

Chapter 2. Methodology

“It is enormously easier to present in an appealing way the wisdom distilled from centuries of patient and collective interrogation of Nature than to detail the messy distillation apparatus. The method of science, as stodgy and grumpy as it may seem, is far more important than the findings of science. -- Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (1997: 39)

“In summary, the idea is to try to give all [sic] the information to help others to judge the value of your contribution; not only the information that leads the judgment in a particular direction or another.” -- Nobel laureate, Richard Phillips Feynman, *The Pleasure of Finding Things Out*, (Feynman, 2001: 210).

“Perception, without verification or grounds, is not sufficient guarantee of truth” -- Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, 1929 (cited in Sagan, 1997: 320).

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the qualitative research methodology and methods employed in this project, covering both the theoretical or conceptual scheme, and the pragmatic, or mechanical research design, and their interrelationships to the thesis' research question, main aim, and four objectives stated in the Introduction of this thesis (see Chapter 1).

The methodology and methods employed in this thesis are related to the research problem as has been stated by a commentator: “the research problem must determine the research approach and the methods employed” (Westbrook, 1994: 242). As stated in the Introduction (see Chapter 1), the research question was: What are the community information needs and provision of the residents of the Broomhall neighbourhood of Sheffield, UK according to their perceptions? In addition, the overall aim of this thesis was: To analyse, through the application of the community profiling tool, the community information needs of the residents of the Broomhall neighbourhood of Sheffield, UK, and to evaluate to what extent information providers meet those needs. As also mentioned in the Introduction (see Chapter 1), this overall aim was divided into four major specific research objectives: 1) the analysis of information needs, 2) the analysis of information provision, 3) the analysis of the effectiveness of the community profiling tool, and 4) the possible implications of this study for policy makers.

That is, from the Introduction (see Chapter 1) the reader can assess that this project has analysed the information needs and provision according to the perceptions of residents, who live in a given neighbourhood of Sheffield, UK (Broomhall), and of their information providers from within or outside Broomhall. Hence the reader can see at a glance that part of the sample from where this thesis generated its data, that it is geographically located (the Broomhall neighbourhood), and that the other part of the sample where also data were generated (that of residents and information providers also related to same neighbourhood). In addition, as the reader will assess later (see Chapter 4), Broomhall is a rather small neighbourhood. Hence, the reader at this stage might already have an idea of the nature of this research project relating to information needs and provision of a small neighbourhood, according to the perceptions of the residents and the information providers living or working from within or outside that neighbourhood.

Hence, the researcher of this project generated and analysed detailed data at a significantly deep level from the perceptions of few people who live (residents) in a given small neighbourhood (Broomhall), and those of their information providers. Simultaneously he made interrelationships of these data with the physical, natural, or material appraisal of the features of this neighbourhood, and with the literature related to those perceptions by using the community profiling tool to generate data. The community profiling tool will be analysed in Chapter 3 (literature review), but the prior methodology will be the subject of this chapter. Thus, the concepts, the qualitative research methodologies, and methods employed in this thesis, along with their favourable and competing views, are related to the research question, overall aim, and four objectives mentioned above.

This chapter is divided into these major sections:

- 1) Theoretical framework, which includes a) rationale for choosing a theoretical framework in qualitative research, b) discussion of the conceptual scheme and its operationalization, and c) the following concepts employed in this study: the concept of the materialist conception of history, the social class struggles concept, and the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory.
- 2) Rationale for choosing a qualitative research methodology, which includes a rationale for choosing the qualitative research methods, this includes a) method of analysis of documents or literature review, b) method of non-participant observation, and c) method of interviews, individually and through focus groups.
- 3) Design of the data generation, which includes: a) the rationale for the selection of the purposive sampling (which includes 1) selection of the purposive sampling, 2) selection process of interviewees –this includes a procedure to obtain a balanced sample, identification code of interviewees, and the composition of sample of interviewees–), b) the rationale of the pilot study, and c) the rationale of main study which includes the evolution of the interviews schedule from the pilot to the main study.
- 4) Design of the data analysis.
- 5) Procedures of validity (which includes the triangulation of methods), replicability (which includes the audit trail), neutrality, and generalization or transferability of the research project.

The next section analyses the theoretical framework.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The following sections will address: a) the rationale for employing a theoretical framework in qualitative research, and b) the discussion of the conceptual scheme and its operationalization (which includes the concepts of materialist conception of history, social class struggles, and the configuration as an open structure of theory). Each concept includes its rationale, and some views in favour and competing views.

The next section explains the rationale for choosing a theoretical framework.

2.2.1 Rationale for choosing a theoretical framework in qualitative research

The main methodology and methods for this research project belong to the qualitative research approach. Some commentators from this approach note that this approach does not employ any theory to be tested (this is a *deductive reasoning*), but rather it generates a theory at the end of any research project (*inductive reasoning*), such is the particular case of the advocates of the grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, other commentators note that the qualitative research approach can underpin a theoretical approach aprioristically (*deductive reasoning*), before the research project starts, e.g. to guide the initial stages of the literature or to interpret or understand events and observations (Gorman and Clayton, 2005).

The author of this research project has employed both the *deductive and inductive reasoning* of a theoretical framework, but following a third route. Building on the work of Mason (2002), this project has employed a theoretical framework where theory, data generation, and data analysis developed throughout the research project “simultaneously in a dialectical process.” (Mason, 2002: 180). That is, it has moved “back and forth between data analysis and the process of explanation or theory construction” (Mason, 2002: 180). However, the author followed Mason’s (2002) ideas as a process of explanation, instead of theory construction. That is, this project began with the idea to have a theoretical framework since the beginning, but this was employed with flexibility according to how the project developed, and going back and forth with the early theoretical statements to assess if later findings matched with earlier concepts. To this type of theoretical framework, according to her interpretivist approach in qualitative research, Mason (2002: 180-181) termed it *abductive or retroductive reasoning*, in clear distinction with the *deductive reasoning* (where theory comes first), or *inductive reasoning* (where theory comes at the end).

In this regard, some commentators who have conducted community profiling research on the health sector support the idea of having a theoretical framework (Moran and Butler, 2001). In addition, they also argue that when researchers who are doing community profiling research do not provide a theoretical framework they fall into difficulties of justifying their methodologies employed to generate or analyse data (Moran and Butler, 2001: 61). A major researcher of community needs profiling from the social work science (Green, 2000a; 2000c), and another commentator (Oliver, 2004), also agrees with Moran and Butler (2001).

Therefore, this research project maintains the idea that employing a theoretical background was a necessary step to be conducted in order to underpin the researcher’s methodologies and methods before one begins the research project and during all its stages until the end. This theoretical framework was not comprised by a single theory, but by a series of different theoretical concepts, or concepts derived from different theories from philosophy, social and natural sciences following Mason’s (2002: 180-181) *abductive or retroductive reasoning* by employing concepts since the beginning, during all the research process, and at the end, simultaneously in a “back and forth” process.

In this respect, some of the concepts that the author employed at the earlier stages of the project, such as the *critical and sceptical thinking* by Sagan (1997), and the *critical epistemology* by de la Garza Toledo (2001), were removed from the thesis. Because, when the author moved back from the final stages to the early stages, after the analysis and discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations (cf. Mason's (2002) *abductive or retroductive reasoning*), those concepts could not longer be sustained, as their early insights did not match with the final findings.

The next section explains the conceptual scheme and its operationalization of the theoretical framework employed.

2.2.2 Discussion of the conceptual scheme and its operationalization

This section analyses the concepts employed in this thesis: a) the concept of the materialist conception of history, b) the social class struggles concept, and c) the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory, and the ways they were operationalized within the thesis.

On Table 2.1 below it is explained the conceptual scheme and its operationalization. In the first column the definitions of the concepts employed throughout this thesis are presented; this is referred to here as the conceptual scheme. In the second column are described the interrelationships of those concepts with other concepts, methods, terms, or key words that appear throughout the thesis. This is referred to here as the operationalization of the concepts, that is, the way they were actually employed. In order to clearly guide the reader to the interrelationships of the conceptual scheme with its operationalization throughout the thesis. A reference to the names of those other concepts, methods, terms, and keywords, and the chapters where they are located is included as well. Hence, whenever the readers find a major concept, method, term, or keyword in this or other chapters in the thesis they can return to Table 2.1 (below) and find the interrelationships of it with any of the three major concepts employed as a theoretical framework.

Table 2.1 is explained here.

Table 2.1 Conceptual scheme and its operationalization	
Definition of concepts	Interrelationships with other concepts (including Chapters of localization)
<p>The concept of the materialist conception of history. "We must begin by stating the first premise of all human beings must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history." However, life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing and various and other things. The first historical act is thus the reproduction of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. In addition, indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousand years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life" (Marx and Engels, [1845-1846] 1976a: 41-42).</p>	<p>Chapter 2 (the social class struggles concept; method of observation; cosmos); Chapter 3 (materialistic concept of need; "bottom up" concept of needs; information recorded in material documents; community profiling; spatial place where communities live in; human communities; labour; technology; territorial cosmic matter; cosmic evolution of nature; historic evolution of human society); Chapter 4 (material living conditions of people; territoriality); Chapter 6 (material and cosmic balance)</p>
<p>The social class struggles concept. Being human beings social mammals evolved from reptiles, they inherited the innate hierarchical drives of either dominance against the weak, or submission before the strong (at the beginning due to natural survival reasons, later and currently for institutionalized dominating motives) mainly to obtain valued</p>	<p>Chapter 2 (materialist conception of history; library and information provision); Chapter 3 (materialistic concept of need; "bottom up" concept of needs; information</p>

<p>resources (e.g. food, territories, properties, knowledge, information) (Sagan, 2001; 1980; 1978; with Druyan, 1992). However, "in societies with dominance hierarchies there will always be inequities in the distribution of valued resources. This is what defines dominance hierarchy" (Hauser, 2006: 394). Thus, these inequities have always prompted the dominated individuals or groups to challenge the dominant. These challenges are struggles (violent or non-violent), and they will continue as long as human social dominance hierarchy persists. "Though neither class nor race is a biological category, our mind is equipped with the hardware and software to pick out cues that identify the other... we can't erase the constraints that our mind imposes on our perceptions, and this includes dividing the world into dominant and subordinate, black and white" (Hauser, 2006: 212). Therefore, "the [written, recorded, Engels] history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx and Engels, [1848], 1976b: 482).</p>	<p>recorded in material documents; community profiling; spatial place where communities live in; human communities); Chapter 4 (working class revolts; cramped and unsanitary conditions of living of working class; territoriality; contrasting poorer and wealthier social classes); Chapter 5 (oppression; monopolization of knowledge and information; contradictions, tensions, and conflicts; to the findings of this project: issues of territoriality or uses of the land; issues of poverty, social and economic inequalities; health issues; political issues; cultural issues; communication issues; transport features; educational features); Chapter 6 (dominance hierarchies; hegemony; conflict)</p>
<p>The concept of configuration as an open structure of theory. A sociologist (de la Garza Toledo, 2006; 2002; 2001; 2000; 1999) notes that the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory takes a qualitative research approach by letting the different subjects configure their own world and reality as their subjectivities consider correct which not necessarily have to be free from contradictions, incoherencies, obscure sides, and so on. Another sociologist (Mason, 2002: 56, 178) has also researched a similar concept which she termed <i>constitution of meanings of people's own perceptions</i> as a central element of her qualitative research <i>interpretivist approach</i> to denote individuals crafting their own reality according to their own interpretations and perceptions.</p>	<p>Chapter 2 (qualitative research methodologies; opposed to positivism; data generation design (methods of documents analysis, observation, and interviews); data analysis; concept of the materialist conception of history; scientific knowledge (episteme); daily life knowledge (doxa); people's perceptions); Chapter 3 (empowerment; action participation; community development; information provision); Chapter 4 (territorial boundaries).</p>

The next section will explain the rationale for choosing the concept of the *materialist conception of history*.

2.2.2.1 RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE CONCEPT OF THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

These sections explain the rationale for choosing the concept of the materialist conception of history (see the definition above on Table 2.1) by presenting the views in favour of the concept, as well as the competing views.

This concept, as theorised and employed by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels ([1845-1846] 1976a: 41-42), was chosen, because this study supports the idea that the material conditions of living of people (e.g. of Broomhall) are the conditions that determine their intellectual, cultural, philosophical, and other types of intangible human conditions (e.g. information needs).

The next section addresses some views in favour of the *materialist conception of history*.

2.2.2.1.1 Views in favour of the materialist conception of history

This section explains some views in favour of the *materialist conception of history* (see its definition above in Table 2.1).

The concept of materiality is taken here as Marx and Engels ([1845-1846] 1976a: 41-42) configured it, as the first vital premise of all humans: they must first live and then do anything else, namely history. Materialist is considered

here “in the sense of being anti-obscurantist and drawing attention to the role of material forces in the shaping of ideas” as one sociologist put it (Delanty, 2005: 71).

Thus, these social needs rely on a common foundation: they all depend of the first premise as in Marx and Engels ([1845-1846] 1976a: 41-42), that humans need to be alive in the material world in the first place. If humans are not alive in the material world, then it is impossible that their needs or anything else exist. On the other hand, like the ancient materialist Greek philosopher, Epicurus would put it: “nothing can exist from nothingness” (Reale and Antiseri, 2004a: 218). In addition, this concept of the materialist evolution of human life taken here is also supported by scientists such as Sagan and Druyan (1992) and Hauser (2006), who also emphasize that humans first need to exist in the material world to have human needs (e.g. information needs) and then seek or be looked after for their satisfaction (e.g. information provision).

Therefore, by analysing systematically those community information needs of Broomhall residents emanating from the grounded materiality of their living conditions, the researcher sought to understand them comprehensively: their issues, features, and information needs and provision within their neighbourhood. In addition, this materialistically rooted analysis set the basis for analysing how those needs translated into informational needs in terms of LIS scenarios, and how information providers, from LIS or others satisfied them or failed to do so.

The next section explains some competing views to the materialist conception of history.

2.2.2.1.2 Competing views of the materialist conception of history

This section explains some competing views to the *materialist conception of history* (see its definition above in Table 2.1).

The author of this project is cognizant of some possible discredit that the ideas of Marx and Engels, or Marxism might have in the academic discourse. Some of the reasons might have to do with the association of their ideas to some historical facts with an evident negative impact on large portions of population such as the repressive character of the Soviet Stalinist regime, or the Cold War, or other geopolitical issues. However, the discredit of the ideas of Marx and Engels might have been more grounded on the confusion between their ideas and the subsequent political implementation, by them or others. One thing is their ideas, and another thing is the political applications derived from those ideas.

There might be many critics to dispute Marxist ideas, but in this project, only a few were considered as competing views to illustrate this confusion of their ideas and a political application derived from their ideas. For instance, some authors (Reale and Antiseri, 2004b) reject and criticise the Soviet Stalinist regime as being oppressive (and so does the author of this thesis), but they reject and criticise Marxist ideas because allegedly they are the cause of Stalinism. Therefore, Marxist ideas, in their opinion, must be also oppressive. However, the author, in line with Reale and Antiseri (2004b), rejects the

oppressive character of the Soviet Stalinist regime, but, unlike them (Reale and Antiseri, 2004b), he accepts Marxist ideas employed here on their own theoretical grounds, regardless of any politically oppressive application of those ideas. That is, Reale and Antiseri (2004b) do not criticise Marxist ideas on their own theoretical grounds, but influenced by their ideological and political beliefs, in this case of rejection of Stalinism. This idea is supported by a sociologist who notes that criticism against Marxist materialist ideas have generally been taken out of context (Delanty, 2005: 70).

When Reale and Antiseri (2004b) criticise the materialist conception of history they reject it by arguing that: “it results unacceptable the theory of historical materialism, as it was formulated by Marx. It cannot be accepted because to an empirical fact it makes it absolute and it gives it a metaphysical character” (Reale and Antiseri, 2004b: 194). However, metaphysics means “what comes after the physics, but it can also mean what lies beyond nature” (Mautner, 2000: 351). Hence, this poses the question: how can materialism be metaphysical, if materialism is rooted within physics, not after (meta) physics? That is not epistemologically possible. It might be only possible if some confuse both terms as Reale and Antiseri (2004b) do, but if some confuse the terms then the counter argument against the materialist conception of history would not be effective.

