

**Reconceptualising Conflict and Consensus within Partnership
Working: The Roles of Overlapping Communities and Dynamic
Social Ties**

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ABSTRACT

Partnership is a dominant theme of public policy and service provision in England and in other western countries. It is also a concept that remains relatively under-researched and under-theorised, especially with respect to conceptualising underlying relational processes that can shape conflict and consensus within partnerships.

This thesis draws on a richly textured ethnographic study, using an in-depth case study of a voluntarily-founded, network-like, cross-sectoral partnership, which aimed to develop and implement a community learning centre in the village parish of Broadley, located in the English Midlands.

The research sees fieldwork conducted over twenty-four months, using multiple methods of qualitative data-generation including the observation of partnership meetings and activities, semi-structured interviews and the collection of partnership artefacts (meeting minutes, funding bid document, emails). It presents an ethnographic view of the inner workings of one partnership and follows its entire lifecycle. This partnership was not sustained and did not realise the vision to which it aspired.

A central concern of this thesis is to investigate the development of conflict and consensus within partnership practice. The contribution of the thesis is to tease out how these elements are understood. This study challenges naive texts that prescribe simplistic, recipe-based formulas for achieving partnership success. Instead, it illustrates what can happen when partners do not develop sufficiently strong and balanced sets of social ties between one another. Consequently, this thesis sets up a new research agenda focusing more specifically on issues of community overlaps, identities and social ties.

This thesis has value in terms of providing a deeply relational account of challenges facing the development of one cross-sectoral, network-like partnership. It draws together insights from partnership literature, community literature and fieldwork, and provides a strong basis from which further research can be developed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Explanation	Description
APO	All People Online	National charity committed to researching and addressing the issues of 'Universal Internet Access' and promoting digital inclusion.
BCHCA	Broadley and Croft Hall Community Association	Committee of trustees that was responsible for the running of the BCHCC.
BCHCC	Broadley and Croft Hall Community Centre	A community centre based in Croft Hall village (neighbouring village to Broadley). One of the rooms was fitted out with computers (no internet access) which Newsby College hired to run its I.T. courses 'in the community'.
BCB	Broadley Council Building	The 19 th Century empty building in Broadley village, owned by Newsby Borough Council, that it was envisaged would be the base and location for the BV project.
BCC	Broadley Community Centre	New-build community centre situated behind the BCB and run by a Management Committee of local residents.
BV	Broadley Vision	The project being developed by the BV partnership
I4A	Internet4all project	National project piloted by All People Online to help communities and individuals in disadvantaged areas across the UK to engage with digital technology. Aimed to help communities overcome any barriers they may have to computers and the Internet so they could take advantage of the opportunities digital technology and the Internet has to offer.
NBC	Newsby Borough Council	Local Authority for Newsby Borough
NC	Newsby College	Large FE College in Newsby Borough
UKTC	UK Telecommunications	An international business providing communication technology, products and services. Through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and programmes, they aim to be a responsible business. UKTC's social investment is based around areas where they think they can use their expertise and technology to make the biggest impact possible. One of these areas is communication skills: they support the development of communication skills as they believe these to be essential to leading happy and successful lives (UKTC cite UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organisation research). Another area is Digital Inclusion: UKTC runs a digital inclusion programme, as they believe that a third of the UK population is classed as 'digitally excluded' which means that they are perceived to be missing out on access to information, cheaper goods and services and ways to keep in touch with family and friends.
VSTP	Voluntary Sector Training Project	Voluntary sector project run by Ann Harrison which aims to provide training and learning for voluntary and community sector organizations.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE BV PARTNERSHIP

