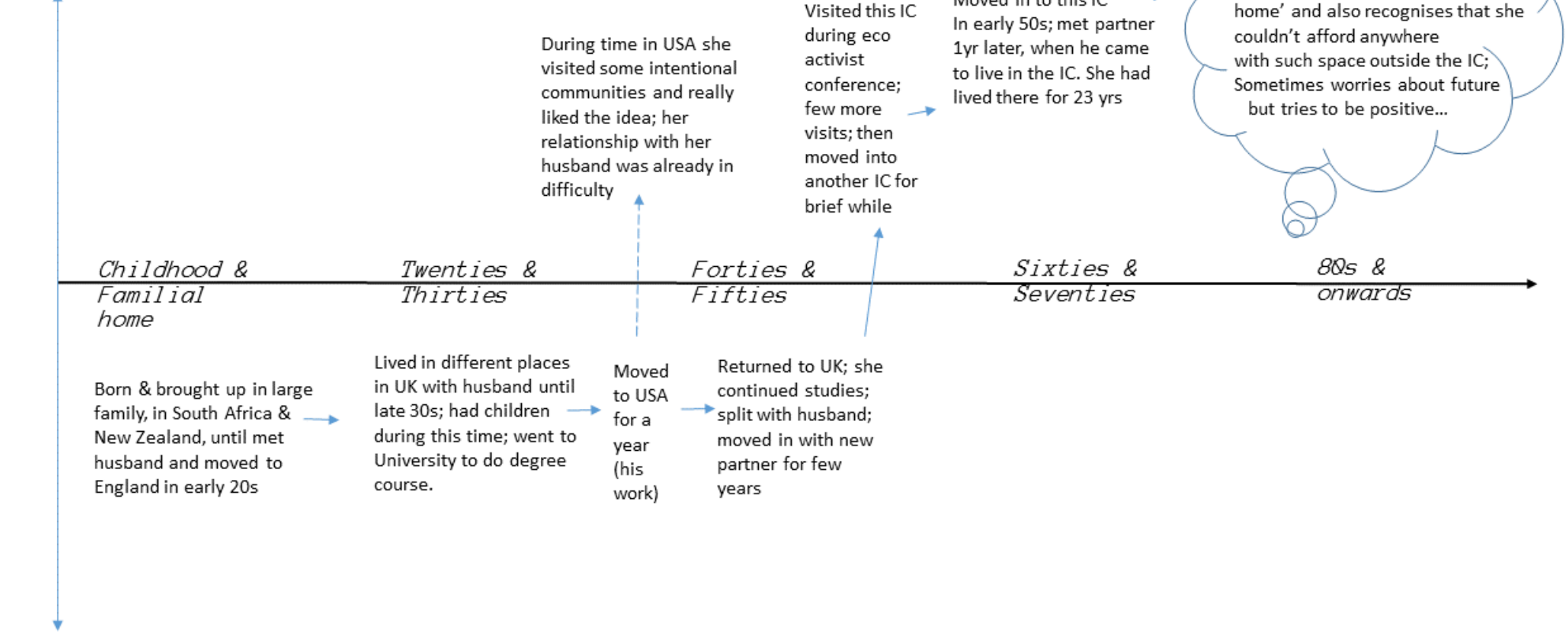
**Future?**

She doesn't know if she will stay here when she's older. She still has a property she owns, that she lived in, in the city...



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 9, COMMUNITY 5**

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*

**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 10, COMMUNITY 5**

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*

*Childhood &  
Familial  
home*

Grew up in traditional family with siblings; immigrant family, living in Wales. Working class and religious family; left school at 16; did 5 yrs engineering apprenticeship; continued to live at home until he married in early 20s

*Twenties &  
Thirties*

Married 1<sup>st</sup> wife; moved towns within Wales; had children; worked in different sectors including coal mines till his mid thirties. He was involved as an activist in the NUM strikes of 1980s; after strike was broken work life was difficult. Met a woman at a conference, which precipitated end of his marriage...

*Forties &  
Fifties*

Left his 1<sup>st</sup> marriage for new partner – ‘a new chapter in my life’; had a child; married; moved around with her work for few yrs & he was house husband...

*Sixties &  
Seventies*

He split with 2<sup>nd</sup> wife in early 50s; his child from 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage moved abroad with mum; he moved around