However, Marxist materialist ideas are taken in this study only on their own theoretical ground regardless of any controversial ideologies derived from them on the political arena (e.g. Stalinism). Moreover, by using them the researcher does not subscribe by any means to any political ideologies where allegedly these concepts were based on. Moreover, the author did not subscribe to any political ideologies or political agenda whatsoever in this thesis. In fact, some of the recommendations that emerged from this thesis (see Chapter 6) are that researchers should abstain from mixing ideological politics with science, because as a commentator from the natural sciences noted it, “politics is not a science” (Sagan, 1997: 433).

As for some competing views in LIS, the researcher of this project was also aware that the concept of information, as it has been argued by Rendón Rojas (2005), is not a materialistic one (as any concept is). It is an ideal one in the sense that it cannot be measured by any human-made physical material tool, e.g. a telescope, or microscope. Since it is simply a human abstraction, and reality becomes only real as humans through conventions agree to give meaning to the material cosmos. The author agrees with Rendón Rojas’ (2005) argument about information as being an ideal concept. Nevertheless, concepts as any other ideas are also materially determined because the human body, and for this matter the brain, are constituted by organic matter, as a Russian materialist philosopher noted it (Ilyenkov, 1977; 1960).

The author is cognizant that there might be more competing ideas to the materialist conception of history, however it seemed a daunting task to include them all, because that goes beyond the scope of this project. However, the reader should bear in mind that this materialist concept worked better for this project due to its geographically rooted nature; hence, a material territory geographically delimited. Thus, any competing concepts (namely idealist), were not adequate for this purpose.

The next section will explain the rationale for choosing the *social class struggles* concept.

2.2.2.2 RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE SOCIAL CLASS STRUGGLES CONCEPT

This section explains the rationale for choosing the *social class struggles* concept (see Table 2.1 above for its definition) by presenting the views in favour of the concept, as well as the competing views.

One of the political issues that emerged from the pilot study (see below in this chapter) was awareness that the residents from the four sections of the Broomhall neighbourhood were divided by social class conflicts. These are some examples of this social class divide as perceived from two residents of the first focus group interview:

“because mainly the people who live here in those rich houses are students, lawyers, lecturers, but as for people they are working class people mostly live in this area [sections A, B and C] and they [are] enrolled in government benefits and the youngsters are being neglected” [a working class respondent from section C] [F.G.01.A]

“I see like a divide in Broomhall, a divide in riches [sic] classes and poor in Broomhall, and the poor ones with families are neglected and that is what I see as the biggest problem right now” [a working class respondent from section C] [F.G.01.D]

Therefore, the author commented on this finding to his new supervisor, and suggested to him that the *social class* issue should be addressed and included in the thesis. The supervisor accepted the suggestion, and the researcher included the *social class* issue in the thesis. However, this inclusion was not easy to conceptualise methodologically.

The next section addresses some views in favour of the *social class struggles* concept.

2.2.2.2.1 Views in favour of the social class struggles concept

This section explains some views in favour of the *social class struggles* concept (see its definition above in Table 2.1).

Through the literature was found the concept of the social class struggles as attributed to Marx and Engels (Marx and Engels, [1848], 1976a: 482; Delanty, 2005; Edgell, 1993). As defined by Marx and Engels, “the [written, recorded, Engels] history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx and Engels, [1848], 1976b: 482). The author is cognizant that such concept as configured by Marx and Engels belongs to their *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, hence it leans politically toward socialist and communist ideas. The author is also aware of the political implications that pamphlet has had since 1848 when they wrote it.

However, this Marxist concept of social class struggles captured, at the beginning, some of the perceptions of respondents in Broomhall as being divided by social class and that there were conflicts at the time of the provision of social services derived from that social class divide. For Marxism all societies were divided by social class, and the term *struggle* clearly states that those

social classes have been throughout history in conflict. That is a conceptual operationalization and configuration of people's common language perceptions.

Nevertheless, the author was not content with the Marxist concept of *social class struggles*, as Marx and Engels stated it, particularly because of its implicit political and violent agenda in favour of socialism and communism against capitalism, however valid this concept was theoretically. That is the reason why the author delved deeper in the literature in order to configure a concept that best adapted to the Broomhall residents' perceptions of the early stages of this project, but avoiding any relationship with the implicit Marxist political agenda towards violence. Furthermore, the role the author played in this research project was not emancipatory, but mediatory (Delanty, 2005: 171), and as an outsider non-participant observer towards the perceptions and actions of the respondents of the Broomhall neighbourhood. In addition, the author has employed this Marxist concept, and all the other concepts, based only on their theoretical grounds, and he has done so in a rigorous manner, not simplistically.

The Marxist social class struggles concept has some underlying ideas. According to a sociologist, "The key ideas underlying Marx's social science are the movement from *contradiction [sic]* to *crisis [sic]* to *conflict [sic]* to *social change [sic]*. ... These contradictions derive from the class structure, which is based on the exploitation of labour. ... The resulting inequality is a structural inequality since there are two classes, those who work for wages and those who live from profit." (Delanty, 2005: 69).

First, Marxist theories and concepts have epistemological acceptance within the social sciences (e.g. Delanty, 2005; Edgell, 1993), and as such they have been employed rigorously in this thesis. Second, the interrelationships of the ideas of contradictions deriving from the class structure based on the exploitation of labour, and the resulting structural inequality of the conflicts between the working class (who work for wages) and the capitalist class (who live for profit), gave theoretical clarity to a better understanding of the social conflicts amongst the residents of the Broomhall neighbourhood.

This social inequality as explained above affects different aspects of social life. For instance, a commentator from LIS made also a similar connection of social inequality as a cause of inequality of access to information and ideas, and a connection to class and power as part of the causes of that inequality:

"Inequality in access to information and ideas cannot be explained fully without reference to its relationship to the primary dimensions of inequality; the patterns of class and power. It is part of a much broader social issue" (Usherwood, 1989: 22).

Thus, social inequality gives a general dimension between the relationships of class and the power each class has within itself and amongst others (e.g. working, middle and capitalist or bourgeois classes as employed here, see below for further explanation). A sociologist (Edgell, 1993: 52), in a book dedicated *ex professo* to the analysis of the social class concept, concluded that any member of society can be ascribed to any social class (even if he or she is going upwards or downwards in the social mobility from one class to the next) in relation to three major determinants:

- 1) By how much private property individuals own;

- 2) By how much knowledge individuals have (and for the case of this thesis, by how much information they have);
- 3) By how much physical labour they do (Edgell, 1993: 52).

That is, according to Edgell (1993), the more private property, knowledge and information any member of a class has, and the less physical labour she or he does for a living, the upper is the class she or he belongs to (e.g. capitalist or bourgeois class, and middle class), and vice versa (e.g. working class). Hence, the author agrees with Edgell's (1993) three major determinants of social class.

Edgell's (1993) three major determinants of social class are in line with the evolution of the social class concept since the earliest inception of the term. According to him:

“originally the term class referred to the division of the Roman population on the basis of property for fiscal and military purposes. This pre-modern usage was a static one in the sense that classes were regarded as ascriptive groupings of people who inherited a shared rank in society. The modern vocabulary of class is inextricably associated with the total reorganization of society that followed the industrial revolution. ... Two of the major consequences of this momentous social change were the creation of two new classes in the transformed class structure and the tendency for class positions to be allocated on the basis of ability rather than birth” (Edgell, 1993: 1).

On similar lines, a psychologist notes that social class is “differentiated by occupational prestige, education, and income” (Jones, 1998: 146). Jones' (1998) occupational prestige, and income might be related to Edgell's (1993) physical labour, and Jones' (1998) education to Edgell's (1993) knowledge (and information added by the author).

Nevertheless, the commentators above (Delanty, 2005; Jones, 1998; Edgell, 1993; Usherwood, 1989), including Marx and Engels ([1848], 1976a), (whose concept is attributed to them), failed to explain the roots of *human conflicts, contradictions, and social inequality* associated with social class. These roots might be found (as mentioned above in Table 2.1 in the definition of *the social class struggles concept* as employed in this thesis) in the notion of “dominance hierarchy” from the natural sciences, namely materialistic evolutionary biology (Sagan and Druyan, 1992; Hauser, 2006: 394). That is the reason why the statement of Marx and Engels is included at the end of the working definition of this concept in Table 2.1 (see above).

As mentioned above in Table 2.1 in the working definition of this concept, the social class struggles concept emerged in the literature from the pamphlet *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels written in 1848. Hence, by reviewing further the literature he found that the *dominance hierarchy* from biology (Hauser, 2006; Sagan and Druyan, 1992) explained better than Marx and Engels themselves their *social class struggles concept*, and without having the need to resort to a politically driven notion of violence of socialists and communists against capitalists as in Marx and Engels. As encapsulated in the definition above, the reader can assess at a glimpse a materialistic and evolutionary trail of the human genetic drive of *dominance hierarchy*. Sagan and Druyan (1992) even noted that submission from the subordinate to the dominant is more pervasive than dominance. Recently, a U.S. neurobiologist (Hauser, 2006) who has conducted research for several years about the genetic moral drives of human and non-human primates, has concluded that “in

societies with dominance hierarchies there will always be inequalities in the distribution of valued resources” (Hauser, 2006: 394).

Therefore, Marxist political agenda towards the empowerment of the proletariat to make the socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist or bourgeoisie class and seize power by military violence is not too far from the ideas of dominance hierarchy. The dominated classes would always challenge the dominant ones in order to obtain valued resources for the betterment of their material or cultural conditions (e.g. information recorded in documents). In addition, these challenges are struggles, either violent or non-violent, that will depend of the capability of negotiation of the dominant classes to satisfy the dominated classes’ needs accordingly. The limitation of this Marxist conception is not that Marx and Engels foster violence of one class against others. That is already a socio-historic fact accepted by social science epistemology (e.g. Delanty, 2005; Edgell, 1993), and by the author of this thesis regardless that they have stated it bluntly in their pamphlet (Marx and Engels, [1848] 1976a). Their limitation might be found in their failure to explain that the proletariat or working class are also humans, and being humans, they carry genetically the drives for domination as noted by Hauser (2006). Hence, they failed to analyse the dominance hierarchy as explained by scientists from the natural sciences (Sagan and Druyan, 1992; Hauser, 2006).

After all that has been said, the *social class struggles concept* as complemented from philosophy (Marx and Engels, [1848] 1976a), and the natural sciences (Hauser, 2006; Sagan and Druyan, 1992), and as it is employed here, served the author to understand better the bigger dimensions of the underlying issues behind social class and human conflict. It served to understand better the contradictions amongst people, and how these intensify when these are interrelated with social class. Although Hauser (2006: 212) clarifies above in the working definition of this concept (see Table 2.1) that social class is not a biological category, it is noteworthy to learn that he also notes that human mind is hardwired to divide the world into dominant and subordinate. Hence, it is illuminating to know that humans have genetically inherited propensities to have contradictions, and to engage into conflicts, or struggles, regardless of their cultural, or socio-historic influences.

As for the library and information science field, the author wrote a book chapter relating to the ethical contradictions of the social responsibilities of LIS (Muela-Meza, 2007), where he made a comprehensive review of the major findings of Hauser (2006) from the past ten years. He concluded what has been explained above, that as long as humans live in societies shaped by dominance hierarchies (Hauser, 2006; Sagan and Druyan, 1992), which have taken the form of social classes (Marx and Engels, [1848], 1976a), then contradictions and inequalities will accompany human relationships, thus, conflicts, or struggles will always appear.

Hence, these contradictions (Muela-Meza, 2007), also affect information needs and provision in libraries and other institutions of information recorded in documents. Another LIS commentator approaches the analysis of the idea of idea of contradictions in LIS but only as related to community profiling by commenting that “what does not seem to have publicly acknowledged is that sometimes the needs and interests of different groups are mutually exclusive.

Until we accept this librarians will struggle to meet these conflicting demands” (Roddy, 2005: 41). However, she does not explicitly mention that there are contradictions in her analysis of needs, and her ideas of “needs mutually exclusive” and “conflicting demands” do not relate to the social class concept, or with the *social class struggle* concept explained above. She does not explain either why the needs and interests of different groups of library and information users are mutually exclusive. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that a LIS commentator writing about community profiling in public libraries, although in a two page professional magazine article, approximates to the ideas of contradictions in LIS used by the researcher before (Muela-Meza, 2008; 2007; 2005c; 2004a; 2004b; 2003b), and throughout this thesis.

Another LIS researcher in a major PhD thesis applying community profiling to library services (Louie, 1976: 169-170) did not find contradictions *per se* in her study, however she found similarly to Roddy (2005) that “the concept of a metropolitan library serving *all [sic]* all members of its community is generally considered utopian.” With utopian, Louie (1976) meant that public libraries could not serve equally every individual within the communities from the neighbourhoods where these libraries were established. However, Louie failed to analyse why it is utopian for libraries to provide all the information needed by all library users.

Hence, according to the concept of *social class struggles* employed here, the needs and interests of different groups of library users are mutually exclusive, and become conflicting demands, because all individuals in society belong consciously or unconsciously to different social classes (Jones, 1998). These are always in conflict (Edgell, 1993), or involve struggle (Marx and Engels, [1848], 1976b) amongst them. Since they live in a society organised through dominance hierarchy, the library and information needs, interests, and demands of everyone, despite the fact that each individual is different from the rest, would be mediated by the social class which they belong. As explained above, a society divided hierarchically through social classes which *per se* interact socially in constant contradiction and conflict, their members might bring consciously or unconsciously their social class interests (Jones, 1998) to their daily relationships with others (e.g. being information users, or information providers). As for being utopian for a library to satisfy equally all the needs of its users, it is utopian for LIS services and professionals, pretend to satisfy all users equally when they live in a society of inequality divided by dominance hierarchy, and within social classes in constant contradiction and conflict. A philosopher of the theory of needs elaborates this idea by noting that social groups (and classes for the interest of this study), may have attributed their needs equally in terms of quality, but their provision, in terms of quantity, would be different for all. She notes “needs are attributed to individuals according to their group [class] of affiliation, but these groups are now being produced by institutions. The attribution continues the [dominance] hierarchy within the social and political institutions. ... that is, to distribute in quality the same types of needs, but in a quantity entirely different [to each group or class]” (Heller, 1996: 89-90).

Nevertheless, the author is aware that this social class struggles concept alone might not explain effectively all the factors that make library and information provision an unequal service. There might be others regardless of users and

providers belonging to a social class that might limit the capability of an equal information provision for all users through institutions of information recorded in documents (Documental Information Institutions, DIIs, like libraries). For instance, they might lack of enough budget to acquire all the information needed for everyone; they might not satisfy all information needs for the simple fact that there might not exist all the documents that satisfy them; they might not be the only information provider users choose to satisfy their needs; they might create collection development policies according to their budget, facilities, and staff which might limit them to satisfy all users' needs. Still, what is noteworthy about this concept is that users and information providers might not escape from such social class divide, and their implicit contradictions and conflicts, or struggles that may emerge when interacting with members of other classes, either consciously or unconsciously (Jones, 1998).

There are other examples from the literature that elaborate on the importance of the social class concept to analyse LIS phenomena. A study found evidence that public libraries are staffed mainly by middle class professionals, and that working class users were excluded to some extent from information provision (Muddiman, 2000a; Pateman, 2000). Another study found evidence of the impact of social class as determinant of some patterns of use of information agencies (e.g. libraries), where the upper classes (e.g. middle class professional/managerial occupations) are better informed and provided than the lower classes (e.g. working class unskilled occupations) (Marcella and Baxter, 2000). Another study found evidence that social class is a divider to access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), where the upper classes had better access to ICT, whilst on the contrary the lower classes do not (Hull, 2003). Another LIS commentator suggested that the lower class newcomers to Canada might become a *class of information poor* who are "characterized by their difficulty or inability to obtain useful information" (Caidi and Allard, 2005: 304).