BV Participant (alphabetical)	Initial	Organisation	Brief Description
Alan Grogan (Cllr.)	AG	Newsby Borough Council	Labour councillor for Broadley and Leader of Newsby Borough Council. Resident of Broadley.
Ann Harrison	AH	Voluntary Sector Training Project	Manager of a voluntary sector training project (VSTP) based in Newsby Borough.
Clare Moorland	CM	All People Online	National Programme Manager at All People Online (APO) (voluntary sector organisation, based in Hertfordshire). APO contracted by UKTC to deliver Internet4All programme nationally. Line managed by Julian Fox.
Clive Potterson	CP	Broadley Rotary Club	Broadley resident, President of the Broadley Rotary Club, Co-ordinator of Broadley.net e-newsletter.
Howard Barber	HB	UKTC	Strategic Manager in UKTC's (UK Telecommunications) Social Policy Unit
Julian Fox	JF	All People Online	Chief Executive of voluntary sector organisation, All People Online (APO). APO contracted by UKTC to deliver Internet4All projects nationally.
Keith Winters	KW	UKTC	Project Manager in UKTC's Social Policy Unit. Oversaw development of Internet4All programmes. Line managed by Martin Hewitts.
Katy Vigurs	KV	Staffordshire University	Research student.
Matthew Griffiths	MG	Newsby Borough Council	External Projects Funding Officer for Newsby Borough Council (NBC).
Martin Hewitts	MH	UKTC	Strategic Manager in UKTC's Social Policy Unit. Responsible for commissioning All People Online to deliver the Internet4All (I4A) national programme (including a pilot I4A project in Broadley).
Ronnie Smith	RS	Smith Enterprises Ltd.	Retired senior manager of UKTC. Self-employed as a business consultant.
Stuart Hogarth (Cllr.)	SH	Newsby Borough Council	Labour Councillor for neighbouring ward to Broadley. Also runs an Employment Agency.
Susie Botham	SB	All People Online	Employed by All People Online. Project officer for Internet4all project in Broadley. Line managed by Clare Moorland.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

Introduction

This thesis has been developed out of a two-year study of the operation and trajectory of one voluntarily-founded, cross-sectoral partnership, in the field of community learning. In the course of this partnership ultimately failing, it presented many problems and dilemmas for the partners (and those seeking to make sense of it), and exploring such conflicts are valuable for developing theory around partnership working. In striving to make sense of my experience in the field, I have engaged with theoretical debates concerning partnership, drawn on insights from community studies literature, and I have taken a reflexive approach to the whole research process. The thesis, and my contribution to knowledge, develops and integrates a number of key concepts, namely: partnership, community, overlapping communities and dynamic social ties.

This introduction will set out the context of the research in terms of the site of the fieldwork and its methodological underpinnings. It will set out the recent history of partnership working in relation to social policy movements, before more fully introducing the Broadley Vision (BV) partnership and its participants. I will introduce the rationale for carrying out such a study using ethnographic methods – particularly observation and interviews – as investigative research tools. From this, the relevance of my turning to the concept of ‘community’ for understanding partnership working will be outlined. This will highlight why it is appropriate to understand the partnership’s conflict and consensus in terms of overlaps between communities. Furthermore, I will discuss why the analysis of dynamic social ties between BV participants adds a valuable conceptual layer to how conflict and consensus in partnership working can more generally, and usefully, be understood. Finally, I will summarise and locate the contribution to knowledge that this research makes, prior to outlining the structure of the thesis.

Introducing the partnership agenda

Partnership between public agencies, private companies and non-profit organisations has been promoted globally by governments through legal directives, financial inducements and support frameworks. In the UK, New Labour provided a policy context that was particularly conducive to partnership working. The government's calls for 'interconnectedness' and a dismantling of 'public service monoliths' produced the new mantra of 'joined-up working' for both policy-makers and practitioners (Anning et al, 2006: 4). The government's modernising aim was to improve public service effectiveness and efficiency by reducing duplication between services, which gave birth to a new wave of multi-organisational, often mandatory, and frequently cross-sectoral partnerships - such as Health Action Zones and Education Action Zones in the late 1990s, and more recently, Children's Centres and Extended Services. Multi-organisational, cross-sectoral partnerships were - and still are - believed to offer the most effective mechanisms for implementing social solutions to multi-dimensional social problems (Clegg and McNulty, 2002).

Partnership working remains at the centre of the development and delivery of social interventions and continues to be enthusiastically endorsed, particularly by public policy and services - including education, health, housing, employment, law enforcement and social welfare - both in the UK and in other western countries (6, 1997; Peters, 1998; DETR, 1999; Milburn, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Clarke and Glendinning, 2002; DfES, 2003, 2004b; Seddon, Billet and Clemans, 2005; Anning et al, 2006; Powell and Dowling, 2006). Partnership activity has become commonplace, and is not only occurring as a response to government push or pull. Rather, it is now more generally understood as a way of working with others on a shared venture where there are mutual interests and benefits in achieving positive results. This is referred to as the 'value-added' of partnership. As Huxham and Vangen (2005:3) put forward, 'Almost anything is, in principle, possible through collaboration, because you are not limited by your own resources and expertise', suggesting that joint visions can be realised by accessing and combining resources and expertise from a range of parties. Indeed, the concept of

partnership carries a positive resonance and is imbued with panacean qualities. This is supported by the many examples of partnerships that are deemed successful. For example, Dhillon's (2005, 2007, 2009) account of partnership working, in the field of post-16 learning, demonstrates how an inter-organisational partnership was successfully sustained over many years, as well as meeting its social and educational objectives. Achieving joint outcomes are the positive paybacks of partnership.