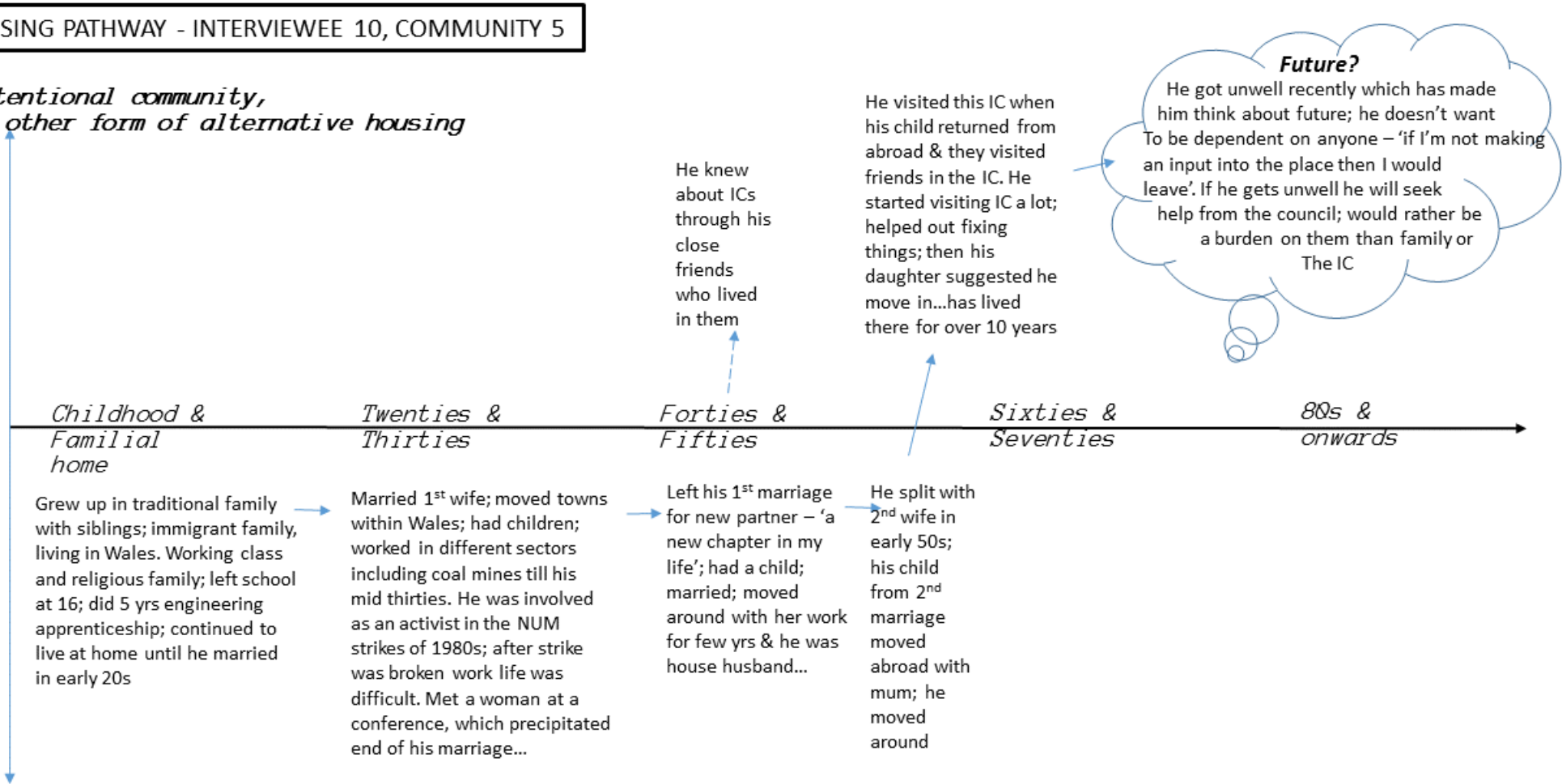
**Future?**

He got unwell recently which has made him think about future; he doesn't want to be dependent on anyone – ‘if I'm not making an input into the place then I would leave’. If he gets unwell he will seek help from the council; would rather be a burden on them than family or The IC

He knew about ICs through his close friends who lived in them

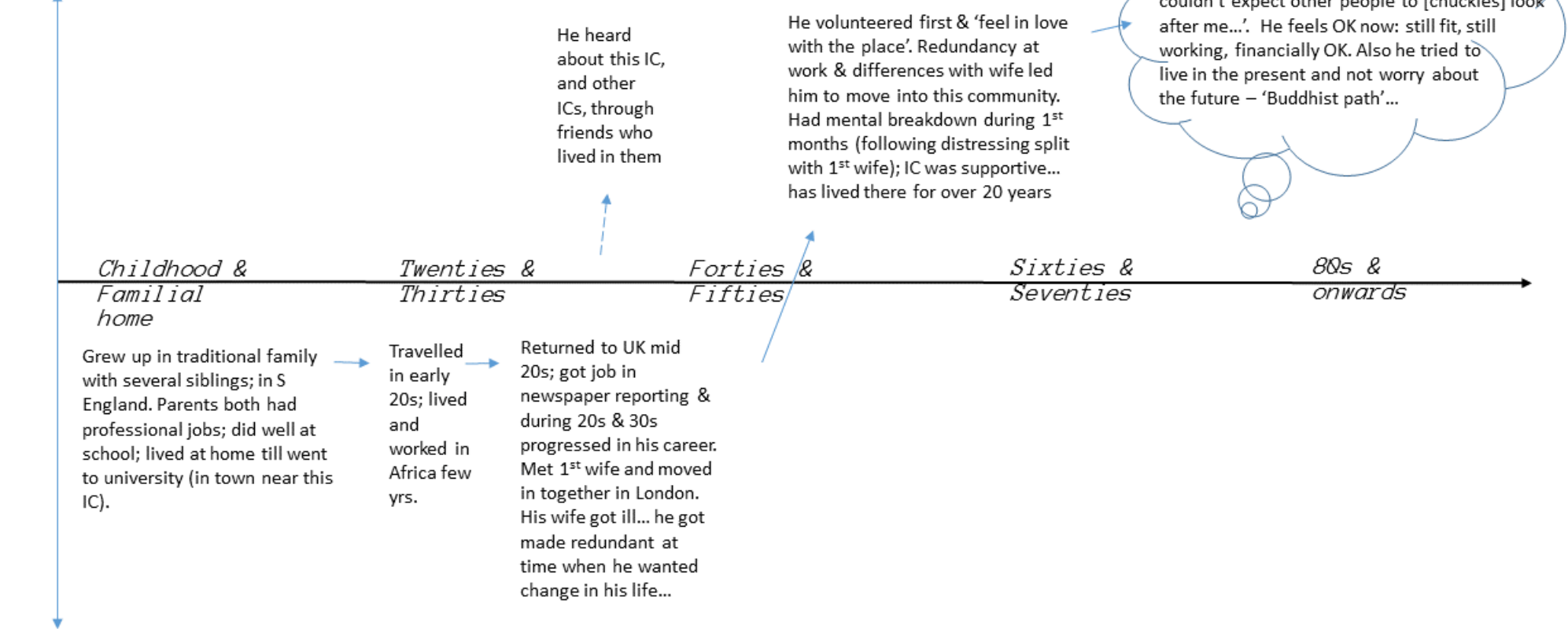
He visited this IC when his child returned from abroad & they visited friends in the IC. He started visiting IC a lot; helped out fixing things; then his daughter suggested he move in...has lived there for over 10 years