As for the different classes employed in this project, the author followed a three social class scheme as configured by a LIS commentator (Pateman, 2000: 28).

- 1) The capitalist or bourgeois class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution and exchange –the factories, banks, shops, land, etc. and their agents.
- 2) The middle class includes middle grade management, small business, professional sections and middle ranks of the state apparatus who act to a considerable extent as agents of the capitalist class, but the degree to which they exercise control over the means of production is often limited, and their income is derived mainly from selling their labour power for a salary.
- 3) The working class includes the great majority of the population, who sell their labour power, their capacity to work, in return for a wage or salary, and who work under the direction of the owner of the means of production and their agents (Pateman, 2000: 28).

This research project has employed Pateman's class division in order to have an approximate idea that clarifies the social class position where the Broomhall residents or information providers stand concerning their social inter-relationships within this neighbourhood.

Operationalization of the social class struggles concept. As shown in the working maps of Broomhall (see Figures 4.1, and 4.2 in Chapter 4), in the section A of Broomhall is where most poor working class residents live. In

section B, there is a mix of working and middle classes, yet the working class prevails. In section C, most of the residents are middle class with few working or capitalist classes. In section D, the Broomhall Park, which is almost homogenous, most residents belong to the middle class, and to some extent to the capitalist or bourgeois class.

Hence, below each interviewee's excerpt cited in the thesis is included a description of the social class, section (either A, or B, or C, or D), and a unique coding number assigned to each respondent (see these codes below on Table 2.5 in this chapter). All information providers, for this study, have emerged as belonging to the middle class.

Therefore, the *social class struggle* concept plays an important role in the analysis, and discussions of this study, because the reader can easily interrelate a social class status of a given respondent, with his or her territorial section within the neighbourhood (either A, or B, or C, or D). Thus, this gives an instant picture of territoriality linked with social class. Then the readers could assess the opinions of the respondents and compare them with others from the same or different classes within the same territorial section, or from a different section. In the case of information providers, the reader will still be able to distinguish marked differences amongst them depending of the section they work, or live and work. All the businesses are considered members of the capitalist or bourgeois class, either small, or medium (e.g. local shops, or local landlords), or big (e.g. construction developers).

The next section explains some competing views of the social class struggles concept.

2.2.2.2.2 Competing views of the social class struggles concept

This section explains some competing views to the *social class struggles concept* (see its definition above in Table 2.1).

The major competing views to the social class concept might be found in the views that consider that the capitalist society is not divided into social classes. For instance, a LIS commentator argues that most research in LIS relating to social issues, or social exclusion avoid deliberately using social class (Pateman, 2000). However, social class has been found to have a pervasive distinctiveness within capitalist society, and thus is an important concept with which to analyse LIS phenomena, as some LIS commentators have included it in their research (e.g. Caidi and Allard, 2005; Hull, 2003; Marcella and Baxter, 2000; Muddiman, 2000a; Pateman, 2000; Muela-Meza, 2008; 2007; 2005c; 2004a; 2004b; 2003b).

In psychology, a commentator who has conducted a PhD thesis relating to subjectivity and class consciousness to develop class identity has noted that most psychologists have neglected the social class analysis, and have preferred others instead such as race and gender to analyse individuals' identities (Jones, 1998). However, she has argued that it has been an error in psychological epistemology to pretend to homogenise people of the same gender, race, or ethnic group, thus obscuring their socio-economic differences which actually exist regardless of other features, and that the social class

concept can shed light on those differences, and still be able to be employed with those and other concepts (Jones, 1998: 145). In a line similar to that of Jones (1998), an education scientist from the point of view of the Marxist educational theory elaborates further, arguing that the differences in gender, race, age, sexuality, etc. are “conditioned by social class and value production, with special reference to the struggle for economic and social justice” (Rikowski, 2002: 25). Hence, the author goes along with Jones’ (1998) and Rikowski’s (2002) arguments and has also employed the social class concept as a determinant to the differences of the different groups of people in Broomhall, regardless of their gender, race, age, sexuality, or other characteristics.

Other competing views have to do with the ideas that social classes, or groups, or individuals belonging to different classes, or groups, live or socially interact in harmony and cohesion, hence free from contradictions, conflicts, or struggles derived from the social class dominance hierarchy. These ideas fostering “community cohesion” have been found associated with the current thinking called post-modernism (Rikowski, 2002). These have also been found in literature specifically related to Broomhall. For instance, in capitalist class residential and business construction corporations doing business in Broomhall (these could be assessed in the studies of Cromar, 2003, and LDA Design, 2005), which have made capitalistic-driven short research projects to regenerate Broomhall into a market valuable zone which might benefit mainly the capitalist class development corporations. Cromar (2003) supported his study with the ideas of capitalist class or bourgeois commentators who underpin the idea of “social capital” (Putnam, 1999) where “social capital” would bring “community cohesion” and hence regeneration in the neighbourhoods with equal benefits for all social classes, without conflicts or struggles.

This post-modern idea of “social capital” has also been brought to the LIS discourse without the sufficient scientific rigor or criticism. For instance, some LIS researchers (Bryson, Usherwood and Proctor, 2003) mentioned that “social capital” emerged in their study as a theme from their empirical data (2003: 8). However, it is unlikely that the term “social capital” had emerged from a research of that nature, it rather seems that the authors brought it as an a priori theoretical framework and then built their research design upon it.

Another commentator (Pateman, 2006: 42) argues that by the post-modern term “social capital is meant the networks of interactions that we have with one another, that bind us together and act as a primary means of exchanging the information, skills and help we need in our day-to-day life.” However, it is interesting to note that Pateman’s (2000) earlier clarity on social class division, which is actually the working classification of social classes employed in this thesis, and Usherwood’s (1989) notions of social class and power as dimensions of social inequalities have been contradicted by their writings in more recent years. Lately they have confused the capitalist or bourgeois class with the idea of the “social capital” (Pateman, 2006; Bryson, Usherwood, and Proctor, 2003).

However, the post-modern terms “social capital” and “community cohesion” have not been found as sound concepts validated by international social science epistemological conventions (e.g. de la Garza Toledo, 2006; Delanty, 2005; Delanty, 2003; Edgell, 1993). Furthermore, those commentators who

supported the “social capital” idea (e.g. Pateman, 2006; Cromar, 2003; Bryson, Usherwood and Proctor, 2003; Putnam, 1999) have failed to define the *capital concept* from the economic theory, which is clearly related to the capitalist or bourgeois class, and hence have brought epistemological confusion to their assertions. For instance, this is how Karl Marx, a philosopher who devoted more than 40 years conducting research about the *capital concept* and the overall capitalist system of production, defined in 1867 the concepts of capital and capitalist (the individual) in his multi-volume work, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*:

“As capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one single life impulse, the tendency to create value and surplus-value, to make its constant factor, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus-labour. Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him” (Marx, [1867], 1974: 224).

Marx’s definition of capital and capitalist have been generally accepted by international epistemological communities as a sound terminology for social science analysis (de la Garza Toledo, 2006; Delanty, 2005; 2003; Edgell, 1993), unlike “social capital,” “intellectual capital,” “human capital” and other post-modern terms which have not been accepted by epistemological communities of the social sciences (de la Garza Toledo, 2006; Delanty, 2003; 2005; Edgell, 1993). Those post-modern terms, instead of being theoretical concepts –either with theoretical or empirical applications— to analyse socio-historic facts are merely ideologies (de la Garza Toledo, 2006) which only foster political values of dominance in line with the capitalist or bourgeois class over subordinate classes (e.g. working class).

Furthermore, it is a daunting task to include all the competing views to the *social class struggles* as configured in this thesis. Nevertheless, in this thesis attention has been given in maintaining an epistemological and methodological rigor and consistency. Hence, however valid the post-modern ideas for their theorists and practitioners, for this project they have not been considered because they do not comply with the epistemological and methodological rigor and consistency of the social sciences (de la Garza Toledo, 2006; Delanty, 2005; 2003; Edgell, 1993), which included library and information science (Muela-Meza, 2008; 2007; 2005c; 2004b; Gimeno Perelló, 2007a; Rikowski, 2007; Rendón Rojas, 2005).

A sociologist elaborates on this idea in his epistemological book *Social Science: Philosophical and Methodological Foundations*:

“When it comes to methodology and philosophy for social science, postmodernism is limited. The value for social science of embracing vague concepts drawn from literary criticism and evocative images of power is limited. ... Its major failings are its inability to articulate critical normative foundation for social science on the one side and on the other it has deflected social science from the task of providing explanations for social phenomena” (Delanty, 2005: 118).

From the natural sciences, some authors agree with Delanty (2005) when they argue that postmodernism has been found as a weak and obscurantist system

of ideas that, instead of fostering the advancement of science, instead tend to render it stagnant (Sokal and Bricmont, 1999).

Still, Delanty (2005) notes that one of the most important legacies of postmodernism is the standpoint epistemology. Within this epistemology, social scientists take a political and ideological position, similar to that of Marx and Engels in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx and Engels, [1848], 1976b). That is, from the standpoint epistemology, the role of social scientists is emancipatory, and the research process and findings are politically and ideologically partisan, providing an open set of guidelines for emancipatory political action against oppression or dominance (Delanty, 2005).

Nevertheless, as stated above, the only role the author of this thesis has played throughout this thesis is mediatory (Delanty, 2005: 171), and thus a role of an outside non-participant observer of the perceptions of the research settings or the ideological and political views and actions of the people who participated in the research project. Hence, however validated the postmodern standpoint epistemology may be in terms of social science epistemology, those ideas are beyond of the scope of this project.

The next section explains the rationale for choosing the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory.

2.2.2.3 RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE CONCEPT OF CONFIGURATION AS AN OPEN STRUCTURE OF THEORY

This section explains the rationale for choosing the *concept of configuration as an open structure of theory* (see the definition above on Table 2.1) by presenting the views in favour of the concept, as well as the competing views.

The author reviewed the literature to find out how to conduct interviews with the prospective respondents, and through this process there emerged an awareness of the concept of configuration, derived both from the need to conduct a community profiling research project by employing qualitative research methodologies and methods, and from the need to operationalize the interviews schedules to record the prospective respondents' perceptions.

After having adopted a suggestion by the author's second and final supervisor on June 2005, the author reviewed the work of British sociologist Jennifer Mason (2002), and found that it would become one of the epistemological bedrocks of this thesis. Related to the configuration concept is Mason's (2002) *interpretivist approach* (see below in this chapter a broader explanation). She noted that "An interpretative approach therefore not only sees people as a primary data source, but seeks their perceptions...but what an interpretivist would want to get out of these would be what they say about or how they are constituted in people's individual or collective meanings" (Mason, 2002: 56). When Mason (2002) mentions how the people's perceptions are constituted into individual or collective meanings (note particularly the term *constituted*), that then reveals the key concept of *configuration*.

The author, after reading Mason's (2002) insights of *people's interpretations of how they constitute the meanings of their perceptions*, delved deeper into the

literature to find out similar approaches, and that is how he learnt about Mexican sociologist Enrique de la Garza Toledo (2006; 2002; 2001; 2000; 1999) and his *concept of configuration as an open structure of theory*. Mason (2002) did not provide a configuration of the concept of *constitution of meanings of people's own perceptions*, however de la Garza Toledo's (2006; 2002; 2001; 2000; 1999) *concept of configuration* did match fundamentally with Mason's (2002) insights. For instance, Mason (2002) in her chapter devoted to analysing qualitative data notes: "according to this broadly interpretivist view the role of the researcher is to understand everyday or lay *interpretation [sic]*, as well as supplying *social science interpretation [sic]*, and to move from these towards an explanation" (Mason, 2002: 178). On similar lines de la Garza Toledo (2006; 2002; 2001; 2000; 1999) agrees with Mason (2002) by stating that: "an open notion of configuration, in the sense to admit theoretical concepts and others from common language, but also as for the clarity of the meanings, in the relationships of the network, as for going from the more precise as deduction to the more obscure by passing through conceptual links which belong to the daily life reasoning with interpretivist and argumentative components, would allow us give a full account of a given reality and a reality in process of configuration, and of the articulations of subjects in a process of formation" (de la Garza Toledo, 2001).

The next section explains some views in favour to the *concept of configuration as an open structure to theory*.

2.2.2.3.1 Views in favour of the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory

This section explains some views in favour to the *concept of configuration as open structure to theory* (see its definition above in Table 2.1).

The researcher has analysed the concept of configuration as configured by de la Garza Toledo (2006; 2002; 2001; 2000; 1999), and Mason (2002: 56, 178), and adapted has adapted it to librarianship as a qualitative research concept (Muela-Meza, 2007; 2008). In addition, for this project that concept has been interrelated with the concept of the materialist conception of history of Marx and Engels ([1845-1846] 1976a) and Ilyenkov (1977; 1960), and with the concept of materialism of Sagan and Druyan (1992) mentioned above (see its definition above in Table 2.1 above).

Likewise, for this project this concept is of paramount importance since the researcher has observed (observation in the broadest sense of that term) and interpreted how some of the people of Broomhall have configured (from 19 October 2004 until March 2006 when the data generation from interviews took place) their material realities according to their own personal subjectivities, and hence, how their lives have been transformed, sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worst. Hence, in the way the different groups or social classes of people have configured their individual and collective or social actions, and to that extent have transformed their social reality (individually or collectively, or both). In addition, some of the very interesting features of this concept of configuration are that it takes into account not only the cognitive or scientific knowledge (episteme) of people, but also their daily life or even

incoherent or blurred knowledge (doxa) (de la Garza Toledo, 2002; 2001; Mason, 2002).

That is, it is a concept that allowed the inclusion of all respondents' different levels of knowledge or abstractions, but based on their concrete material reality, according to their interpretations and the author's interpretations. It helped the researcher to observe, qualitatively, how the different groups of people in the neighbourhood transform their individual and collective or social lives. Therefore, it helped the researcher to bring light on the conflicts, contradictions, and class struggles of those groups and to describe and analyse more adequately how the different groups or classes interacted within the Broomhall neighbourhood, without rejecting any lay or common language perception.

The next section explains some competing views to the *concept of configuration as an open structure to theory*.

2.2.2.3.2 Competing views of the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory

This section explains some competing views to the *concept of configuration as open structure to theory* (see its definition above in Table 2.1).

The concept of configuration as configured by sociologists de la Garza Toledo (de la Garza Toledo, 2006; 2002; 2001; 2000; 1999) and Mason (2002), as explained above, is a qualitative research concept.

The major competing views to this concept come from the positivistic or quantitative research paradigm. For instance, a foundational element of positivism is objectivism, which is "an objectifying attitude to nature by which nature [including people] is seen as existing outside science and can be neutrally observed" (Delanty, 2005: 11). That is, whereas the qualitative research concept of configuration allows the different subjects under research to configure their own world and reality, in the positivistic paradigm they should be seen as existing outside science, their perceptions excluded.

Whereas the concept of configuration takes also into consideration all people's levels of knowledge, including perceptions, opinions or daily life knowledge (doxa) (de la Garza Toledo, 2002; 2001), for the positivistic paradigm since Platonic times, only scientific truth (episteme) is considered as an absolute form of knowledge, and perceptions, opinions, or daily life knowledge (doxa) excluded (Delanty, 2005: 13).

The author is cognizant of more competing views to the qualitative research configuration concept, since there will always be competing views between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. However, as mentioned above, this is a qualitative research study, and the research problem was precisely to find out about the community information needs and provision of the residents of Broomhall according to their perceptions. Thus, the qualitative research configuration concept was found adequate to assess those perceptions as respondents' configured them (regardless of their different cognitive levels of abstraction or expression), instead of other concepts, either positivist or not. In addition, the author is open to the possibility that there might be other concepts

more adequate to analyse the aim and objectives of this thesis, however the concept of configuration was found adequate, and it proved to be highly instrumental for this study.

The next major section explains the rationale for choosing the qualitative research methodology.