Conversely, there can also be sizeable barriers to making partnerships work, and many involved in collaborative projects have expressed frustration and disappointment through previous studies (Arino and de la Torre, 1998; Hudson, 2000; Clegg and McNulty, 2002; Craig and Taylor, 2002; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Billet et al, 2007). This is referred to as 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Nonetheless, the concept of the value-added partnership and 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham, 1996) remains an implicit assumption underpinning collaborative approaches to public policy and practice, despite a growing body of literature which warns that the desired positive outcomes from partnership working are often not achieved in practice, and are not equitably distributed amongst members (see, for example, Mayo and Taylor, 2001; Hudson and Hardy, 2002). The next section will introduce the partnership at the centre of this study – the Broadley Vision partnership – and will outline how this case of partnership fits within the broader picture of partnership practice and policy, describing some of its main characteristics and features.

Background to the Broadley Vision partnership

This research seeks to explore and analyse conflict and consensus within partnership working through a qualitative study of the Broadley Vision (BV) partnership; a joint venture of individuals emanating from a range of sectors and organisations, which, between 2000-2003, tried to set up a 'communications and learning centre' in the semi-rural parish of Broadley, located in a shire county of the Midlands in England. Broadley is part of Newsby District. In order to preserve the anonymity of the place (and the partnership participants), I have changed all

names and provided suitable pseudonyms. Historically, the area of Broadley was a remote, rural parish. Coal was mined in the parish in the 19th and 20th Centuries, but today there is little evidence of the heavy industrial markers that would have once have been a prominent feature of the local landscape. An extract from my research diary, below, describes observations from my first visit to Broadley:

My first trip to Broadley today. I caught the bus from Newsby town centre to Broadley – a twenty minute journey. The bus drove first through the residential ‘regeneration areas’ of Chattsley and Croxby, which appear to run into one another. Dense groupings of ex-local authority houses - many boarded-up – a few shops with thick, metal grills over the windows, interspersed with large, industrial units. I didn’t see many people. Once through Croxby, it’s another five minutes or so to the outskirts of Broadley and the landscape changes dramatically. For a few miles there are no residential or industrial areas, just fields. It also becomes quite hilly. In this sense, Broadley feels physically remote from other areas in Newsby – although obviously it doesn’t take long to get there by car or bus. The first dwellings I saw in Broadley parish were clearly farm-related. Big farm houses with bales of hay piled up at the side. Then we passed six or seven short roads of terraced houses, then a newer, 1970s housing estate on the other side of the road. The bus turned left onto the main street in Broadley – at one end a modern, single-storey, community centre [BCC] directly opposite an empty, but imposing two-storey, ex-district council building [BCB], and at the other end, a small, ex-local authority housing estate, then more fields. I did feel like I was in the countryside. The main street contained many small shops and services – a bakery, a butchers, two green grocers, a small public library, health centre, dentist, a bank, hardware store, two pubs, a café, two small supermarkets, two church village halls, a fish and chip shop, an Indian restaurant and even a small, community-run theatre (!), which looked like it was housed in an old cinema building. Further residential streets lead off this main street, on both sides, all the way along – there appears to be a mix of housing although the majority around the main street are old, red-brick terraces. It was 11 o’clock when I got off the bus and the street was busy, especially with older people and parents with young children.

(Field notes - 17th August 2001)

Broadley was selected as the location for the project due to the involvement of Alan Grogan, a long-term resident and established Labour councillor for Broadley (see Chapter Four). At the time of the fieldwork, Alan was also the Leader of Newsby Borough Council, and had access to a large, vacant, council-owned building in Broadley (BCB). In my first interview with Alan (October 2001), he told me that he had wanted to see some sort of community learning centre set up in Broadley for over thirteen years, reporting anecdotal evidence of some residents ‘*not being able to read or write*’. However, it was only when he was introduced, by chance, to Ronnie Smith (a local businessman who had similar aspirations), at a government department conference in Birmingham, that the idea was raised and began to develop into what would become known as the BV partnership.