*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 11, COMMUNITY 5**

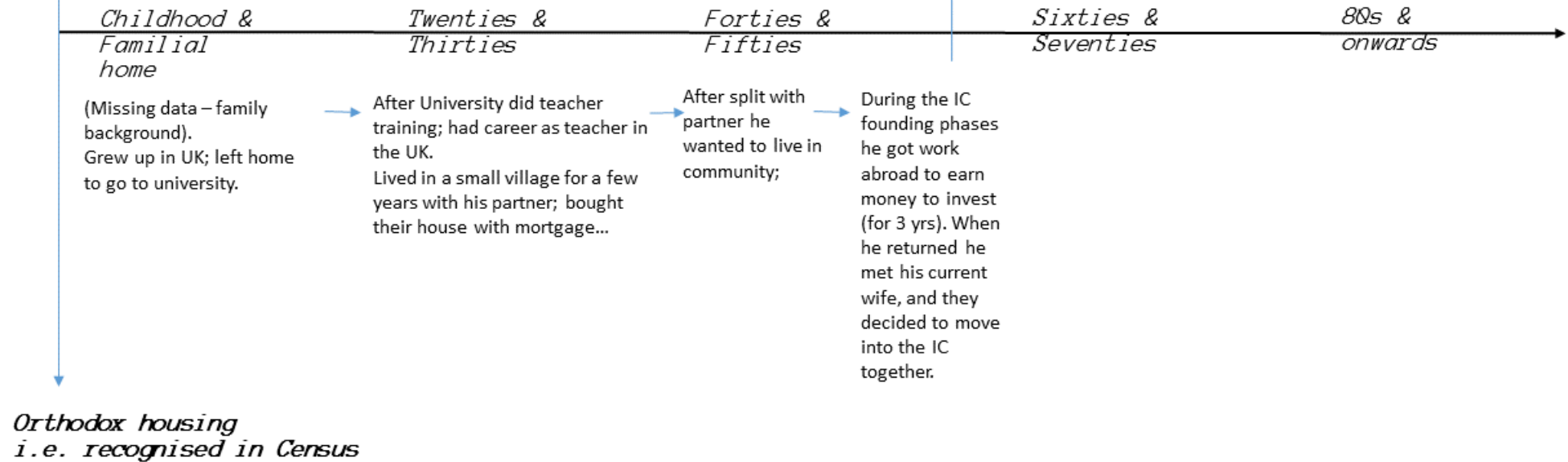
*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*

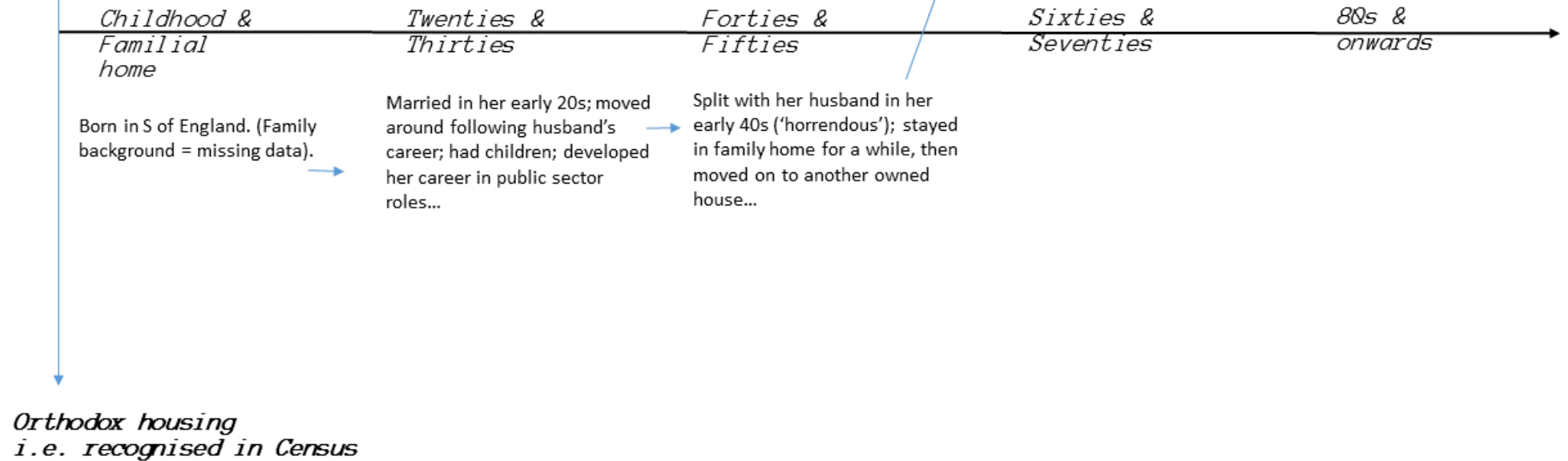
HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 12, COMMUNITY 1