2.3 Rationale for choosing the qualitative research methodology

These sections explain the rationale for choosing the qualitative research methodology in this thesis by presenting some views in favour, and some competing views.

During the early stages of this research project, the author embarked in a constant literature review, as suggested by his first supervisor, in order to finish his early PhD research proposal. Noteworthy is the research paper “An introduction to the applicability of qualitative research methodologies to the field of Library and Information Sciences,” which the author wrote on 17 November 2003 (Muela-Meza, 2003a; 2006b) simply to clarify ideas, concepts, methodologies, and concepts. This was submitted to his supervisor for comments.

From these early stages of the research project there emerged from the literature, and through the guidance of the supervisor, the idea to conduct a community profiling research project geographically based (e.g. within a neighbourhood) and to employ qualitative research methodologies and methods to learn about the information needs and provision as perceived by the residents and information providers within that given neighbourhood.

Hence, the author chose the Broomhall neighbourhood, and he decided in agreement with his supervisor, to conduct a community profiling study by employing methods of analysis of documents, observation, and focus groups and individual interviews with residents to learn about their perceptions.

The next section explains some views in favour of the qualitative research methodology.

2.3.1 Views in favour of the qualitative research methodology

This section explains some views in favour of the qualitative research methodology.

One of the discussions in the social sciences lies on which methodologies and methods are most or least adequate to do analysis of social phenomena, whether quantitative or qualitative ones. Silverman (2000) argues that there is no such thing like best or worst methodologies and methods: “the choice between different research methods should depend upon what you are trying to find out.” (Silverman, 2000: 1). As mentioned earlier, the research question of this project was to analyse the community information needs and provision of the residents of Broomhall according to their perceptions; accordingly, a commentator observed that “it is necessary therefore to profile the community and to be aware of the local perceptions and priorities [*of the residents of a*

given neighbourhood]" (Usherwood, 1992: 34). More precisely, the type of qualitative research methodology employed for this thesis was interpretivism or interpretivist approaches (Mason, 2002: 56; Miles and Huberman, 1994: 7-8).

How then is a community profiler or researcher conducting community profiling to investigate the perceptions of the people from the perspectives of their communities and within their neighbourhoods or the geographical areas where they live? Through spoken language interviews is one of the most appropriate methods (either individually, or through focus groups or other group styles). Because people can orally express their world views and perceptions, and when these perceptions have been recorded on tape like in this thesis, or through video, or other recording methods, and then transcribed into text, then their perceptions by themselves or through the author's interpretation take form; written form.

A sociologist (Smith, 2002: 37) emphasizes that qualitative methods should be employed in community profiling, like ethnographic study of the community (mapping, walkabout, photography or video, collecting documents); in depth interviews with key professionals, activists or stakeholders; focus groups for specific sections of the neighbourhood (e.g. children, young people, women, minority ethnic communities, business people, etc.). He also suggests using census and official statistics and surveys from the residents (Smith, 2002: 37).

The next section explains some competing views to the qualitative research methodology.

2.3.2 Competing views to the qualitative research methodology

This section explains some competing views to the qualitative research methodology.

This is a qualitative research study, hence the major competing views to this approach come from the quantitative research paradigm.

For instance, some of the previous LIS studies, where community profiling has been conducted, have relied strongly on quantitative research methods such as questionnaires (Satyanarayana, 1997: 192; Sarling and Van Tassel, 1999; Kaniki, 1995). One of those (Kaniki, 1995), however, found some remarkable flaws on the use of quantitative methodologies to quantify some qualitative categories such as behaviour, gestures, postures, and others when he assessed information needs of some communities. He concluded that those categories were simply unquantifiable. In this regard, these unquantifiable categories can be better assessed with qualitative research methodologies and methods.

Along these lines, another LIS researcher (Penzhorn, 2002: 241) argues that in recent years LIS researchers have found dissatisfaction with the generalisation of quantitative methodologies and the depersonalisation of information provision and use. Hence, qualitative research is a more suitable approach to provide information according to a more personalised assessment of people's needs within their particular scenarios that might not be the same as others.

Other LIS commentators elaborate on this idea (Gericke 2000; Kalyane and Devarai, 1994). They address the issue that community profiling should employ qualitative methodologies, hence people in the neighbourhoods could be participative, engaged, and “empowered,” and, therefore, information provision could be conducted according to their actual needs: to what they really felt, expressed, and requested, or even if they did not know how to articulate their needs. They also stated that LIS researchers, by doing community profiling in such ways, would be more likely to fill the gaps between people expressively or tacitly having information needs and their providers satisfying their actual needs.

Nevertheless, the author found several limitations in the qualitative research approach. For instance, one limitation is that this project turned to some extent into an anthropological or ethnographic-like project. That is, dealing with too much data from interviews transcripts, historic documents, and notes from non-participant observation on the field made the author become to some extent overwhelmed with data. The author has managed and coped well with this sort of overwhelming data, however if he could do this project all over again, he would at some point devise a questionnaire to complement even better the data pool. Hence, the questionnaire or various questionnaires would have helped the author to obtain information in a shorter period of time, then the author would have been better equipped to use the data generated from the questionnaire to more effectively conduct the interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Nevertheless, the reader should not assess this limitation in terms of epistemological or cognitive relativism, or lack of rigour, and objectivity. For instance, some physicists –at the heart of positivism– argue that a certain “relativist” attitude is methodologically natural in some social sciences such anthropology, because what matters in such studies is to understand culture in the way people perceive it (Sokal and Bricmont, 1999: 212). However, this was not an anthropological study, but the main aims of this project were to understand the Broomhall issues, features, information needs, and provision as people perceived them (through the own interpretations of interviewees and the author’s of the data analysed through non-participant observation, documents, and interviews’ transcripts).

The next section explains the rationale for choosing the qualitative research methods employed in this thesis.

2.3.3 Rationale for choosing the qualitative research methods

These sections explain the rationale for choosing the qualitative research methods employed in this thesis (documents analysis or literature review, non-participant observation, and individual and focus groups interviews), by presenting some views in favour, and some competing views.

The next section explains the method of analysis of documents (or literature review).

2.3.3.1 THE METHOD OF THE ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS (OR LITERATURE REVIEW)

The next section explains some views in favour of the method of analysis of documents (or literature review).

2.3.3.1.1 Views in favour of the method of analysis of documents (or literature review)

This section explains some views in favour of the method of analysis of documents (or literature review).

The literature review, according to Denscombe (2003: 212), is the first step to have a broad view of previous research and as a guide to design the instruments of generation and analysis of data. This has helped the researcher of this project to assess what, why, how, where and who have been doing research in the similar topics as to try to fill the gaps on what others have failed, or to improve the applicability of tools, methodologies or methods for the planning of the research, generation, and analysing data and writing of the thesis.

All investigations that lay claim to being 'research' should start with a literature review. The literature review, then tries to establish the existing state of knowledge in the area of proposed research and, drawing on this, to set out research questions that will help to advance our understanding of the topic (Denscombe, 2003: 212). The basic documents assessed which supported this thesis all along the way dealt with theoretical, ontological, and epistemological issues, and dealt with Broomhall situationally, considered as part of Sheffield, UK, both historically and contemporaneously from academic, government, and other independent sources such as organisations based on the neighbourhood.

The documents or publications reviewed included: indexes, abstracts, monographs, articles from journals, non-refereed articles in paper or from the Internet (sources available as pay-per-access, free-of-charge, or Open Access), these were in a variety of formats: maps, historic documents, photographs, audiovisual and multimedia resources, grey literature, etc. Emphasis was made on the grey literature as sources of data, since some of the printed information about the neighbourhood appeared in this format. In this project, several statistical sources from government and private providers were used in order to gain a wide view of the neighbourhoods under research as was suggested by another sociological expert on community research (Rogers, 2003).

The next section explains some competing views of the method of analysis of documents (or literature review).

2.3.3.1.2 Competing views of the method of analysis of documents (or literature review)

This section explains some competing views of the method of analysis of documents (or literature review).

The main competing views of the method of analysis of documents have to do with the fact that the interpretation of reality, or nature, or people's perceptions (either theoretically or empirically) is being made at a tertiary level of analysis (e.g. made by author of this thesis). This tertiary level of analysis is being done

about secondary interpretations (e.g. the writers of the documents being reviewed by the author of this thesis) over primary interpretations (of the individuals –e.g. the respondents of the author’s interviews–, or nature, or reality being studied, e.g. Broomhall neighbourhood).

In other words, to approximate to the empirical study of nature and reality (inclusive of humans) through the documents is necessarily sifted by two, or three or more levels or layers of interpretation through time and space. That means that through documents, depending on the subject, several or many individuals are interpreting a given piece of reality, nature, or population through time and space. Hence, given the composition of human nature, that documental information every time that it reaches a new reader (such the author of this thesis who analysed over 1000s of documents and the future readers of this thesis) is already sifted and mediated according to the different interpretations of the different readers/authors on the way through time-space. However, the risk posed for every new reader of past documental information is that all the previous interpreters since the origin of such documental chain might be wrong or limited in their interpretations. As a physicist put it, as a critical safeguard for present and future researchers, one should not exclusively depend on past experiences (Feynman, 2001).

Hence, to rely only on documental information in conducting empirical research is to risk an interpretation of erroneous past experience or considerably limited experience; thus, this documental past experience would limit the generation of new empirical knowledge, which will be in the future documental information of the past and so on. However, neither can it be suggested that only ‘pure’ present empirical research (without any review of the past experience or literature) can be more valid. Compare the comments that a researcher offered from within the qualitative research paradigm in LIS (Mellon, 1990).

Hence, if the analysis of documents alone cannot be the most adequate and comprehensive method of research, then other methods are needed to combine past and present experiences. That is one of the sound reasons for this project relying on different methods, like the analysis of documents, interviews and observation, in order to record present interpretations of the reality (the respondents’ and author’s interpretations of the interviews and the author’s by means of observation).

In addition, the limitations of the analysis of documents methods have to do with the quality of the documents, such as validity, and reliability, and their implicit historical limitation, amongst some other limitations. For example, for this project, as mentioned above, different documents were analysed. In the case of census information, they appeared to have several limitations as to be considered as reliable sources for this project: namely, information was outdated in most instances (although some historical census information worked fine to some extent for the historical part of Broomhall, see Chapter 4 for a comprehensive assessment of Broomhall historical and demographic background).

The next section explains the operationalization of the method of analysis of documents.

2.3.3.1.3 Operationalization of the method of analysis of documents

This section explains the operationalization of the method of analysis of documents.

The author speaks and reads fluently in Spanish (his mother tongue) and English, his second language. Hence, the analysis of documents, other than those related to Broomhall, was conducted with an international scope, but using only English and Spanish as working languages. However, the author has used mainly English and focused his research based on British standards due to the influence of his first supervisor, and also because, as some authors suggest (Rugg and Petre, 2004), it is one of those unwritten rules that students, specially international students who have different academic standards back home like the author, when they register in British academic universities must comply with the British system.

The next section explains the search strategies of information when using databases.

2.3.3.1.4 Search strategies of information when using databases

This section explains the search strategies of information when using databases.

These were some of the elements included to create precise and pertinent search strategies: 1) logical Boolean operators AND & OR (“AND” reduces the search to cover only a small amount of information by combining two or more terms or phrases of several combined terms or sets of several combined terms and/or phrases and/or even larger sets, and the information retrieved is only the small portion where all sets meet together in intersection or juxtaposition; “OR” on the contrary expands a search to cover all the universe of elements to retrieve by combining two or more terms, or phrases, or sets and the information retrieved is the total of all the elements combined; the “NOT” was not employed for either was sought limited or wide combinations, not exclusions); 2) syntactical or proximity operators to create semantic phrases represented with quotes “”, e.g. “*community profiling*” is a syntactical phrase where the quotes combined the terms *community* and *profiling* in a single meaningful phrase as if both were a single word.

The search strategies employed here are described synoptically and generically, but the author conducted many different combinations of strategies, not only these shown here. In addition, since the early stages until the final draft of the thesis the author kept abreast of the latest advances of the core content of this thesis thanks to many bibliographic alerts from pay-per-access databases from the University of Sheffield Libraries, from Google Scholar and Google.com, and from E-LIS. Hence, that has guaranteed that the literature review has been covered not only comprehensively at one single instance in time, but also constantly through time. Moreover, that is precisely one of the strongest assets of the qualitative research methodologies in a given project: they observe and assess small contextual phenomena, but comprehensively and constantly through time.

These are the search strategies to retrieve documental information. Strategies about the Broomhall neighbourhood from both controlled (e.g. Library and Information Science Abstracts database and using scientific descriptors) and uncontrolled vocabularies (e.g. Google):

(Broomhall OR Havelock OR Hanover OR Spriengfield OR Broomspring OR Lynwood OR Sunnybank OR Gell OR Collegiate OR Exeter) AND ("Sheffield England" OR "Sheffield UK" OR "Sheffield South Yorkshire" OR "Sheffield Yorkshire" OR "Sheffield United Kingdom" OR "Sheffield Britain")

Strategies about "*community profiling*," "*information needs*" and "*information providers*" in LIS through controlled vocabularies, but from non LIS specialised databases:

("needs assessment" OR needs OR "social needs" OR need) AND (library OR information OR documentation) AND (LIS OR "library and information science" OR "information provision") AND (community OR "community profile" OR "community profiling" OR "community analysis")

The idea to use non LIS specialised databases was to discover authors from other disciplines who might have done similar research though applied to their disciplines, and thus to learn from them. Such is the case involving the work of a social work scientist Green (e.g. 2000a; 2000b; 2000c) who has been found to be the most prolific author doing research on community profiling, or "*community needs profiling*" as he has termed it.

In addition, it is important to note again as mentioned also in Chapter 3 (Review of the literature), that "*community profiling*" is not a descriptor from any of the controlled vocabularies employed in this project, whereas "*community analysis*" is indeed. However, the reader could assess seamlessly that both concepts are considered as *community profiling*. Even community profiling experts have used them interchangeably in the same way (Beal, 1985: 3). Hence, this project has adopted the terminology of the non-standardised and British practised *community profiling* tool instead of the internationally standardised *community analysis*.

Strategies about "*community profiling*," "*information needs*" and "*information providers*" in LIS through controlled vocabularies, but only from LIS specialised databases:

("needs assessment" OR needs OR "social needs" OR need) AND (community OR "community profile" OR "community profiling" OR "community analysis")

("community profile" OR "community profiling" OR "community analysis") AND ("English in LA" OR "Spanish in LA")

("needs assessment" OR needs OR "social needs" OR need) AND (library OR information OR documentation OR LIS OR "library and information science" OR "information provision")

It should be noted that *information needs* was not found as a descriptor, but only "*needs assessment*," thus this is considered as a synonym of *information needs*.

Table 2.2 shows the libraries employed to review documental information for this thesis, either physically or electronically through Internet.

Name of library (libraries)	Location
British Library	London
British Library	Boston Spa, UK
Most libraries from Sheffield Hallam University	Sheffield, UK
Most libraries from the University of Sheffield	Sheffield, UK
Sheffield Central, Mobile, Broomhill, Highfield, & Upperthorpe public libraries	Sheffield, UK
UANL Raul Rangel Frías & University Library	Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, Mexico

Table 2.3 shows the databases used to search documental information for this thesis

Name of database	Publisher
Academic Search Premier	Ebsco Host
Amazon (from UK, US, France, Germany, & Canada)	Amazon, Inc.
ASSIA (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts)	CSA
Bio Med Central	Bio Med Central
Books in Print	R.R. Bowker, Inc.
British Library book catalogue	British Library
DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals	DOAJ
Dissertation Abstracts	Proquest / UMI
E-LIS: E-prints in Library and Information Science	E-LIS
ERIC: Educational Resources Information Center	US Dept. Education
Google Scholar; Google.co.uk & Google.com	Google, Inc.
Horizon Information Portal catalogue	Sheffield City Council Libraries
Index to Theses	Index to Theses from UK and Ireland
ISI Web of Science & Web of Knowledge	Thomson Corporation
Library Catalogue	Sheffield Hallam University
Library catalogue Star	University of Sheffield Library
Library Literature & Information Full Text	The H.W. Wilson Company
LISA: Library and Information Science Abstract	Reed Business Information Ltd.
Newsbank British and international newspapers	Newsbank
REDALyC	Latin American Network of Scientific Journals in Open Access
SciElo	SciElo
Sheffield Today	<i>Star (Sheffield)</i> newspaper
Social Science Abstracts	CSA
Sociological Abstracts	CSA
UANL library catalogue & periodicals databases	Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, Mexico
UNAM library catalogue & periodicals databases	National University Autonomous of Mexico

The next section explains the method of non-participant observation.