The resulting partnership could be described as serendipitous and ‘non-mandatory’ (Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Dhillon, 2009), having been jointly and informally initiated by the chance meeting of two individuals (Alan Grogan and Ronnie Smith), rather than being formally instigated by a third party such as government. In contrast to other partnerships (for example, learning partnerships, DfEE (1999) and Single Regeneration Budget partnerships, DfES (2004a)), the BV partnership was formed voluntarily and did not receive any external funding to meet the costs of partnership working. This is in a policy context where financial motivations have been employed to promote, attract and persuade individuals and organisations to form partnerships. Powell and Glendinning (2002) describe this as a ‘carrots and sticks’ approach that can produce ‘compulsory partnerships’. The BV partnership was certainly not such a ‘compulsory partnership’, although it did try to become an externally funded partnership at one point (see Chapter Four). This funding bid was unsuccessful. The costs of partnership working were thus absorbed solely by the participating individuals and/or the organisations which they represented. For some members, these costs were cited as reasons for conflict and tension within the group. In the context of the partnership literature - especially in the field of education-related partnerships - partnerships that are very informal, non-compulsory and that fail are under-researched.

The BV partnership could also be depicted as ‘cross-sectoral’ in that the partners were drawn from the public sector (a Local Authority), the private sector (representatives of a large multi-national company and a small business) and the voluntary and community sectors (charitable organisations - one national and two local, including one Broadley-based community organisation). Specifically, these individuals came from Newsby Borough Council (two councillors and one officer), local and international private sector organisations (Smith Enterprises Ltd and the UK Telecommunications company), national and local voluntary sector organisations (All People Online and Newsby Voluntary Sector Training Project) and a community organisation (Broadley Rotary Club). Many of them were men; none were from minority ethnic backgrounds; most were in their forties, fifties and sixties. Their professional backgrounds varied: there were politicians, engineers, businessmen, public policy officers, educators, youth workers and voluntary sector

workers. Some of the participants had more than one professional background and some represented more than one organisation or sector. At a superficial level (prior to exploring the detail of such an enterprise), what they appeared to have in common was a commitment to the setting up of some sort of community learning centre in the parish of Broadley, in Newsby Borough.

Introducing the participants

Twelve individuals participated in the BV partnership over its three year life, although not all twelve were involved at the same time (see figure 1.3), or to the same extent (see figure 1.1). When referring to any of these twelve within the thesis, I use terms such as ‘participant’, ‘partner’, ‘party’ or ‘member’, although I acknowledge that membership was an imprecise category with ‘shifting boundaries and allegiances’ (Gilchrist, 2004: 30). To talk of ‘partners’ or ‘members’ could imply that there were clear affiliation mechanisms (Ahrne, 1994), which was not the case in the BV partnership. These terms are used to indicate individuals who became involved in the operation and trajectory. The following table is a brief sketch of the BV participants (see figure 1.1), under their pseudonyms. These sketches will be given fuller context in Chapter Four. For reference, I have included a comprehensive list of abbreviations at the front of this thesis, to aid the reader’s comprehension of the - at times - acronym-laden passages.