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



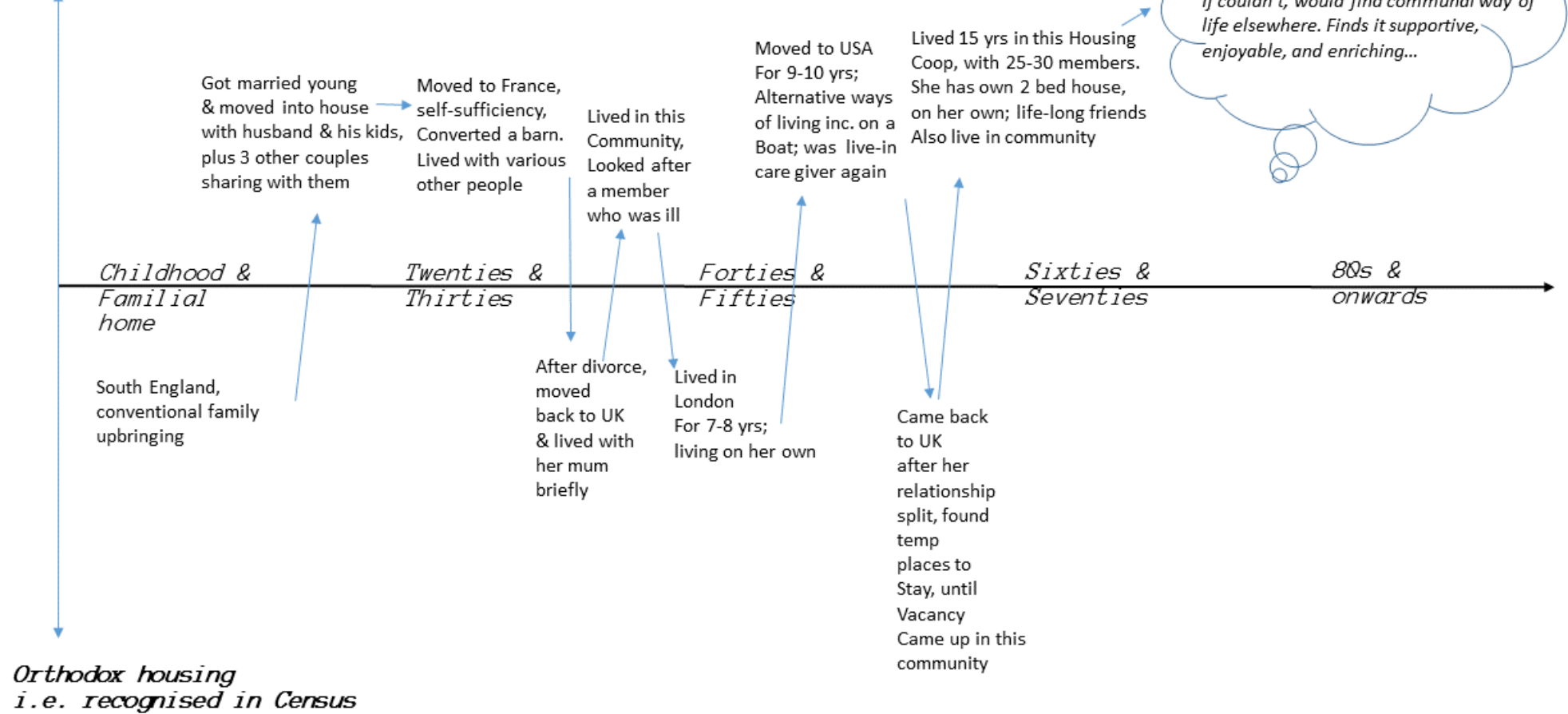
HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 13, COMMUNITY 6

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 14, COMMUNITY 6**

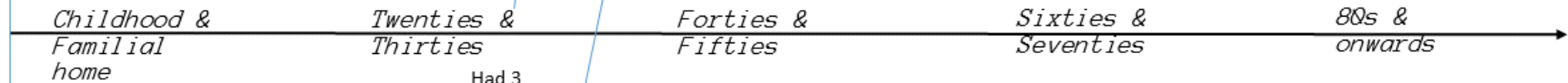
*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 15, COMMUNITY 6**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*

*Orthodox housing i.e. recognised in Census*



Grew up in 'poor working class family' in North of England; father was in army, & died when she was young. Mother remarried & she had difficult relationship with her step-father...

Left school & home at 16; Moved with her partner to London; worked & did A levels at night class

Had 3 children in Her early 20s; Moved to Council House in Midlands on 'a very rough housing estate'; didn't like it &; split with partner

She heard about housing coops & started looking for alternative communities for her & her kids to live in

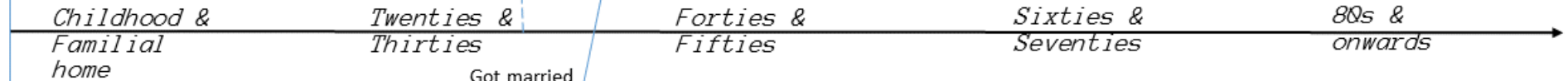
Lived in this coop for 30+ yrs; joined soon after it started in late 70s; got allocated a 4-bed house in early 80s; her ex-partner also moved in to the coop (had his own house). Has lived there ever since, brought her kids up; now living on her own in 2 bed house having swapped houses with a family as they needed it...