2.3.3.2 THE METHOD OF NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The next section explains some views in favour of the method of non-participant observation.

2.3.3.2.1 Views in favour of the method of non-participant observation

This section explains some views in favour of the method of non-participant observation.

After the researcher had already an idea of the different groups of people and categories where data could be generated from, then the next step was to walk around the streets of Broomhall, with a diary in hand to physically observe people and things as they appeared to the researcher's sight. This is the method of observation.

The method of observation has more advantages than the method of questionnaires. For instance, if a researcher would be employing only questionnaires, she or he would generate the data at one single time, analyse them, report them, and not return to the community again. In addition, if someone conducted quantitative research triangulating quantitative with qualitative methods for small projects of less than a year, she or he would not assess, empirically, the major changes in a given neighbourhood. That would not be possible because the nature of quantitative research is to generate a vast amount of data in a given short period of time.

However, long qualitative research projects, such as this of nearly four years long, can detect the different major changes that take place in a neighbourhood, for instance by using observation method on a regular basis. In this case the researcher walked around and observed the Broomhall neighbourhood once every week or two weeks, or once every month at least in some cases.

The next section explains some competing views of the method of non-participant observation.

2.3.3.2.2 Competing views of the method of non-participant observation

This section explains some competing views of the method of non-participant observation.

Through the method of observation, the researcher can record people's actions as they happen, but this is conditional to the fact that he or she needs to be in the same time and place when people carry out their actions (Mason, 2002), and that was not possible in all events and circumstances for all the people of Broomhall who were under research. However, through observation many features of people's behaviour could be learned; by observing the materiality where people live, work, etc., e.g. houses, parks, open spaces, playgrounds, streets, pavements, trees, street lights, etc., a large amount data could be generated which in itself offered the researcher valuable features (cf. Forsetlund and Bjorndal, 2001).

The author is cognizant of some ideas that foster the inclusion of the researcher as an insider within the population and settings under research in qualitative research. For instance a commentator argues that participant observation (insider's view) has more advantages than non-participant observation (outsider's view), because the researcher could gain access to people, or resources to benefit the research process that outsiders could not, or that would be more difficult to reach (Labaree, 2002). However, this competing view to the outsider non-participant observer has been also challenged by the same author (Labaree, 2002), who notes that being an insider participant observer poses some political risks for the researcher to gain access to people who might have different political or ideological views who might decline their participation in the research project, or if they participate might feel uncomfortable if the findings might not fit within their political ideas (Labaree, 2007). Furthermore, being an insider participant observer has been found as having inherently some methodological bias that might affect the objectivity of the data collection and analysis (Breen, 2007).

The next section explains the operationalization of the method of non-participant observation.

2.3.3.2.3 Operationalization of the method of non-participant observation

The method of observation was employed in the form of non-participant observation. It was used to draw direct evidence from the context where the events occurred exactly as they did, or as the researcher interpreted (Denscombe, 2003: 192). Some commentators from the health sciences (Forsetlund and Bjorndal, 2001) commented that researchers should use the non-participant observation method when they assess people's information needs because they may capture some unrecognized or potential needs just by simply observing the physical environment where people perform any of their daily activities.

Non-participant observation means that the researcher observes people's actions, and events as he or she perceives them in a unique given time or a series of instances through a short or large time span, but without being involved in any participation with those people, or events (Breen, 2007; Labaree, 2002). That is, completely detached from people, and from the events being observed. Hence, the only role that the author played throughout the doctoral study and the thesis was a mediatory role (Delanty, 2005: 171) towards the perceptions and actions of the respondents of the Broomhall neighbourhood by acting only as an outside non-participant observer.

The next section explains method of interviews (individual and focus groups).

2.3.3.3 THE METHOD OF INTERVIEWS (INDIVIDUAL AND IN FOCUS GROUPS)

The next section explains some views in favour of the method of interviews (individual and focus groups).

2.3.3.3.1 Views in favour of the method of interviews (individual and focus groups)

This section explains some views in favour of the method of interviews (individual and focus groups).

The use of interviews normally means that the researcher has reached the decision that, for the purposes of the particular project in mind, the research would be better served by getting material, which provides more of an in-depth insight into the topic, drawing on information provided by fewer informants. (Denscombe, 2003: 163). Thus, the interviews were employed formally and informally in order get in-depth insights from the interviewees on the questions being asked which led to an understanding of the phenomena under research (Denscombe, 2003: 163). A LIS researcher (Nicholas, 2000: 111-112) considers that interviews have many advantages over other types of research methods, since researchers are thereby enabled to make few but key questions to interviewees and these can give as extensive, free and abundant answers to those few questions as their time allows it, both theirs and the researchers', and therefore generate plenty of valuable data for the researchers' projects.

For this project, the focus group method is simply considered as part of the method of interviews, but conducted in a group fashion (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Hence, it is considered in this project, after Arksey and Knight (1999), that there is not a major difference between individual and focus groups interviews (and for that matter of any other different type of interviewing). That is, the participants of focus groups interviews are simply interviewees, but arranged in a group form. They follow the mechanics and dynamics of a focus group developed over the years by many commentators (e.g. Huberman and Miles, 2002; Mitchell and Branigan, 2000; Glitz, 1998; Krueger, 1998; Krueger and King, 1998; Morgan and Scannell, 1998; Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1988), not as a very special type of method, but simply as any other type of interview, conducted in a focus group style. That is, by a group of interviewees focused on certain topics or themes; in this case, the same ones this project conducted for both group and individual interviewees.

The focus group is a qualitative research technique, originally developed by social scientists, to gather data on the opinions, perceptions, knowledge, and concerns of small groups of individuals about a particular topic. The technique involves questioning and listening within the small group setting, to allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words, (Glitz, 1998:1). Some commentators mention that holding focus groups allow data to be obtained from a larger number of respondents and for people to develop their original responses after they heard other people's views, (Patton, 1990; Morgan, 1988).

A sociologist (Kitzinger, 1995) comments that this method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way. Focus groups can answer certain types of questions better than others can. They are particularly good at exploring concepts, generating ideas, eliciting opinions and measuring the degree of consensus on a topic. This is because group interaction is used to generate data. Group members stimulate each other to think and express opinions that in turn stimulate more thought (Mitchell and Branigan, 2000).

In this project, focus groups interviews were used after the literature review and observation, but before individual interviews, because as some LIS researchers have observed, when assessing information needs, focus groups can establish some of the crucial issues which would be important to follow up in subsequent interviews, from those opinions can also be established to whom interview later on (Williamson, Schauder and Bow, 2000).

The next section explains some competing views of the method of interviews (individual and focus groups).

2.3.3.3.2 Competing views of the method of interviews (individual and focus groups)

This section explains some competing views of the method of interviews (individual and focus groups).

The major limitation of the interviews method (either individually or through any group modality, e.g. *focus groups*) is that it only captures interviewees' experiences expressed in their own words; what the interviewees think *they have done, they do or will do* (Silverman, 2005; Arksey and Knight, 1999; Deacon and Golding, 1991). That is, their actions are mediated by their own world view, subjectivities, and ideologies (e.g. like actually all human beings behave indeed, after Lenin, [1908], 1964 and Ilyenkov, 1960; 1977), hence what they say (orally, because if written it would then be a questionnaire, but not an interview) through the interview process that they have done, do, or will do, does not necessarily have to be exactly how they express it.

Silverman (2005) has even criticised further what he argues has become an *interview society* in qualitative research, where practitioners, when using interview methods, should not take them as a 'gold standard': "the pursuit of people's 'experience' by no means constitutes an adequate defence for the use of open-ended interview" (Silverman, 2005: 240).

This project has focused mainly on the residents' perceptions of the research question, aim, and objectives at stake, and accordingly, their own perceptions are precisely their main limitation. So that, building for instance on Green's (2000a; 2000b) "bottom-up felt needs" concept (see Chapter 3) and de la Garza Toledo's (2002; 2001) "configuration" concept, already explained above in this chapter (see Table 2.1 for its definition), they do indeed precisely consider individuals' perception and their experience --in this case captured through the interviews method, as an important source of evidence to support research findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations. However, as it is being explained here, people's perceptions of their past, present or future experiences, are precisely limited, when considered as the only source of evidence.

There proved to be no homogeneous background for the interviewees, e.g. social class; ethnicities. However, in terms of the different focus groups' participants, most of them were from working class, unemployed, or poor backgrounds. Therefore, that means that to set up these types of focus group was to some extent a difficult task. For instance the first focus group interview with young and adult working class people was also in the open, but it was more homogeneous, although at times impressions between the young people and adults clashed. The set-up of the second focus group with young adult student women was perhaps the most difficult of all because some of them were not allowed to talk to men due to barriers relating to their BEM (black and ethnic minority) cultural backgrounds. Hence, that focus group alone took about seven months to obtain access through a very intricate, but nonetheless, rewarding process of trust building through gatekeepers. In the case of the third focus group with unemployed elderly participants, it was conducted under circumstances to some extent difficult. These respondents gathered in a place where privacy was interrupted constantly.

Another limitation of all the focus group interviews was that some respondents were more articulate than others were, and although the researcher tried as much as he could to try to engage in a balanced participation with all the respondents, that could not be fully achieved. This limitation is reflected in Chapter 5 where not all respondents' perceptions could be incorporated

throughout the findings, because not all of them responded to all the questions as some did. However this limitation did not limit the overall soundness of the focus group interviews, because as a commentator explains, there is the caveat that the success of this type of interviewing depends of the types of respondents and their contexts (Kitzinger, 1995). In addition, those limitations from the focus group interviews were compensated by the individual interviews where all individual interviewees responded fully to all questions, as is expected from individual interviews.

The next section explains the operationalization of the method of interviews.

2.3.3.3.3 Operationalization of the method of interviews

The formal interviews with residents and information providers were both tape recorded and notepad recorded, but from the informal ones only notes were taken. Some of the reasons for doing this were that the settings for the formal interviews were well planned in advance, with all the ethical considerations well planned and actually conducted accordingly, but in the case of the informal interviews or chats with many people from the neighbourhood, these were always unplanned and spontaneous, and for the most part conducted at the street level (e.g. passing by the Broomhall allotments; at shops). Hence the researcher could not be carrying a tape recorder all the time or be tape recording people without their consent and besides, the informal interviews were not strictly a part of the planned interviews.

Furthermore trust was also at stake. Most of the time those notes from informal interviews or chats were taken in a very small pocket notepad (detective style) always after and away from the different scenarios. This was done because whenever people saw the researcher taking notes (particularly in section A and the areas C and B near section A) they felt uncomfortable and made him also feel uncomfortable. Perhaps they would feel like being 'questioned by the police', hence that could hamper the trust built by the researcher, the data generation process, and most of all it might have hampered the whole research process on un-ethical grounds.

The next section will explain the design of data generation.

2.4 Design of data generation

The next sections will explain the design of data generation as employed in this thesis, which includes: a) the rationale of the selection of the sample, b) the rationale of the pilot study, c) and the rationale of the main study.

The next section explains the rationale of the selection of the sample for this research project.

2.4.1 Rationale of the selection of the sample

The next section explains the selection of the purposive sampling employed in this research project.

2.4.1.1 THE SELECTION OF THE PURPOSING SAMPLING EMPLOYED IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

This section explains the selection of the purposive sampling employed in this research project.

As already explained in the background to the study in section 1.4 (see Chapter 1 of the Introduction), the author conducted community profiling research in the Broomhall neighbourhood in order to analyse information needs and provision through the perceptions of residents and information providers. Hence, the sampling of this study comprises two integral parts: a) people (that is, long-term residents living in the Broomhall neighbourhood, and as well the information providers from within or outside the neighbourhood but who serve those residents), and b) the geographically delimited Broomhall neighbourhood (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2 in Chapter 4 to assess the working maps).

For this project, purposive sampling models were employed instead of random sampling ones, because what it is being sought, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 370) suggest, “are the groups, settings, and individuals where and for whom the processes being studied are most likely to occur.” Alternatively, like Wengraf (2001: 102) puts it when building on Patton, purposeful sampling: “Selects information-rich cases for in-depth study. Size and specific cases depend on the study purposes.” In this respect, Silverman (2005: 129) suggests that when choosing the purposive sampling model, “we think critically about the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case carefully on this basis.”

The type of purposeful sampling employed in this project was the type of snowball or chain sampling (Hall, 1981: 27), which “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich; that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (Wengraf, 2001: 102).

The next section explains the selection process of the interviewees that took part in this research project.

2.4.1.2 THE SELECTION PROCESS OF THE INTERVIEWEES THAT TOOK PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

This section explains the selection process the interviewees that took part in this research project.

Following the purposive sampling through the type of snowball or chain sampling, the author interviewed only 32 individuals: 24 residents, and 8 information providers. Of these: 18 individuals were interviewed individually (10 residents and the 8 information providers), and 14 distributed in three focus groups (two focus groups were conducted through the pilot study, and the other two through the main study, see below for further explanation of these).

The beginning of the selection process of interviewees through the snowball sampling process emerged from four circumstances: a) the author needed a population to generate data from a sample, b) the author when first arrived to Sheffield used to live in the Broomhall neighbourhood, c) the first supervisor of

the author suggested to him that since the author was already a foreigner in the UK, that any neighbourhood would be feasible to conduct research about it; hence, the author suggested his supervisor that if Broomhall was a suitable neighbourhood, then that would be how the Broomhall was selected; and d) the author in the first days when he arrived to Sheffield met a Mexican research student at the University of Sheffield who already lived in Sheffield with her husband and family, and after the author and the supervisor agreed on selecting Broomhall as a research neighbourhood the author told this Mexican student about his research project, and this lady put him in contact with a key information provider within Broomhall whom this student knew for few years and with whom she had a good level of trust.

Hence, the researcher made an informal request to this student to arrange a meeting with this information provider at her premises. This meeting took place at the information provider's premises in late October 2003 (that is, in the first three of four weeks since the researcher had arrived to the UK by first time). At this earliest stage of the research, as explained below in the pilot study, the methodologies and methods to be employed and the methodological instrumentation was not yet designed. Nevertheless, the meeting with this key information provider, who had great influence in the communities of the Broomhall neighbourhood, was of paramount importance for the researcher. Thus, this first information provider and key respondent of the research project was very friendly and cooperative with the author and gave him many ideas, hints, clues, and most of all referred him to other residents and information providers from the neighbourhood. This respondent was then the beginning of the snowball sampling process. From the individuals this respondent referred to the author, some became actual respondents and these afterwards referred the author to further prospective respondents; and the snowball sampling grew in that way.

Nevertheless, the author did not approach all the prospective respondents referred simply because they were referred by others. The author had to design a rigorous procedure to guarantee a balanced sample of the different communities comprising the Broomhall neighbourhood. This procedure is explained in the next section.

2.4.1.2.1 Procedure to obtain a balanced sample that reflects the different communities of Broomhall

As explained above in the section of the *social class struggles concept* (see also Table 2.1), as long as there exists a dominance hierarchy of social class contradictions, then conflicts, and struggles will constantly emerge. This project tried to obtain a balanced sample that reflects the different communities of Broomhall, however that task was not completely accomplished. Much of it was due to this social class divide found in Broomhall at the early stages of the research. For instance, the three working classes of this project are working class, middle class, and capitalist or bourgeois class, however some members from the latter, who were referred to the author from respondents of sections A, B, or C, were invited to take part in this project, but they declined their participation.