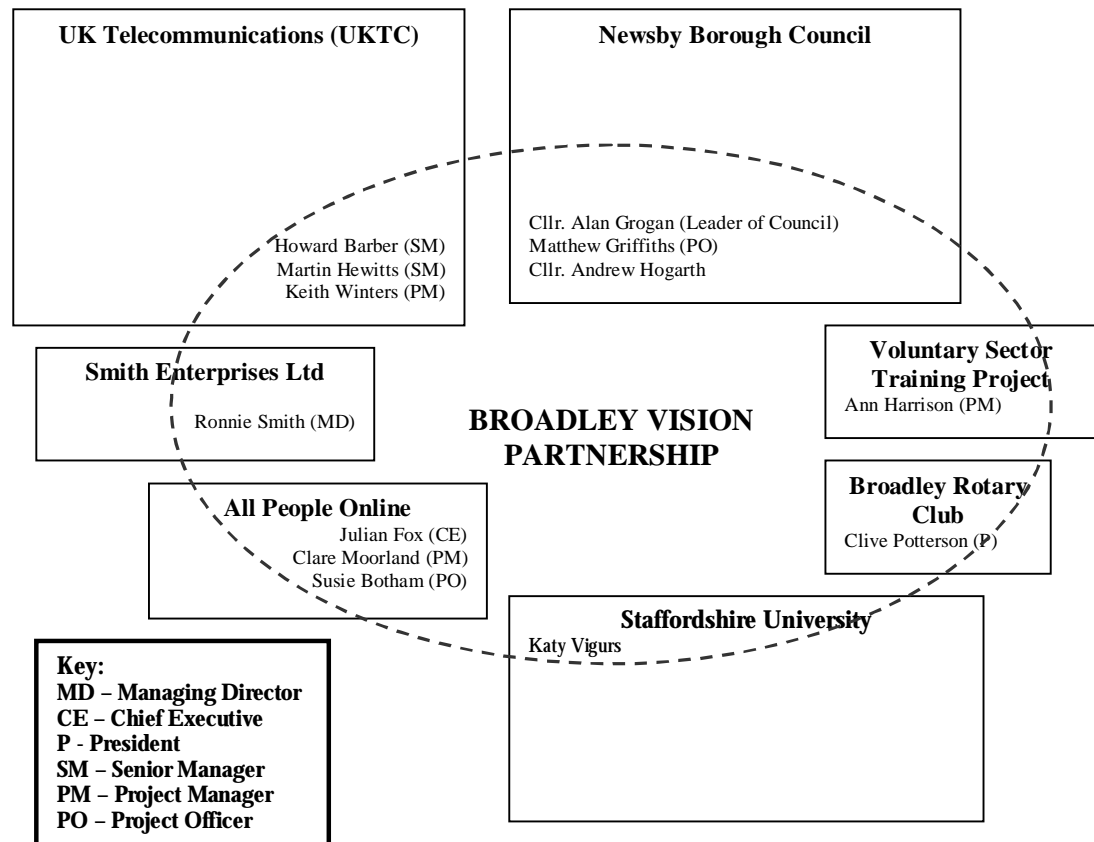
Figure 1.1: BV partnership participants

BV partnership participant	Core or peripheral member of BV	Core organisation	Sector	Status in core organisation
Ronnie Smith	Founding / Core	Smith Enterprises Ltd.	Private	Managing Director
Cllr. Alan Grogan	Founding / Core	Newsby Borough Council	Public	Leader of the Council (Labour Councillor for Broadley)
Ann Harrison	Core	Voluntary Sector Training Project	Voluntary	Project Manager
Howard Barber	Core	UK Telecommunications (UKTC)	Private	Senior Manager – Corporate Social Responsibility
Cllr. Stuart Hogarth	Peripheral	Newsby Borough Council	Public	Labour Councillor for ward neighbouring Broadley
Matthew Griffiths	Peripheral	Newsby Borough Council	Public	External Funding Officer
Martin	Peripheral	UK	Private	Senior Manager –

Hewitts		Telecommunications (UKTC)		Corporate Social Responsibility
Julian Fox	Peripheral	All People Online	Voluntary	Chief Executive
Keith Winters	Peripheral	UK Telecommunications (UKTC)	Private	Project Manager – Corporate Social Responsibility
Clare Moorland	Peripheral	All People Online	Voluntary	Programme Manager
Susie Botham	Peripheral	All People Online	Voluntary	Project Officer
Clive Potterson	Peripheral	Broadley Rotary Club	Community	President

Figure 1.2, below, further represents both the individuals and their organisations involved in the development of the Broadley Vision partnership. However, it is important to view this with caution. Through its lifetime, the partnership saw its ‘membership’ shift (see figure 1.3 and appendix 2), therefore, this illustration shows participants over time, rather than a snapshot of any one moment in the partnership’s operation.

Figure 1.2: Composition of the BV partnership



When I entered the field in August 2001, the partnership could still be described as nascent, even though it had been developing incrementally since September 2000. At this stage, the BV partnership had six visible partners, four of whom I would describe as ‘core partners’ (Cllr. Alan Grogan, businessman Ronnie Smith, voluntary sector project manager Ann Harrison and private sector programme manager Howard Barber). At this stage, there were also two ‘peripheral partners’ (Cllr. Stuart Hogarth and council officer Matthew Griffiths). Between November 2001 and January 2003, six further participants became involved. Figure 1.3, below, demonstrates the variation in length of partnership membership amongst the twelve participants. This neatly captures the partnership’s dynamic and shifting membership boundary.