**Future?**  
 She has disability so is looking for a more Accessible home; her coop considered buying Another building to develop more accessible Flats, but it fell through. She wants to stay but is in conflict with other members over changes she made to her house (planning issue); wouldn't want to live with her family; dreads going Into a nursing home...

**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 16, COMMUNITY 6**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*

*Orthodox housing i.e. recognised in Census*



Grew up in traditional 'working class family' near this community; father worked for railways, so they moved around a lot. Her family moved further South when she was 15 & she 'hated it'

Left home at 16 to move back to this area; moved in with her sister briefly; on a council estate; moved in with friends, then partner...

Got married to her partner to get council flat; moved into flat in her early 20s; two yrs later had children & they moved to a house on a new council estate nearby

Her husband's friend took them to see this community & she liked it straight away

Lived in this coop for 30+ yrs; joined soon after it started in late 70s; had 2 bed house. Split with her partner but stayed friends. Met new partner, had third child, & moved into a 4-bed house. Brought kids up there & swapped back to a 2 bed house when their kids left home.

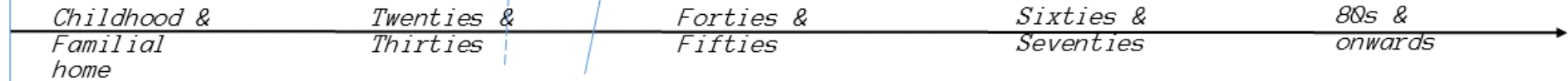
**Future?**  
 She cannot imagine not living in a housing coop; & can't imagine moving out. They have tried to Secure another property more suitable for ageing (ground floor flats) but it didn't work out. She feels the coop enables her to have an ongoing voice as she gets older.



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 17, COMMUNITY 6**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*

*Orthodox housing i.e. recognised in Census*



Grew up in traditional family in a 'working class community' in London; 'it was our manor... no one locked their doors, everyone just walked into one-another's houses...'

Got married young & with husband moved out of London, to temporary place on a housing estate near his & her work

They bought a house as part of their work re-location package, but she hated the area. They split up & she started looking for somewhere else to live as single parent with two kids.

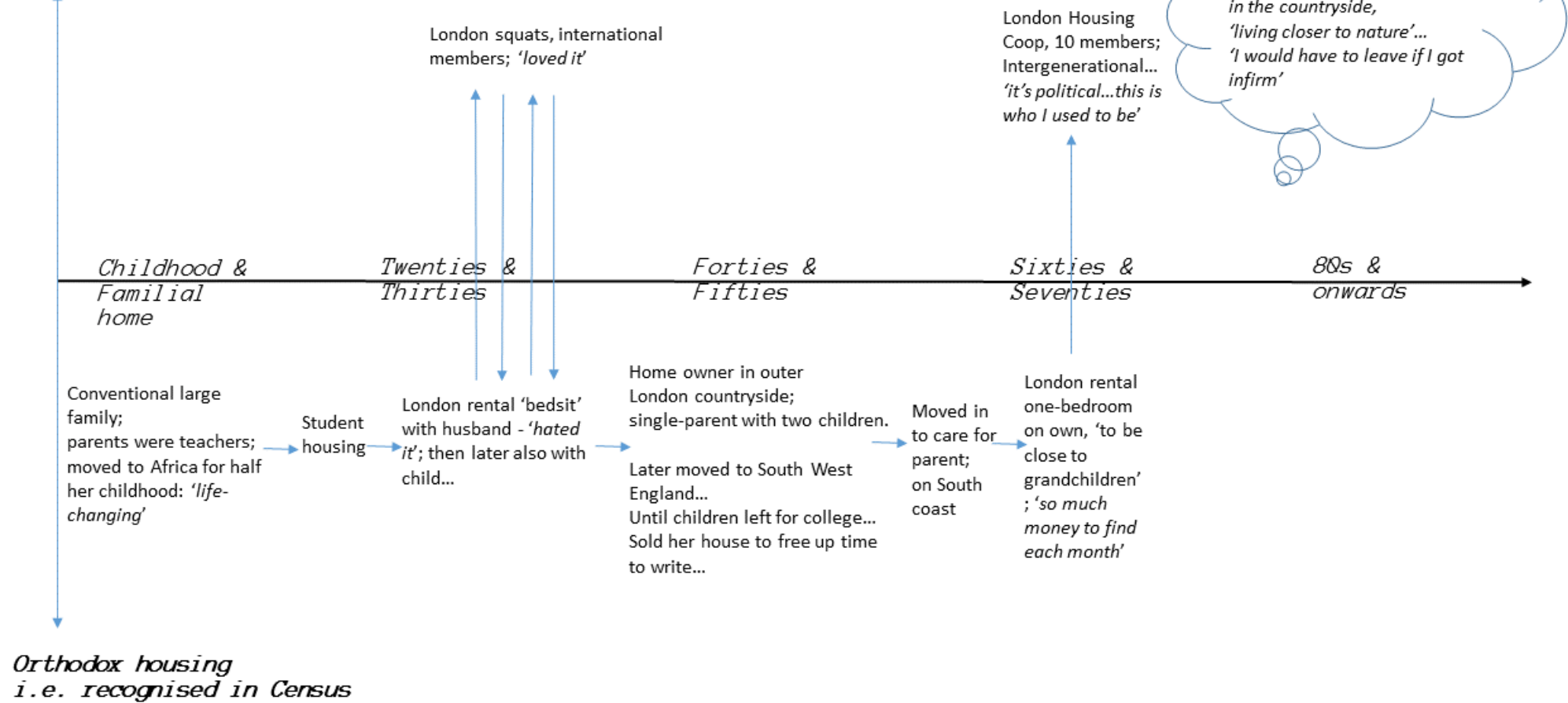
As part of her community development work she found out about this community being set up