Furthermore, Broomhall emerged as divided in four sections (A, B, C, and D), being A the most deprived where most working class residents live, B less deprived than A, but less affluent than C, this more affluent than B, but less affluent than D, and this the most affluent of all where most middle and capitalist class members live (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for the working maps in Chapter 4), however as shown below in Table 2.6, only one respondent participated from section D. That is, capitalist class residents from all sections, but in particular from section D, they all declined to take part in this research project; likewise, middle class residents from section D declined too.

In addition, as analysed in chapters 4 (historical and demographic background of Broomhall), and 5 (where the findings of this project are analysed and discussed), it emerged that the section D, the Broomhall Park, was not part of Broomhall, but a different neighbourhood. Nevertheless, since within section D is located the historic and Manor type Broom Hall mansion which historically gave name to the Broomhall neighbourhood, the author tried to include residents from that section in the sample, but without success.

To try to overcome that limitation of the snowballing sampling, the author collected several names of capitalist or bourgeois class residents from section D publicly available in the literature (e.g. Cromar, 2003; Sheffield City Council, 2006a; *Star (Sheffield)*, 2002a; 2002b; 2004b), and invited them to take part in the project, but they also declined. That is the main reason why the residents of the capitalist or bourgeois class throughout the four sections of Broomhall were absent from the sample.

What steps did the author take to assure a rigorous and consistent procedure of selecting prospective respondents? As explained below in the audit trail process as part of the replicability procedure of this project, this project generated an impressive amount of data of all types. The sampling process also generated a daunting amount of data: 62 pages A4 size in digital format listing the 1,860 e-mail messages relating the process of contacting the more than 200 prospective respondents. That is, the author in order to gain access and most of all trust with the actual participants exchanged with them many e-mails, but to get in touch with them he sent 1,860 messages during the time span the data generation took place. Besides the e-mail communications, the author also made many telephone calls and paid many visits to prospective respondents, or individuals who would serve as a reference to contact prospective respondents. This process of selection generated an overwhelming amount of data.

Hence, in order to maintain a tight control of the avalanche of data that the author compiled for about four years, he created a relational database for his own use. As shown in Table 2.4 below the reader can assess the various database fields of the working *Broomhall directory of respondents* that the researcher created (with the free software Open Office database suite) since November 2003 and maintained and updated until March 2006 when the generation of interviews data finished. The table is divided into three columns: a) personal data, b) job data, and c) research data. The creation of this database began on November 2003 but it was constantly improved as the project advanced and new fields were included.

With this database the author coped with the avalanche of data generated to select the sample of prospective respondents from beginning to end. The most important field of this database was the *Follow-up notes* that the researcher kept with the more than 200 prospective respondents. That is, in order to obtain the most balanced sample to cover as much as possible the different respondents from the three working classes of this project, from the four sections, from both genders, from different groups of age, ethnic backgrounds, and economic status, the author made in his database the most comprehensive profile of each prospective or actual respondent. The database included real names of people: contacts, of referral contacts, actual or prospective respondents, names from the literature (included actual bibliographic or full text records).

Selecting the sample alone became as important as reviewing the literature. The process, same as with all the procedures that help accomplish this research project, was conducted scientifically, professionally, rigorously, ethically, with discipline, and most of all with too much patience. Through the *Follow-up notes* field of the database the author recorded in the database as a log or blog the daily communication relating to the more than 200 prospective respondents: e-mails, telephone calls, and visits, including dates and time. The only purpose of this database was simply to obtain a balanced sample and a pool of actual respondents. All the notes in the *Follow-up notes* field stopped when either a contact accepted to take part in the interview by stating the date and time when the interview took place, or if they declined after being contacted, or if the author declined any follow-up, as it happened with hundreds of prospective respondents who never responded to the researcher despite the fact that he contacted them many times over months and even more than a year.

Furthermore, none of the respondents knew that the researcher was creating a detailed profile of each of them for several months or years, only the author's supervisors knew about this directory. However, due to the ethical statement made by the researcher to the actual or prospective respondents to guarantee confidentiality to all the respondents, nobody except the author had access to this database. This is the reason why on Table 2.4 below only the names of the fields, and an explanation of each is presented in order to comply with this ethical consideration regarding confidentiality, but the actual profiles of the prospective and actual respondents were on ethical grounds withheld.

Table 2.4 is shown here.

Table 2.4 Database fields of the working Broomhall directory of respondents		
Personal data	Job data	Research data
Contact ID (an arithmetic consecutive number)	Organization name (where residents or information providers work)	Respondent code
Title (if Mr., Mrs., Ms.)	Position	Type of respondent (if resident or information provider)
Gender	Address	Method (if individual or focus group interview)
Surname	City	Interviewed? (yes or no)
First name	Postal code	Social class (if member of the working, middle, or capitalist class)
Home address	Work telephone 1	Section of Broomhall where the respondent live or work (A= Hanover flats, B= Broomspring, C= Havelock, and D= Broomhall Park)

City (some information providers live outside Sheffield, but worked in Broomhall)	Work telephone 2	Economic status (if employed, unemployed, homeless, pensioner, student, in government benefits)
Postal code (to find out to which of the 4 areas of Broomhall classify them)	Work fax	Age
Home telephone	Work e-mail	Ethnicity
Mobile telephone	Work web page	Referred by (person or persons who referred this person as candidate to be respondent following the snowball sampling)
Personal e-mail		Respondent's name found in the literature (yes or no; some respondents were not referred by others but found on the literature)
Personal web page		Follow-up notes (a constant follow-up of the actions of the researcher towards gaining access and trust with the prospective respondents until they accepted or declined to be interviewed, or the author desisted to interview them after a constant lack of response)

Therefore, the author by employing his own database had the chance to select and discard prospective respondents in order to obtain balance in most of the fields of the database, e.g. social class, section where they live or work in Broomhall, gender, age, economic status, and ethnicity. The main idea was to obtain a balanced sample comprising the three working classes from the four sections of Broomhall.

This was achieved as follows. As mentioned above, capitalist or bourgeois class members could not be integrated as respondents in the project. However, as analysed in Chapter 5 (where Findings are analysed and discussed), most capitalist or bourgeois class members emerged mainly related to the construction industry. Hence, to circumvent this limitation, the participation of this class was included as a literature review along with the perceptions of working and middle class interviewees (e.g. Exposed, 2007; LDA Design, 2005; *Star (Sheffield)*, 2002b; 2004b; *Broomhall News*, 2004a; Cromar, 2003). The construction industry in Broomhall emerged as having the most adverse impact to the different communities. Hence, the inclusion of literature addressing some of the construction industry plans underway in Broomhall was remarkable.

Thus, despite the fact that no capitalist or bourgeois class members could be interviewed, the sample comprising the respondents selected from working and middle class backgrounds and the literature reviewed relating to capitalist class members gave the author a balanced sample considering the three working classes from the four sections of Broomhall. See below in this chapter the actual composition of the sample of interviewees.

In addition, from this database (see above Table 2.4) several other operationalization procedures were derived. For instance the application of an identification code to distinguish each interviewee. This is explained in the next section.

2.4.1.2.2 Identification code of interviewees

This section explains the identification code assigned for interviewees who took part in this research project.

Every interviewee who took part in this research project was assigned a unique identification code added at the end of each transcript excerpt textually cited in chapters 4 and 5 (but mainly in the later which is devoted to the analysis and discussions of the findings of this thesis mainly through the perceptions of respondents). This was done to guide the reader to unequivocally distinguish the different perceptions of all the interviewees.

These codes were conformed as follows. For resident individual interviewees the abbreviation R.I. was given, and after it a subsequent arithmetic number was given according to how they were being interviewed in chronological order. For instance, R.I.01 means the first individual resident that was interviewed. For focus group interviewees the abbreviation F.G. was given, after it a subsequent number was given to distinguish each focus group, and after it a capital letter in alphabetical order was given to distinguish each respondent since focus groups comprised several respondents. For instance F.G.01.A means that A was the first respondent who spoke within the first focus group. For information providers the abbreviation I.P. was given, and after it, same as with R.I.s above, a subsequent number was given to distinguish each respondent. For instance, I.P.01 means the first information provider that was interviewed.

See Table 2.5 below to assess at a glance the identification codes that were given to each respondent.

Table 2.5 Identification codes for interviewees	
Type of respondents	Identification codes
Focus groups (FGs) interviews to residents	3 FGs. FG 1: 6 respondents (F.G.01.A, F.G.01.B, F.G.01.C, F.G.01.D, F.G.01.E, F.G.01.F). FG 2: 3 respondents (F.G.02.A, F.G.02.B, F.G.02.C). FG 3: 5 respondents (F.G.03.A, F.G.03.B, F.G.03.C, F.G.03.D, F.G.03.E)
Individual interviews to residents (RIs)	10 RIs: R.I.01, R.I.02, R.I.03, R.I.04, R.I.05, R.I.06, R.I.07, R.I.08, R.I.09, R.I.10.
Individual interviews to information providers (IPs)	8 IPs: IP.01, IP.02, IP.03, IP.04, IP.05, IP.06, IP.07, IP.08.

In addition to the identification code of each respondent, the author also added the social class that respondents belong to, according to the author's analysis, and the section of Broomhall (A, B, C, or D) they belong to according to them, either as a resident or information provider. Hence, the reader can assess in each excerpt the respondents' perceptions according to the social class and section within Broomhall to which they belonged. From this assessment the readers might obtain interrelationships of how belonging to working class makes a significant difference than belonging to a middle class, or how living in section A, the most deprived, makes also a significant difference than belonging to more affluent sections such as B, or C, or D (this the most affluent).

2.4.1.2.3 Composition of the sample of interviewees

For this project, 32 individuals were interviewed: 18 individually (10 residents and 8 information providers), and 14 through 3 focus groups. See Tables 2.6 through 2.9 to assess the specific profiles of all the respondents who took part in this project. As derived from the *Broomhall directory of respondents* created by the author as a personal and non-public organizing tool (see above Table

2.4), through Tables 2.6 to 2.9 the readers might find a sample reflecting a balance of residents and information providers, living or working in Sections A, B, and C of Broomhall, with working and middle class, economic status, gender, age, and ethnicity. For capitalist or bourgeois class in general and from section D in particular it was discussed above that all the prospective respondents declined to take part in the research, hence this balance only applies to working and middle class with the actual Broomhall (sections A, B, and C).

See Table 2.6 below to assess at a glance general profile of all the interviewees.

Social class	Location within Broomhall	Economic status	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
15 working class members 17 middle class members	8 from Section A 5 from Section B 17 from Section C 1 from Section D 1 from Broomhill closest neighbourhood	2 homeless 2 unemployed 2 on government benefits 2 pensioners 3 students 12 employed 3 physical labour occupation 2 low managerial occupation 2 school teachers 2 university lecturers	16 female 16 male	7 youngsters 17 adults 8 elderly	12 BME 20 British Caucasian

The general profile of the residents individually interviewed is shown in Table 2.7 below.

Social class	Location within Broomhall	Economic status	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
3 working class members 7 middle class members	1 from Section A 1 from Section B 8 from Section C	3 physical labour occupation 1 pensioner 2 low managerial occupation 2 school teachers 2 university lecturers	5 female 5 male	8 adults 2 elderly	1 Black Minority Ethnic (BME) 9 British Caucasian

The general profile of the information providers individually interviewed is shown in Table 2.8 below.

Status within their middle class	Location within Broomhall	Economic status	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
3 low managerial with no university degree 1 school teacher 9 middle-top managerial with university degree (4 of them library or information management related)	2 from Section A 1 from Section B 3 from Section C 1 from Section D 1 from Broomhill closest neighbourhood	8 employed	4 female 4 male	7 adults 1 elderly	2 BEM 6 British Caucasian

The general profile of the residents interviewed through focus groups is shown in Table 2.9 below.

Social class	Location within Broomhall	Economic status	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
12 working class members 2 middle class members	5 from Section A 3 from Section B 6 from Section C	2 homeless 2 unemployed 2 on government benefits 1 pensioners 3 students 4 employed	7 female 7 male	7 youngsters 2 adults 5 elderly	9 BME 5 British Caucasian

The next section explains the rationale of the pilot study.

2.4.2 The rationale of the pilot study

This section explains the rationale of the pilot study.

The pilot study was a preliminary study to the main study, which lasted from 30 September 2003 until 18 October 2004. Its main purpose was to test in some degree the different methodologies and methods for both the generation and the analysis of data, but in a very short time span.

This pilot study generated a 60 pages MPhil/PhD Transfer report, entitled: *Broomhall community profile*. When it was decided by the end of 2003 to focus on a community profiling of Broomhall and with qualitative research methodologies, the idea back then was to conduct the pilot study there in Broomhall and then in the main study compare it with another neighbourhood, which by the end of 2004 was decided to be Broomhill. However, by September 2005 it was decided with the researcher's new supervisor that due to the researcher's lack of sufficient resources: funding and time, the main study would be conducted only in Broomhall.

In such a case, the pilot study served to depict some of the main features of the neighbourhood, which would serve as the basis to find out about the Broomhall residents' information needs and to which extent information providers would meet them. These were the main features profiled as of 18 October 2004 (Muela-Meza, 2005a):

1. Housing development (e.g. demolishing & building; local residents being moved out).
2. Unemployment (e.g. abandonment of neighbourhood; drug addiction).
3. Health – heart and respiratory diseases (e.g. drinking, smoking, unhealthy food).
4. Multiculturalism – social exclusion (e.g. social class divides and conflicts).
5. Educational exclusion – due to linguistic barriers (about 60 languages were spoken in Broomhall).

Most of those features, or issues were configured or generated as the research moved along inductively, especially through observation and the transcripts of the two first focus group interviews. However, for the design of the focus groups guide some issues were proposed deductively as prompts to the participants as needed.

These are the questions used for the focus groups and the pre-selected themes as prompts:

- A. What are the major features of the community? (prompts: population, transport, communications; cultural, traditions (local festivals, working men's clubs, ethnic traditions etc); land usage (industry; Shops etc); housing; communications in the community (local newspapers, free sheets, radio TV, etc); local authority policies (with the local community).
- B. What is the best and what is the worst thing about living in this community?
- C. What are and have been the major issues facing the community?
- D. Where do you go to find facts and/or to have better understanding of your issues? (Prompts: or whom do you ask for help?).
- E. Is there anything else you would like to add?

See the next section to compare the evolution of questions guide from the pilot to the main study.

The data of the pilot study were generated from not only the previous literature review, and non-participant observation, and informal chats with people in the neighbourhood, but also from two focus groups with residents. In consultation with the research supervisors it was decided that those focus groups were well conducted and relevant, and could appropriately be included in the main study.

The next section explains the rationale of the main study.

2.4.3 *The rationale of the main study*

This section explains the rationale of the main study.

The generation of data from the main study lasted from 19 October 2004 until March 2006. In fact, it is better said that it lasted from the very beginning of the program on the 30th of September 2003 until the very final correction of the thesis before the *viva voce*, since the data from the pilot study served the thesis as the main foundation to build on, and although the generation of data from individual interviews and focus groups had finished by March 2006, the updating of documental sources continued until the end of August 2007, just before the final submission of the thesis.

Also, as for other sources of data generation, the research diary note taking of the researcher from 30 September 2003 up to 15 December 2006 amounted to more than 1, 000 pages of notes: field notes; bibliographic records; hints; vague ideas; draft phrases or ideas; "spark" ideas; that is, all kinds of writings, and ideas which served well to what some commentators call in qualitative research the "audit trail" (Rice-Lively, 1997: 186; see also below the audit trail conducted by the author as part of the replicability process).

The next section explains the evolution of the interview schedules.

2.4.3.1 EVOLUTION OF THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

This section explains the evolution of the interview schedules from the pilot study through the main study.

There were no major changes from the pilot focus groups interview schedule to the main study. The major thing added was a schedule for the information providers, and as mentioned in the interview method section above, here the individual interviews, and focus groups are considered both as interviews, thus, at the end, only two interviews schedules were developed: one for full time residents and one for information providers.