Figure 1.3: Timeline of partners’ involvement in BV

Partners	2000 Sept- Dec	2001 Jan-Dec	2002 Jan-Dec	2003 Jan-July
Alan				
Ronnie				
Ann				
Howard				
Stuart				
Matthew				
KV				
Martin				
Julian				
Keith				
Clare				
Susie				
Clive				

Following the sustained tensions and unresolved conflict, the BV partnership came to an abrupt end in July 2003, without having realised the intended community learning centre. Thus, it can be described as a partnership that ultimately failed to sustain itself and that was unsuccessful in achieving its original aims and objectives. This thesis seeks to develop and extend understandings of conflict and consensus within partnership working by analysing an instance of partnership failure that followed collaborative inertia. I question the underlying social and relational

dynamics that led to partnership dysfunction and collapse. Thus, a research agenda was formed that sought to understand what underpinned the formation, operation, trajectory and, ultimately, the failure of the BV partnership.

Background to the research

A research scholarship was initiated, in direct relation to the BV partnership, when one of the partners, Howard Barber (UKTC), was introduced to my initial doctoral supervisor, at an early public meeting of the BV partnership (see Chapter 4, 'February 2001'). Out of their subsequent discussions, Howard arranged for UKTC to fund one research scholarship, through Staffordshire University, that would generate new knowledge out of the BV partnership's work. Howard explained that he had no interest in the Ph.D. thesis that would be produced, mentioning during his interview that *'no-one at UKTC will ever read the thesis'*. He did, however, explain that he was interested in the role that a researcher could play in generating data, by interacting with Broadley community groups around residents' experiences of and feeling towards issues of 'learning', 'communication' and 'community'. Howard expected that this data would contribute, firstly, to the development of the BV project, and, secondly, to the development of a qualitative baseline that would feed into an evaluation of the intended initiative's impact. Indeed, it was uncritically envisaged by Howard, and the partnership, that my research-based role would ultimately feed into the documentation of the partnership's success. Thus, alongside my study of the partnership's operation and trajectory, I worked with three Broadley community groups and generated summary reports that were fed-back to the partnership, via informal conversations and a formal presentation. The collapse of the partnership, however, meant that this aspect of my role did not develop past my initial work with the community groups. I do not draw on any of this community-based work in this thesis, as to do so is beyond its scope.

It is important to note that, at the outset, my role was not conceived by Howard, or any of the other partners, as playing a formal formative or developmental role in relation to exploring the inner workings of the BV partnership. I suspect this was

partly because they did not anticipate that the BV partnership would fail to sustain itself or achieve its objectives. It is also consistent with the partnership's founding members' collectively overlooking the need to build in any formal reflective practice at that time. Some of the partners (Ronnie, Ann, Howard, Matthew, Stuart) separately reported to me that each had successfully worked in other partnerships before, which may also have contributed to a false sense of confidence about the partnership succeeding. However, when I first encountered the BV partnership, it was already showing symptoms of fatigue and inertia, and had made little progress towards its goal, despite having existed in name for eleven months. Furthermore, on entering the field, I was immediately intrigued by the unreflective way in which the BV partnership appeared to be developing and operating. I observed issues of tension, confusion and apathy from my earliest days in the field, which suggested that focusing the research on conflict and consensus within the BV partnership may be fruitful as the subject of the Ph.D. Over my 24 months in the field, I observed the participants experiencing and adjusting to the uncertain, dynamic and complex requirements of their attempt to work together in partnership.

This research employed a broadly ethnographic case study approach to develop rich, nuanced and detailed data that would facilitate rounded and contextualised understandings of conflict and consensus during the partnership's operation and trajectory. When I write about this study, through Chapters Three, Four and Five, I do so with an ethnographic sensibility of valuing thick description of the social context and practices that were taking place (Mason, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This thick description has been constructed from a range of data. These were the following: detailed field notes, which recorded my observations of unfolding events and partnership interactions over two years in the field; participants' accounts of their experiences, through semi-structured interviews; and partnership artefacts, such as a written funding bid, meeting agendas and minutes, emails and letters. These data show that partners differed in how they interpreted what was taking place within the BV partnership, as they referred to their's and others' roles, their relationships and loyalties, and partners' commitments to BV. I illustrate some of these multiple accounts, as well as providing my own narrative account of the BV partnership (Chapter Four).