Sold her house to move into this coop. Lived here for 30+ yrs; helped set it up in late 70s; met her second husband whilst living here (he had lived in squats). Has a 4-bed house. Her children live locally; has a grand child who is applying to join the coop.

**Future?**  
 She had an accident recently & chronic illness  
 So is very aware of thinking about the future. Lots of her friends have died too. She wants to stay;  
 She has very strong friendship within the community;  
 She would hate to live with only older people...

**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 18, COMMUNITY 7**

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 19, COMMUNITY 8**

*Intentional community, or other form of alternative housing*

*Childhood & Familial home*

Grew up in North England; lived with parents & sibling in 'post war council housing in rural environment' until 13. Grandfather died so his parents and Grandmother jointly bought a house to live together also with an Aunt...

*Orthodox housing I .e. recognised in Census*

Various London squats & Communes...

*Twenties & Thirties*

Living in London, Sometimes

Initially in Student Housing in London

In late 70s left with new wife & their child to live in rental accommodation in Ireland & on South Coast England; had a second child; he also bought a run-down house in Ireland but never lived in it... (7 yrs)

*Forties & Fifties*

Moved back to London 'for economic & social reasons' & bought a house; then 'living in London took its toll on us' & they split up... (6 yrs)

Heard about this community through his ex-wife who had moved to the area & she encouraged him to visit; has lived here for 25+ years: 'With my limited financial resources I had secured a future home for my children to grow up in...'

*Sixties & Seventies*

*80s & onwards*

**Future?**

He expects to stay; he loves this place: I've got 75 acres to play in. It's a playground, that's what it is. It's beautiful. He feels it helps to keep him fit and healthy & he enjoys the social life that comes With it...

**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 20, COMMUNITY 8**

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*

Early in life felt that the nuclear family was too small...

He & his wife found out about the community via an advert in a newspaper and they moved in at the start of the community, with their young children. He has lived here for over 40 years now; split with his wife, he did have another long-term relationship but lives on his own now but she also lives in the community & he is still good friends with his ex-wife...

**Future?**

He is in early 80s so and wants to stay to his end... he still is useful, using his technical skills to fix things, does work in the gardens. He hopes he Won't become dependent on anyone; he would rather be helped to die than become incapacitated...

*Childhood &  
Familial  
home*

*Twenties &  
Thirties*

*Forties &  
Fifties*

*Sixties &  
Seventies*

*80s &  
onwards*

Born & grew up in 'outer London suburbia' in traditional family, with a sibling. His father died when he was young & feels that he has 'always suffered from that'; his mother decided he should do apprenticeship to ensure he could earn a living...

At 21 did National Service

Went to University in North of England

Went to do post grad at Oxbridge

Went to live & teach in North England; lived in rental

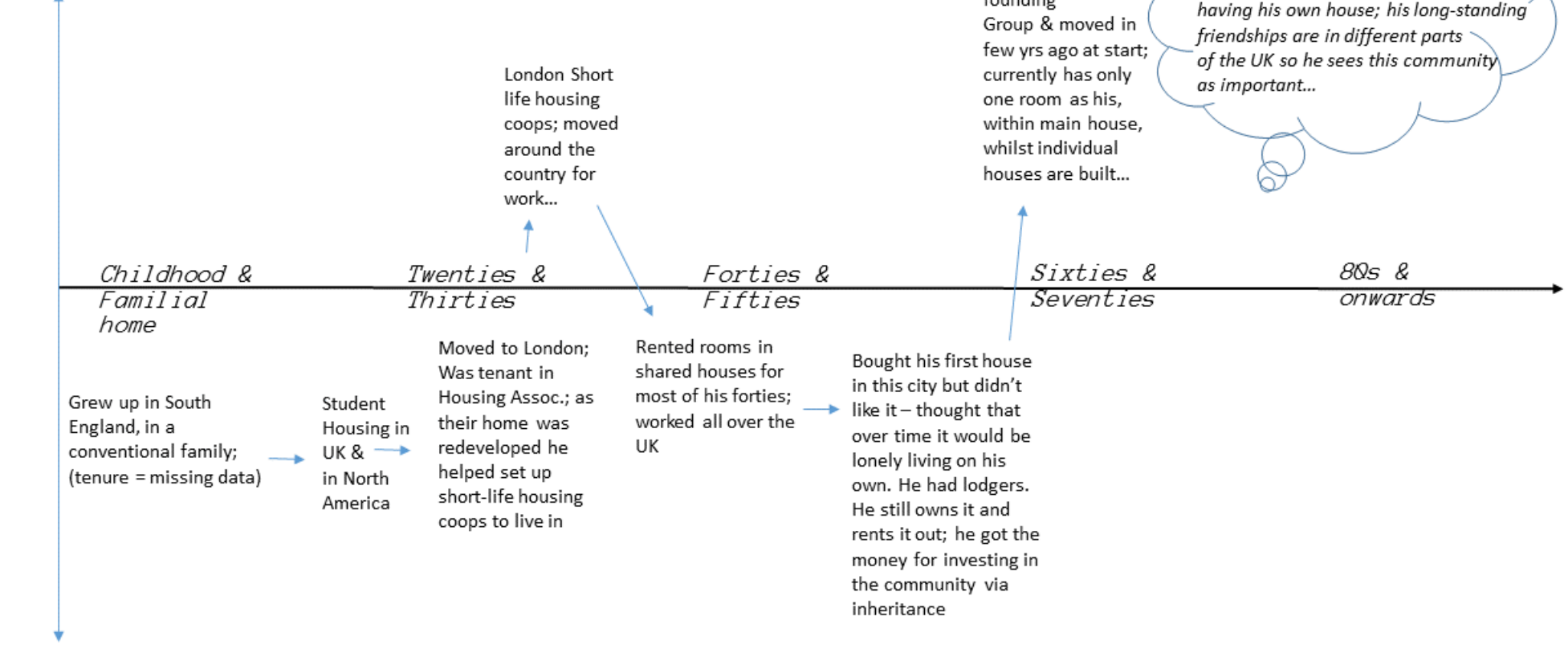
Worked in teaching in Africa for 3 yrs; met wife & they had children