Comparison of the interviews schedules between the pilot and main studies. By comparing questions from the pilot and main study, the question A and B remained the same, for both residents and providers, but only in B were prompts added in the main study:

A. What are the major features of the community? (prompts: population, transport, communications; cultural traditions (local festivals, working men's clubs, ethnic traditions etc); land usage (industry; Shops etc); housing; communications in the community (local newspapers, free sheets, radio TV, etc); local authority policies (with the local community).

B. What is the best and what is the worst thing about living in this community?
Prompts: Either they would be best or worst these issues could be:
Safety; Transport; Housing; Health

Question C is very similar but was substantially improved. For residents it was:

C. What are and have been the major needs, or issues or concerns you face in the community? Prompts: For example: Health issues; Social and economic issues; Employment opportunities; any other?

For information providers was:

C. What are and have been the major needs, or issues or concerns you think people experience, or face in the community?

Question D was the same but more prompts were added. For residents was:

D. Where do you go to find facts, or to have a better understanding, or to find solutions to your issues or concerns?
Prompts: Or whom do you ask for help? For example: Relatives; Friends; Community leaders; Church leaders; Advice centres; e.g. Citizen's Advice Bureau
Libraries; Any other?

For information providers was:

D. How do you (or does your organisation/institution) contribute with those people to find facts, or to have better understanding, or to find solutions to their needs, or issues, or concerns?

Two new questions were introduced. For residents:

E. How well your needs are satisfied from the people or institutions you sought for help?

For information providers:

How well their needs are satisfied or their issues alleviated with your help (or with the help from your organisation/institution) when they have sought you (them) for help?

For both, to assess how the residents felt about the service they received from information providers, and how the latter thought that residents felt of their service.

And, for both:

F. What has worked and what hasn't worked and why?

To have a self assessment from the respondents of possible causes of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, in both obtaining and providing information services.

The final question in both studies remained the same, and in the main one the same for providers too:

G. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The next section explains the design of data analysis.

2.5 Design of data analysis

This section explains the design of data analysis.

2.5.1 Theoretical and methodological analysis of data

The findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations of this thesis were deliberately arranged and presented from the most negative (or controversial, or adverse) issues to the positive (or less negative, or controversial, or adverse) features; issues are seen as negative and features more positive. This order was chosen not only because it embodies the intrinsic analytical logic of the *social class struggle* concept where theoretically and generally the poor working class people (including the destitute, asylum seekers, refugees, homeless, jobless and other poor people alike) are more prone to be deprived in every sense, but also because it emerged from the data that the working class people were precisely the most deprived from Broomhall neighbourhood. Hence, where information needs were perceived as having the most adverse effects.

In line with the qualitative research methodology of interpretivism or interpretivist approaches (Mason, 2002: 56; Miles and Huberman, 1994. 7-8) employed in this study to generate data, the same methodology has been used to analyse data.

From the literature reviewed, Mason's (2002) analysis of qualitative data was found the most suitable for this project. She (Mason, 2002: 148-149) notes that that three levels of analysing qualitative data can be employed by researchers: 1) literally (e.g. if it is interview transcripts, then they should be transcribed literally); 2) interpretatively (following the same interview example, then the researcher may try to make her or his own interpretations of the transcripts and not include literal extracts); and 3) reflexively (where the researcher's world view would be part of the data generated).

This project employed only levels 1 (literally) and 2 (interpretatively) of Mason (2002). The author cited excerpts from data of the literature and interviews (both of individuals and focus groups) which are considered the *literal* level of analysis by Mason (2002), thus every time the reader assesses a citation from either the literature or interviews he or she would be assessing a *literal* level of analysis. However, the author made an interpretation of each excerpt of data cited, and then he employed Mason's (2002) second level of analysis of *interpretation* of the data.

Moreover, in the literature, Mason's (2002) interpretivist approach to analyse data has also been similarly employed by other researchers. For instance, a commentator notes that the observation that research reports is "written on the basis of the active interpretation of the reader" (Porter, 2007: 80). Along these lines, another commentator notes that it is precisely through the interpretation of the information how the research thesis or new knowledge is constructed (Cisterna Cabrera, 2005: 63). Nevertheless, some commentators present a caveat that "qualitative researchers are often at risk of merely categorising and illustrating participants' accounts rather than developing 'provocative and insightful' interpretations that could contribute to meaningful theory-building" (Rizq and Target, 2009: 68). Another commentator notes that the interpretation of data to be more than descriptive "relies ultimately on the researcher's interpretation of data" (Jootun, et. al, 2008: 43).

Hence, in this project the data has been analysed with the same logic as how it was generated, by using triangulation of methods. That is, through the generation, analysis, and writing of data blended into one another (Linley and Usherwood, 1998: 15). In addition, some experts of qualitative research data analysis emphasize that the analysis of data most of the time is done with words: "The words can be assembled, sub clustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyse, and bestow patterns upon them" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 7).

Accordingly, the data generated with the methods of analysis of documents, observational field notes, and interview transcripts were read seeking interrelationships and themes; as a researcher has suggested:

"This analysis was first done through a 'floating reading', somewhat akin to the psychoanalysts floating attention, which allowed us to identify unexpected themes or surprising words, and to spot certain connections. Another reading more systematic was based on different data: tables with a nominative entry and several thematic entries which summarize a certain number of characteristics and which bring out the relationships between them; a list of quotes by themes" (Petit, 1998).

Then, "excerpts of data are classified –words, sentences, and paragraphs—into intuitive and anonymous categories" (Saquilán, 2005: 44), "in such a way that patterns in the data are made clear" (Bradley, 1993: 445). In addition, all of these data once analysed have been intertwined, or collated, or threaded throughout the whole doctoral thesis in the form of text following in order to obtain a triangulation of the findings obtained from the different methods employed through a triangulation process too: analysis of documents, observation, and interviews.

However, being this thesis underpinned by interpretivism or interpretivist qualitative research methodology (e.g. Mason, 2002: 56; Miles and Huberman, 1994. 7-8; Porter, 2007: 80; Cisterna Cabrera, 2005: 63; Jootun, et. al, 2008: 43), the author was not concerned in theory-building as some note (Rizq and Target, 2009: 68; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, this could not be considered a lack of rigour, because the author was concerned in interpreting critically and analytically the interpretations made by people through documents or interviews as well as by data generated by the author.

2.5.2 *Limitations of the analysis of data*

A possible limitation to the analysis of data might be that, the author did not follow the methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), or hermeneutics in order to analyse data as some commentators suggest (Rizq and Target, 2009: 68; Standing, 2009; Quinn, et. al, 2008; Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006; Smith, 2004). This might seem as a limitation to some extent because the author has employed interpretivism or interpretivist approaches (e.g. Mason, 2002: 56). However, Mason's (2002) interpretivist methodology have been employed on broader terms and interrelated with the working concepts employed in this thesis: *the materialist conception of history, the social class struggles, and the configuration concept as an open structure of theory* as well as other concepts such as *configuration*. Hence, the interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology was not found suitable to be interrelated with those concepts. Furthermore, there is a sound critique from social science epistemology that "interpretation [*within the interpretative phenomenological analysis, and hermeneutics methodologies, MUELA-MEZA, Z.M.*] does not involve critique but mere understanding" (Delanty, 2005: 61). Thus, the interpretivist methodology employed in this thesis sought not only a mere understanding of the phenomena researched, but also critique.

Another possible limitation to the analysis of data might be that the author did not employ *strictly speaking* any specialised software package called Computer-assisted Analysis of Qualitative Data (CAQDAS), like ATLAS or ETHNOGRAPH. A commentator noted that qualitative research emerged as a response to the quantitative research which was more concerned with technology (including computers), than with pressing social or political issues (Silverman, 2005).

However, that was not the reason why the author did not employ any specialised CAQDAS. The author does employ computers since many years to conduct his academic work. Hence, he did not conduct the analysis of data fully 'manually' without the help of a computer software. He did use the MS-Word word processor suite throughout the doctoral program, and to some extent to find the occurrences of some analytical categories already designed from the onset through the interview schemes.

In addition, the author was cognizant of the commercial CAQDAS called ATLAS. The author had access to the full version CD-ROM of the ATLAS software at the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield, but in agreement with his supervisor it was decided not to employ it because only 32 interviewees were recorded, hence being this research project of a

small scale, the amount of data generated from transcripts did not represent a problem as to be analysed with ATLAS, or with any other CAQDAS packages. This argument is also noted by some commentators (Silverman, 2005; Mason, 2002). That is, more than an advantage it represented a disadvantage, because for a small scale project such as this, a non-CAQDAS analysis was more suitable (Silverman, 2005), or epistemologically effective (Mason, 2002: 164).

In addition, before the analysis of data, the author also reviewed the demo version in CD-ROM of the only software package found in the literature related specifically to community profiling: the *Compass for MS-Windows. The Community Profiling Software*, developed by the Policy Research Institute of the Leeds Metropolitan University, UK (Policy Research Institute, 2004). He commented about this software package with his supervisor after thoroughly reviewing the actual pool of 463 sample questions included in the CD-ROM for researchers to choose in order to tailor their own questionnaires. However it was also agreed not to use the full version of this package for these reasons: 1) because the interviews were already conducted by the time the candidate was aware of this package, hence it was not necessary to use or tailor any of the 463 sample questions of the software; 2) *Compass* was not a CAQDAS package, and if ATLAS which was an actual CAQDAS was already rejected, *Compass* could not suit the needs for computer-assisted analysis of qualitative research data because it entirely favoured the quantitative research approach by using a fixed questionnaire; and 3) this research project conducted community profiling entirely with qualitative research methodology and methods.

Thus, the choice for not using *strictly* a CAQDAS or any other specialised software package could not be seen as a major limitation for this project.

The next major section explains the procedures to obtain validity, replicability, neutrality, and generalization in this study.

2.6 Validity, replicability, neutrality, and generalization of the research project

These sections explain the various procedures that were considered in this thesis to assure validity, replicability, neutrality, and generalization or transferability.

The next section explains the procedure of validity.

2.6.1 Validity

Some views about validity are related to the operationalization of concepts, as a commentator from the qualitative research paradigm notes: "if your research is valid, it means that you are observing, identifying, or 'measuring' what you say you are. ... Validity is often associated with the 'operationalization' of concepts, a term more commonly associated with quantitative and experimental forms of research, but nevertheless one which encapsulates the idea that you need to be able to demonstrate that your concepts can be identified, observed or 'measured' in the way you say they can. You therefore need to work out how

well a particular method and data source might illuminate your concepts, whatever they are” (Mason, 2002: 39).

In this sense, the three major concepts employed in this thesis: *the materialist conception of history*, *the social class struggles*, and *the configuration concept as an open structure of theory*, as has been explained above, identified, observed, and ‘measured’ other concepts, methodologies, methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations as the author mentioned they would.

As for the *materialist conception of history* (see definition in Table 2.1 above), by researching about the materiality of the living conditions of the people of Broomhall (e.g. housing, parks, green spaces, playgrounds, shops), this concept helped the researcher to identify, observe, and ‘measure’ the major material features and issues which determined people’s information needs.

As for the *social class struggles concept* (see definition in Table 2.1 above), it helped the researcher to identify, observe, and ‘measure’ how the people of Broomhall were divided by social classes, why conflicts and struggles emerged as derived from that division, and the implications this division had for people’s information needs and their provision.

As for the *concept of configuration as an open structure of theory* (see definition in Table 2.1 above), it helped the author to identify, observe, and ‘measure’ the perceptions of respondents according to their own interpretations, and the author’s interpretation. Likewise, the idea of beginning an open concept also helped the author to consider the procedures of data generation and analysis as a constant and open process of configuration of interpretations, analysis, discussions, findings, and ultimately conclusions and recommendations throughout the thesis.

Other views about validity are interrelated with reliability. A commentator has found this interrelation in this way from the quantitative or positivistic research paradigm: “a proof [or assessment, Muela-Meza, ZM] can be reliable, but not valid, but a proof cannot be valid if it is not reliable. In other words, reliability is a necessary condition, but not sufficient, for validity” (Salking, 1999: 129). Another elaborates on this interrelation, also from a positivistic paradigm: “It is, though, no good producing results which are reliable but wrong; the data need to be reliable *and right [sic]*. Only if they are right can the data be deemed *valid*” (Denscombe, 2002: 111).

In this sense, the data generation, and analysis, and the findings and overall presentation of the thesis, are therefore valid and reliable. However a commentator from the qualitative research paradigm argues that validity and reliability could not be assessed in the qualitative research paradigm in the same way as in the quantitative research or positivist paradigm, and that the process of *triangulation of methods* is a more adequate way to obtain validity and reliability in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003).

In this sense, the next section will explain the *triangulation of methods* the author also employed in this thesis to obtain validity and reliability.

2.6.1.1 TRIANGULATION OF METHODS

A LIS researcher expert in community profiling (Beal, 1985: 47) observes that due to the nature of community profiling research, a single method will not be enough to capture sufficient and adequate data to come up with a sound and systematic analysis of the problems to be assessed. Thus, several methods have been applied in this project to bring about a rigorous validity and reliability. The lack of validity and reliability has often been criticised as a weakness of the qualitative research as some sociologists have pointed out (Smith, 2002: 37; Denscombe, 2003: 134). Thus, triangulation of methods extends the breadth of projects and improves the quality of the research; obviously, conclusions arrived at by using several different means are more likely to be correct, and accepted as such (Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 32).

Hence, one single method for data collecting or generation will not be enough to get valid results to support a research project, and therefore several methods should be used instead (Smith, 2002: 37; Denscombe, 2003: 134). This is called triangulation or the use of multi-methods or several methods in a kind of triangulation fashion as to obtain validity of the data collected for a research project. A social scientist (Green, 2000b: 27) called it *mixed method approach*. However, in itself the use of triangulation or multi-methods is not another type of method. Some commentators elaborate further mentioning that when conducting community profiling the use of triangulation of methods could breach the gap between the profilers and the people being 'profiled' (Moran and Butler, 2001: 72).

In this sense, as already explained above in this chapter in the section of *Rationale for choosing the qualitative research methods*, this study employed through this process of triangulations these methods: analysis of documents, non-participant observation, and focus groups and individual interviews.

The next section explains the procedure of replicability.

2.6.2 Replicability

Verification equates to the replicability found in a number of texts on qualitative research methodology. This relates essentially to the extent to which the research can be replicated, or verified.

Replication can be facilitated by the provision of a clear and transparent audit trail detailing the research processes and decisions taken by the researcher.

The next section describes the audit trail.

2.6.2.1 AUDIT TRAIL

The audit trail helps the reader to assess if the data generated are the genuine data. The audit trail is a trail that qualitative researchers leave so if they need to be audited for objectivity purposes, anyone in a given case could resort to check on it. In qualitative research it is inappropriate to talk of complete objectivity. Thus, what qualitative researchers can do, as Rice-Lively (1997)

argues, is to build trustworthiness by “controlling the researcher’s bias” through a well kept and thorough record keeping, the “audit trail.”

Hence, this research project did actually take place and the data generated are genuine. All the documents employed in this thesis do actually exist, they were properly cited in the body of the thesis, and their actual bibliographic records are accessible in the Bibliography section. Most of them are accessible in libraries, or online (either on a pay-per-access, or free-of-charge Open Access), and those that belong to community centres include the names and addresses of those centres for actual further access.

As for the observation method, the author filled more than 1,000 pages of hand written diary notes. Furthermore, most of the observation outcomes are also recorded in 600+ pictures which are accessible online at the author’s master PhD file free to everyone to see, download, copy, store, and print, without any copyright barrier (see Muela-Meza, 2003-2006). Hence, the reader can access free-of-charge this file (Muela-Meza, 2003-2006) and contrast the interpretations made by the author with the actual pictures taken. Furthermore, the reader can go to the actual places where the pictures were taken and corroborate that they are genuine.