Whilst I was in the field, I started reading around the subjects of partnership (as a means of contextualising BV) and community (in relation to the Broadley community-based research I was carrying out simultaneously). When analysing the data, the partnership literature helped to provide initial explanations for some of the issues being raised in the data. However, early data interpretation also pointed to limitations in the partnership literature, raising questions around where heterogeneity, and specifically conflict, between partners might stem from, how heterogeneity and conflict within a partnership can be managed, and how dynamic social ties between partners might be implicated. I had been struck by what appeared to be the relative strength of some partners' relationships, and by the apparent isolation of others. The partnership literature only superficially outlined the source and management of partners' heterogeneity and conflict, and did not help me to analyse or understand the function of dynamic social ties at all. This prompted my re-engagement with the community literature, in order to explore whether this body of literature could support analysis of the issues outlined above. This re-engagement with the community literature, in dialogue with reflections on the fieldwork, offered persuasive reasons for conceptualising consensus and conflict within the BV partnership in terms of instances of overlap between communities, and dynamic social ties.

My development of the inter-related concepts of overlapping communities and dynamic social ties draws on conceptual debates found in the community literature, but is primarily grounded in the data and findings of the research study of the BV partnership. Through analysing the data and interpreting the life of the partnership, I was confronted with a number of perplexing questions: What contributed to the partnership's collapse? What kept the partnership going for so long, given its fragility? In what ways is it appropriate to understand the operation and trajectory of the Broadley Vision partnership in terms of overlaps between communities? What was the role of dynamic social ties in the formation, development and collapse of the BV partnership? Together, these questions can be combined, as I set out to address the questions: Are instances of overlapping communities inherently problematic for partnerships? Are strong social ties between partners important for the co-ordination of non-mandatory, network-like, cross-sectoral

partnerships? And, does the experience of BV suggest that there is value in conceptualising partnerships in terms of newly-formed communities?

Contribution

With this thesis, I am seeking to contribute to knowledge concerning the development of partnership policy and practice, and to approaches to researching partnership working. In terms of an addition to partnership theory, there is, to my knowledge, no study that develops the concepts of overlapping community memberships and dynamic social ties, in the analysis of consensus and conflict within partnership working. Conflict and consensus have been referred to in different ways in existing partnership literature, however, the contribution of this thesis is to tease out how these elements can be understood. My analysis of the BV partnership shows how instances of overlapping community memberships and dynamic social ties underpinned the development of both conflict and consensus within BV. Moreover, although there is a broad, cross-disciplinary body of literature on partnership, previous studies that draw on the concept of ‘community’ in relation to partnership have focused narrowly on the issues of participation and representation of community members in partnerships. Thus, developing an analysis of partnership in terms of instances of overlaps between communities, and dynamic social ties, helps to raise sophistication in the use of community theory, as employed to make sense of partnership practice.

I demonstrate that the existing body of research and theory on partnership is deficient in two key respects. Firstly, it does not explicitly refer to partners’ *multiple* community memberships, aspects of which partners will inevitably bring with them to the partnership setting, although such memberships are acknowledged in different ways under different terminologies (e.g. culture, public/private differences, identities, etc.). Nor does it conceptualise conflict in partnership as stemming from instances of overlap between communities. Secondly, the partnership literature does not address the implications that a mix of dynamic social ties within a partnership might have for creating and sustaining co-operation between partners, and for managing and mediating instances of community

overlaps. This thesis begins to develop an original approach to analysing and conceptualising conflict and consensus within partnerships, whether they ultimately succeed or fail.

With respect to partnership research practice, the concepts of overlapping communities and dynamic social ties have been developed from rich, in-depth data provided in one instance of partnership working. Most partnership studies present their findings thematically, abstractly removed from the chronological order of events and episodes. However, I see narrating the story of the partnership as necessary, so as to provide the reader with important contextual detail, to enable an assessment of whether the 'findings flow from the data' (Robson, 1993: 408). The inclusion and valuing of such a narrative offers a small contribution to ways of presenting findings from partnership research.

In relation to partnership practice, an overarching claim that can be drawn from this research is that negotiating and managing conflicts and consensus within partnership working can be complex. In this context, conceptual developments here stand to aid understandings of relational and meaning-making processes that can underpin and shape the development of conflict and consensus within partnership working. This could provide an important foundation for the reflective practice of practitioners. Indeed, a key recommendation is that undertaking partnership work – particularly in network-like, cross-sectoral partnerships – requires deep, active and ongoing reflection. My setting up of a new research agenda focusing more specifically on issues of community overlaps, identities and dynamic social ties, could lead to the development of tools for locating the roots of conflict in partnership working and providing direction in how to go about negotiating solutions. In this sense, the thesis challenges accounts of partnership policy and practice, which assume that partnership working will produce positive outcomes for all involved, and that it is underpinned by altruism and rationality. I will also call into question the idea that partner diversity is *necessarily* a positive and productive aspect of achieving 'added-value' from partnership working. This thesis supports such a challenge to dominant partnership policy discourse, by demonstrating the problems faced by the BV partnership in relation to the co-ordination and management of conflicting overlaps between communities. It

suggests that broad, superficial claims of harmonious community overlaps, together with an imbalanced web of social ties, were not enough to sustain the BV partnership. This analysis and conceptual development may assist those struggling to understand the complexities, stresses and strains of partnership working.