Returned to UK to teach in various locations &

*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*

**HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 21, COMMUNITY 9**

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*

**Future?**  
Hopes stay in this CoHousing community; enjoys the separateness of having his own house; his long-standing friendships are in different parts of the UK so he sees this community as important...

Was part of founding Group & moved in few yrs ago at start; currently has only one room as his, within main house, whilst individual houses are built...

*Childhood & Familial home*

*Twenties & Thirties*

*Forties & Fifties*

*Sixties & Seventies*

*80s & onwards*

Grew up in South England, in a conventional family; (tenure = missing data)

Student Housing in UK & in North America

Moved to London; Was tenant in Housing Assoc.; as their home was redeveloped he helped set up short-life housing coops to live in

Rented rooms in shared houses for most of his forties; worked all over the UK

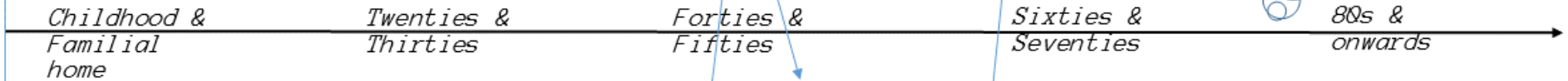
Bought his first house in this city but didn't like it – thought that over time it would be lonely living on his own. He had lodgers. He still owns it and rents it out; he got the money for investing in the community via inheritance

London Short life housing coops; moved around the country for work...

HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 22, COMMUNITY 9

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*

*Orthodox housing  
i.e. recognised in Census*



Grew up in North of England, (family structure & (tenure = missing data)

Student Housing in North of England → sometimes sharing, sometimes in bedsits

Moved around for work, living in rental, → sometimes sharing, sometimes in bedsits

Bought her first flat in Scotland; 'quite unusual for a single woman at that time'; but preferred living more communally, so sold it

Rented rooms, mostly shared houses with other women; moved from North to this city, and became a lodger

Moved into Housing Assoc. flat on her own because: 'there wasn't really any alternative' except family-orientated coops

Bought a house (subsidised by Housing Assoc.) with a friend; couple of years was bought out by friend & bought a house nearby... she got 'fed up' with job & sold her house ('not very wise' as prices went up soon after... rented after that...