Furthermore, the author has kept an electronic record of all the documents used as evidence or generated by him. This record has been backed-up in his laptop, in an external massive storage disk, and DVDs (amounting altogether more than 50 GB of documental information including the pictures). All the documents except the pictures are also backed-up printed on paper.

As for the interviews, the author has in his possession all the cassettes that show the evidence that the interviews took place and he has a copy of all the transcriptions and a detailed database with a comprehensive directory (*Broomhall directory of respondents*) with the profiles of each of the 32 respondents who actually took part in the research, but also of others who did not (see above in this chapter the section of *Procedure to obtain a balanced sample that reflects the different communities of Broomhall*, and Table 2.4 to assess the importance of this directory and the database fields).

Furthermore, the author accumulated 62 pages A4 size listing all the 1,860 e-mail messages of communication related to the data generation with actual and potential respondents through the University of Sheffield mailer, Yahoo, and Gmail. However, the actual communication is accessible online, but only by the author in order to keep the ethical consideration of data confidentiality and anonymity promised to respondents. Each message is on average 1 page long A4 size, so on average all of these messages amounted 1,860 pages long, but many included attachments. Thus, the cassettes containing the interviews, the transcriptions, and the private communication related to the research cannot be accessible to just anyone, but only to the author (not even to the respondents) on ethical grounds and the written promise of strict confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, also on the grounds of security for all the stakeholders involved: respondents, supervisors, the University of Sheffield, and the author.

The audit trail can also facilitate checking of the accuracy and honesty of the research. This thesis can be accessed and read by anyone because the data and findings are reported genuinely and honestly without falling into logical fallacies such as *ad hominem* (where persons are addressed personally instead of their arguments). In this thesis only arguments were analysed, discussed, and reported but all respondents' identities and privacy were honestly protected and their perceptions were kept anonymous.

By doing all of that is how the choice of qualitative research methodologies became configured in the context and in the way that events happened. The people conducted the events, or how they said they did, or how the researcher interpreted they all did, or how a mix of all of them were configured, or combined through a sound triangulation of methods.

Thus, the generation of data was designed and actually conducted in two stages: the first was the pilot study (see above in this chapter), which lasted from 30 September 2003 until 18 October 2004, and the second was the main study (see above in this chapter), which lasted from 19 October 2004 until March 2006 .

The next section explains the neutrality process.

2.6.3 *Neutrality*

This section explains how the researcher obtained neutrality in the research project.

One historic debate at the core of social sciences lies on the objectivity of research; on how impartial, neutral, and unbiased it is. Whereas objectivity may be easy to be obtained in the natural sciences, in the social that is not case. That may be due in part to what Ford (1987: 23) points out that the phenomena in the social research could not be controlled in the same way as the ones of the natural sciences. Alternatively, it may be due also to the fact that in the social sciences, as Frías and Borrego (2004: 204) argue, "it is not possible to separate completely the subject –the researcher—from the object –the research phenomena."

Some commentators elaborate those ideas further by arguing that in the social sciences research can never be entirely objective (de la Garza Toledo, 2006; Denscombe, 2002: 157), or that in the qualitative research or naturalistic paradigm objectivity is an illusion (Rice-Lively, 1997: 185). However, the natural sciences cannot be entirely excluded from the subjectivity factor either. For instance a physicist (von Baeyer, 2003) argues that subjectivity is always present in order to make choices of what types of phenomena conduct research about, or which experiments to conduct from those phenomena, and with which instruments to make measurements, which in turn would become objective.

This controversy of the 'pure' objectivity in the quantitative research approaches versus the 'pure' subjectivity in the qualitative research approaches has been known as "the paradigm wars" (Bryman, 2006), or the "wars of science" (Sokal and Bricmont, 1999). However, some commentators note that these epistemological "wars" are fictitious (Sokal and Bricmont, 1999), and that

instead there exist 'peace' (Bryman, 2006), or "methodological reconciliation" (Lawal, 2009). That is, quantitative and qualitative research paradigms both contain the subjective factor, and both can attain objectivity, because both are conducted by human beings, and human sciences (broadly speaking) encompass all kinds of sciences, either classified as natural, hard, social, soft, etc.

As for the social sciences where this project fits in, another commentator notes that "researchers need to be open-minded and self-reflective" (Denscombe, 2002: 158) for them to attain objectivity as it is best known in the quantitative or positivist paradigm. He explores the questions if research can really be impartial and unbiased, and if the findings are not inevitably biased by the researcher's prior attitudes and conceptions, and he answers them in this way:

"The research has been designed, conducted, and reported in genuine spirit of exploration and the research explicitly acknowledges, as far as possible, the ways in which any vested interests, social values, and aspects of the researcher's self-identity have had a bearing on the nature of the research" (Denscombe, 2002: 157).

Likewise, the researcher has adhered to this spirit of Denscombe (2002) by having attained the most rigorous objectivity in order to conduct this doctoral research thesis through all of its different stages.

For instance, an important aspect related to neutrality is the ideological and political position of researchers with regards to their research projects. Hence, the researcher played only a mediatory role between the data generated (respondents' perceptions and interpretations, documents and observation), his own interpretation as a researcher noted it (Delanty, 2005: 171). In addition (as explained in section 2.3.3.2 within this chapter), the author conducted his research project acting as the outsider non-participant observer that he is to the Broomhall people without taking any ideological or political position towards any respondent or data source. And this approach was the one that best worked for this project. Otherwise, access to the neighbourhood or to all the participants in this research project would have been more difficult, or would have not worked at all. If it was not completely easy, it was not completely difficult either, a fine balance in approaching all sorts of groups (some of them highly conflicting amongst themselves) played well for everyone, especially for the researcher who could access other groups where conflicting groups could not. If the author had taken partisan sides with some individuals or groups then he would not have gained access to individuals of different or conflicting political and ideological views.

Furthermore, this position of being an outsider non-participant observer adopted by the author is worth mentioning here, because he lived within the Broomhall neighbourhood for 1 year and 10 months in two different time periods (nine months from October 2003 to July 2004, and one year and one month from July 2006 to August 2007). However, as mentioned in the section of the *Background to this study* in the Introduction (see Chapter 1) the author is a Mexican national student who only came to Sheffield to study a doctoral program in Information Studies at the University of Sheffield. That is, he was only a transient student resident of Broomhall who before 29 September 2003 had never lived in any locale within the UK. And the two occasions that he lived in Broomhall

happened randomly because in those two times the only places for rent available were located within Broomhall.

Certainly, the author mingled as much as he could with neighbours in the two occasions he lived in Broomhall or in other different places in Sheffield, but simply like any other citizen would do living in a different place (e.g. saying hello to neighbours around his house, or when he saw them in corner shops, or pubs). But he never became a member of any community of the Broomhall neighbourhood. In that sense his research project could not be assessed as the views of an insider participant observer, because he never became a long-standing resident who has lived all of his life or for many years in the neighbourhood like a commentator suggests to be the case for an insider participant observer within a given neighbourhood (Smith, 2002). The author neither belonged to any organisation within Broomhall in order to become an insider participant observer within an organisation as suggested by another commentator (Labaree, 2002).

Therefore, that being said, the researcher never participated at all with people, or events from the Broomhall neighbourhood as far as the non-participant observation method is concerned (see the explanation of this method above in section 2.3.3.2 within this chapter). Thus, the reader can be assured that the researcher, by not having conducted his research project as an insider observer by taking political or ideological sides with the people, and their events within the Broomhall neighbourhood, guaranteed the most ethical, unbiased, and objective approach to the employment of the method of non-participant observation.

Nevertheless, after this thesis had been made public (see Chapter 7 to assess the different forms this thesis is going to be communicated), and its readers (e.g. Broomhall people) would like to consider any of its contributions as a documental information source to carry out either political or ideological actions, or further research, or other, then those would be the readers' sole responsibility or action, and their own interpretation of the author's own original interpretation as written within the thesis. The author is responsible for what he has analysed, discussed, and reported here, but he cannot bear any further responsibility of how Broomhall readers, or any other readers interpret this thesis.

Furthermore, by not having conducted the observation method as a participant observer (e.g. taking political or ideological sides with people of the Broomhall neighbourhood), that does not mean that the researcher is devoid of his own world view, subjectivity, and ideologies. As explained above within this chapter relating to the limitations of the method of interviews (see section 2.3.3.3.2, and after Lenin, [1908], 1964 and Ilyenkov, 1960; 1977), no human being is devoid of his or her own world view, subjectivity, and ideologies. However, as explained above in this section, in order to attain objectivity and neutrality, the author put his world view, subjectivity, and ideologies aside and let the data configure the overall interpretation of the thesis following the spirit of Denscombe (2002: 157) mentioned above. Or like Sagan and Druyan would put it: "We humans are biased observers, with a vested interest in the answer. The cure for this disease is more data" (1992: 400). Thus, the reader could value the

objectivity of this thesis according to the data generated, analysed, discussed, and reported.

Another aspect related to neutrality is to give equal treatment to all data sources by presenting views in favour as well as competing views of an argument. Hence, an equal treatment has been given to all data sources analysed, discussed, and presented in this thesis by intertwining in a balanced manner the different perceptions (e.g. from interviewees, or from the literature, or the author's own analysis from observation, interviews, and literature review). In addition, the analyses, discussions, and findings have been presented "disinterestedly" as a physicist would put it (Feynman, 2001: 108), and only for the sake of knowledge (Hawking, 1988: 13). That is, only for the sake of having shed sufficient sources of light to illuminate the phenomena under research and to make a sound but humble contribution to the wealth of human knowledge where conclusions and recommendations can be drawn for the benefit of the different actors related to this research (e.g. Broomhall residents and information providers, library and information science practitioners, policy makers).

Another important aspect of the neutrality process is "to acknowledge any vested interests in the research or sources of sponsorship that could potentially compromise the objectivity of the findings" (Denscombe, 2002: 171). Accordingly, the author declares that he has not had any vested interests of any kind in this research; he has had only a genuine pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Neither the author nor his sponsor CONACYT has any vested interest in the research.

The next section explains the generalization or transferability of this thesis.

2.6.4 Generalization or transferability

Some researchers (Silverman, 2005; Mason, 2002) note that qualitative research cannot be assessed with the same degrees of generalizability as in positivist paradigms. However, provided that someone conducted research in a similar scenario and context such as Broomhall, then some of the findings of this thesis might be generalized or transferrable to different scenarios with similar characteristics. Nevertheless, those possible generalizations of findings could not be made in the same way like in positivistic research, since qualitative research is rooted within the context under study. In this case, this project was comprehensively rooted and shaped by the historical and territorial features of Broomhall, which are very unlikely to be repeated in any other neighbourhood within or outside UK with different historical and territorial features.

In this sense, when researchers and practitioners conduct research based on this thesis, they could relate the eight major findings (and information needs) that emerge from this study to their studies. Not by making a literal translation, but by pointing out that these findings might also emerge in future studies, provided that the various concepts, methodologies and methods used, and the factors analysed here were similar to theirs.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has shown the reader all the methodological steps taken into consideration to conduct this doctoral research through its different stages (from methodological design through data generation and analysis, and reporting of the findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations), and it has also explained how the measures of validity, replicability, neutrality, and generalization were achieved.

The chapter was divided into five major sections: a) theoretical framework, b) rationale for choosing a qualitative research methodology, c) design of the data generation, d) design of the data analysis, and e) the processes of to obtain validity, replicability, neutrality, and generalization or transferability of the research project.

As for the theoretical framework, it highlighted the ideas that support employing a theoretical framework within the qualitative research methodology. Instead of employing a theoretical framework solely based on *deductive reasoning* (where theory is used at the beginning of the research process), or *inductive reasoning* (where theory emerges at the end), this project, building on the ideas of Mason (2002: 180-181), employed an *abductive or retroductive reasoning*. This is a flexible and open mixture of the other two notions, but it allowed the author to employ concepts deductively, but with an inductive flexibility, and adapt them going back and forth from the early to the later stages of the research project in order to adapt on a continuum the theoretical framework to the findings, and vice versa in order to obtain theoretical consistency throughout the thesis.

The conceptual scheme of the theoretical framework included these concepts: a) the concept of the materialist conception of history, b) the social class struggles concept (the classes employed in this study were: working, middle and capitalist or bourgeois), and c) the concept of configuration as an open structure of theory. In Table 2.1 (see above) the concepts are defined as employed in this thesis and the interrelationships with other concepts (including a reference to the chapters where they are found in the thesis) are explained. A rationale for choosing each concept, and some of their views in favour and competing views are analysed.

As for the views in favour of the Marxist materialist conception of history, it was found as an adequate concept to analyse the material conditions of living of the people of Broomhall and the material conditions of the neighbourhood through the methods of non-participant observation, and interviews, since this project was geographically delimited. The competing views of this concept were found more politically or ideologically inspired in idealist philosophical conceptions against Marxism than on sound epistemological grounds.

As for the views in favour of the *social class struggles* concept, it emerged in the pilot study that Broomhall had some conflicts caused by social class divide. The author re-conceptualised the Marxist philosophical concept of *social class struggle* and added to it the concept of the *dominance hierarchy* from the natural sciences in order to understand why society is divided in social classes, and why contradictions, conflicts, and struggles emerge those social classes.

The competing views of this concept were found related to the postmodernist notions of *social capital* and *community cohesion*. However these notions, besides the fact of not having been accepted as sound concepts within social science epistemology, failed to address the contradictions, conflicts, and struggles as they emerged in this study.

As for the methodology employed in this thesis, the qualitative research methodology, and particularly interpretivism or interpretivist approach, proved to be the most adequate approach for the purposes of this study. The qualitative research methods employed through the process of *triangulation of methods* were analysis of documents, non-participant observation, and interviews (individually and through focus groups).

As for the design of data generation, the study employed purposive sampling through snowball or chain sampling. A database was created by the author (*Directory of Broomhall respondents*), where he used throughout the process of data generation to assure a balanced sample reflecting the different communities within Broomhall. This balance could only be attained for respondents of the working and middle classes from sections A, B, and C of Broomhall, as no member of the capitalist or bourgeois class could be interviewed. However, perceptions of the latter from the literature could be triangulated with the perceptions of the actual interviewees to overcome that limitation. Hence, only 32 individuals were interviewed: 24 residents, and 8 information providers. From the pilot study an interview schedule was designed to conduct two focus groups with Broomhall residents with five questions to appraise the major features of Broomhall and where residents find information. In the main study the questions of interview schedule of the pilot study were maintained, improved, and two more questions were added to differentiate the three types of respondents: focus group residents, individual residents, and information providers.

As for the design of data generation, the theoretical analysis of data was made literally (when excerpts from interviews transcripts or literature were cited literally) and interpretatively (as the author analysed and discussed data). As for the structure of the analysis of data, the eight major findings analysed in Chapter 5 were presented from the more negative to the more positive, since Broomhall emerged as having more negative issues than positive features. As for the methodological analysis of data, it was conducted through the generation, analysis, and writing of data blended into one another (Linley and Usherwood, 1998: 15), by following the pattern of the five themes that emerged in the pilot study that became transformed into the eight major findings of the main study.

Finally, the study followed rigorous procedures to obtain validity, replicability, neutrality, and generalization or transferability throughout the different stages and processes of data generation and analysis and the presentation of the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and further research that emerged in the project. Validity was obtained through the operationalization of the three working concepts of the theoretical framework, and through the triangulation of methods. Replicability is related to verification, and this was obtained through the presentation of a detailed audit trail that explained the research processes and decisions taken by the author. Neutrality was obtained through: a) a

disclaim of any vested interests of the author with any sponsor, b) a mediatory role played by the author as an outsider non-participant observer between the respondents' perceptions and actions, instead of any standpoint, or partisan, or insider role, and c) through an equal treatment and presentation of views in favour and competing views of the data analysed and discussed. Generalization or transferability is suggested methodologically where the findings of this thesis might be transferable to some extent to other contexts by considering similar concepts, methodologies, and methods employed here, and that other contexts might be similar to Broomhall.

The next chapter is devoted to a comprehensive review of the literature related to the main elements of this thesis: community profiling tool, information needs, and information provision.