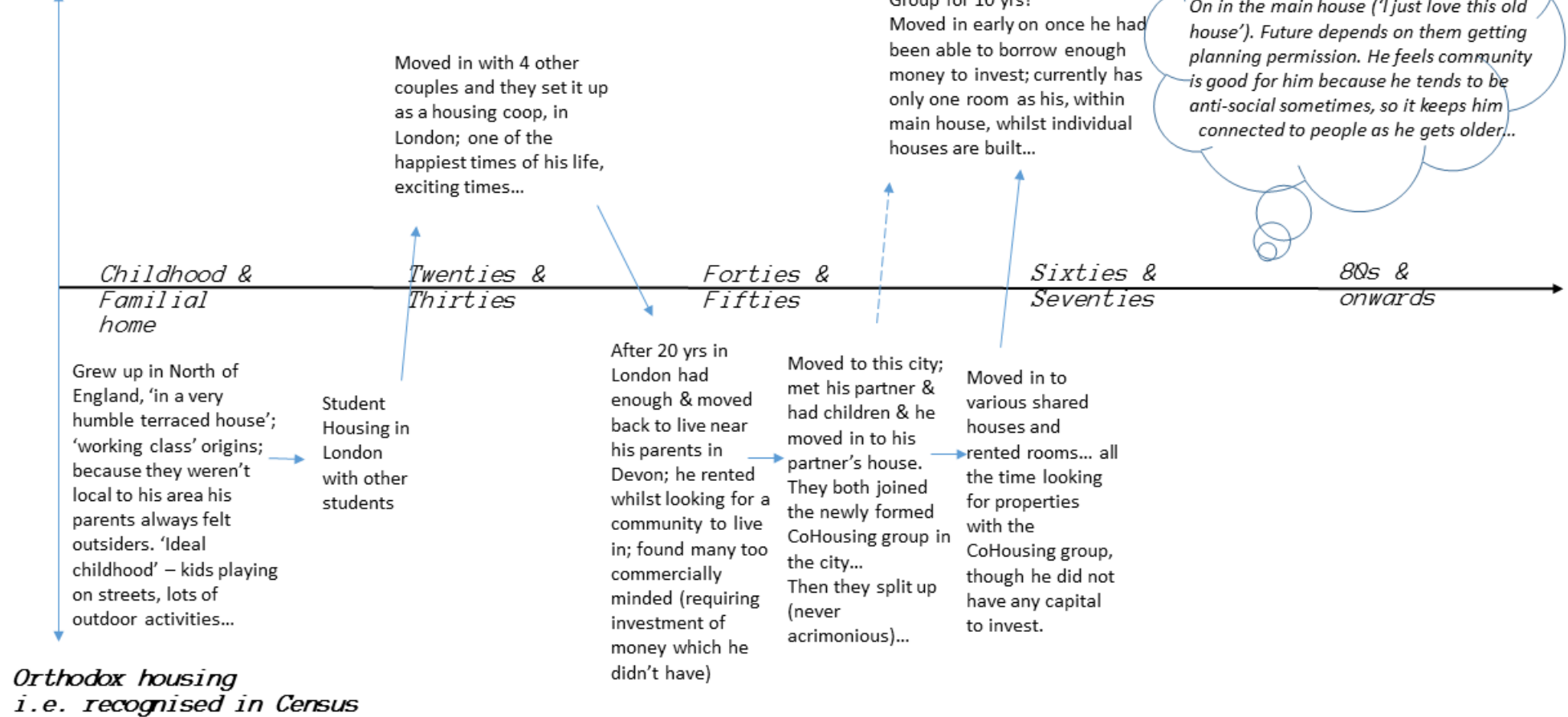
She rented a room in a women's housing coop for 2 years; got fed up constantly fixing things...

Became involved on & off before she joined & moved in few yrs ago; currently has only one room as hers, within main house, whilst individual houses are built...



HOUSING PATHWAY - INTERVIEWEE 23, COMMUNITY 9

*Intentional community,  
or other form of alternative housing*



## Appendix 13 – Summary of the Themes Relating to Chapter 7

### Summary of responses to questions about what it takes to live successfully in this way

Some words in the table below are exactly as they were used by interviews (in single quotation marks) and others are my paraphrasing. I could have made the list more condensed by forcing what interviewees said into broader thematic groupings but there were some words and expressions that I felt did not simply fit neatly into themed categories, such as 'grit' or 'living with human short-comings' and therefore I have left these show the diversity of the ways that interviewees expressed the emotional skills and resources needed to live well in their communities.

I have to emphasise that the grouping together of interviewees responses into the categories of skills or aptitudes listed below are based on my interpretation of their views, therefore I have provided the numbers only to give an approximate guide as to the most commonly cited emotional aptitudes, not to imply that these numbers represent any kind of 'objective' ranking of those aptitudes. These are matters of subjective interpretation: I could have included 'considerate' in with acceptance or with tolerance; I could have combined 'not put yourself first' with acceptance of group priorities: compromise is close to acceptance of other's priorities; another researcher reading these narratives from another perspective could have grouped these differently. Therefore, the findings are not about numbers meaning objective importance; rather they are about the range of emotional skills that were articulated as well as the commonly cited ones, and they are about the complexity of the emotional dynamics of living more communally or cooperatively in these communities.

Summary of responses to questions about what it takes to live successfully in this way	Number of interviewees that talked about this	Number of references within interviews
tolerance	11	18
acceptance, go with flow	10	12
cope with or like change	8	11
productive, contributing	7	9
Compromise	6	8
cooperative with others	6	10
skill set	6	8
Able to let go, including of pettiness	5	7
not put self-first	5	6
understanding	5	5
give and take	4	4
sociable	4	4
assertive	3	3
enjoy sharing, enjoy the process	3	3
honesty	3	4
listen to others	3	3
commitment	2	2
determination, grit	2	2
humour	2	2
like people	2	2
look beyond surface of people's behaviour	2	2
maturity	2	2



open minded about people	2	2
patience	2	2
physical ability for practical work	2	2
prepared to take part in difficult conversations	2	2
sense of self	2	2
supportive	2	2
willing to take part	2	2
anyone can	1	1
considerate	1	1
having own kitchens & bathrooms	1	1
live with human shortcomings	1	1
social antenna	1	3
sympathetic	1	1
trust	1	1
unconventional	1	1

## APPENDIX 14 – Summary of the Themes Relating to Chapter 8

### Common themes about ageing, generation, care and support

Summary of Themes of Aging and generation and care and support	Number of interviewees that talked about this	Number of references within interviews
intergenerational, relations between younger & older	17	45
moving on or not	17	45
attitude to ageing	17	42
The parallel ageing of their community as an organisation	16	44
frailty & illness & physical limits	13	38
dying, death & illness	13	26
active ageing	12	33
talking about ageing & future, or not	12	19
retirement from work	10	39
downsizing	8	9
understanding of members' difficulties	6	12
relatives, biological family links	5	6
accepting care	4	6
natural, evolved	4	5
wisdom, maturity	4	5
no pension	4	4
Well-being	4	4
Gives purpose or role	3	6
limits of care	2	5
aging bringing less fun, more structure	2	3
bringing or buying in care	1	1
politics and policies	1	1
still have a voice in co-op	1	1