Thesis outline

The remaining chapters will be organised as follows:

Chapter Two reviews and synthesises the most relevant academic literature on partnership and community, in order to further understanding of how ‘partnership’ has been understood, and how it could be further explored. This moves the partnership literature towards understanding instances of conflict and consensus within a partnership in terms of ‘overlapping communities’ and as the instance of a new, embryonic ‘community’. This chapter outlines how the operation and trajectory of partnerships are currently understood and identifies where there is scope for development in the partnership literature. It then seeks to attend to some of these limitations by turning to the literature on community. This raises questions about partners’ membership of other communities and how this may frame their interactions in a partnership context. The turn to community literature also develops a perspective on *partnership* as the quest to establish a new, temporary community for the duration of its lifetime. Furthermore, analysing partners’ social ties with one another invites consideration of the implications that a dynamic mix of social ties might have for creating co-operation across a partnership. Engagement with the community literature suggests that it is important for partnership researchers and practitioners to be aware of the dynamic and divergent nature of overlapping values, attitudes and interests, as well as social ties, in partnership settings.

Chapter Three describes the methodology underpinning this research. It begins by outlining the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research endeavour, before presenting the research design. My role as researcher in the generation of data is considered, and the research methods used and the data

produced are discussed. The ethical approach employed is also outlined and is followed by the procedures used for data coding and subsequent interpretation.

Chapter Four presents a chronological narrative of the BV partnership's trajectory, providing the complex context of the BV partnership's development and demise. This illustrates important contextual details and provides a micro-level view of the day-to-day activities and interactions associated with the development and operation of the partnership. It demonstrates the intricate and interwoven layering of relationships, processes, events and behaviours that contributed to the BV partnership's operation and ultimate failure. In this chapter, the rich observational and interview data, interwoven and thickly described, invites a reading of the data that offers valuable insights into the deeper, relational issues that have been under-articulated in the partnership literature to date.

Following Chapter Four's illustration of rising tension and problems of communication within BV, Chapter Five provides a conceptual unpicking of some of the factors which affected the development of conflict and consensus within the partnership. This is developed in my analysis of partnership as instances of overlapping communities, and as the site of dynamic social ties. It illustrates – from and through the data – different forms of overlapping communities, how these become manifest and what aspects of partnership working are made salient by these overlaps (e.g. working practices; expectations regarding timescales and outputs; attitudes regarding democratic participation, flatter organisational structures, and more). This chapter also demonstrates that social ties were vital, and yet implicit, in the establishment, operation and trajectory of the BV partnership. Social ties variously strengthened, weakened or remained static through the course of partners' communities overlapping; and this strength or weakness also appeared to mediate partners' handling of their community overlaps.

Chapter Six draws together some of the themes from Chapters Four and Five and discusses them in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. I address three main questions in the light of the academic literature and the data analysis set out in earlier chapters: Are instances of overlapping communities inherently problematic for partnerships? Are strong social ties between partners important for

the co-ordination of non-mandatory, network-like, cross-sectoral partnerships? Is there value in understanding partnership as the formation of a new community?

In the process of addressing these questions, I consider them at the level of the Broadley Vision partnership, as well as extending the discussion to consider wider implications for partnership working more generally.

Chapter Seven brings the thesis to a conclusion by summarising and locating my contribution to knowledge, and by discussing the main strengths and weaknesses of the thesis. Finally, I will outline the pragmatic and progressive directions in which I can envisage this research and my key concepts being further developed.

Conclusion

I have introduced my research by outlining its background, the scope for knowledge development, which it seeks to attend to, and the epistemological and methodological approach taken. The wider context of partnership policy, practice and theory has been invoked, and the nature of the research, in particular its setting, participants and research questions introduced. It should be clear that my research aims to probe deeply into the Broadley Vision partnership, analysing its instances of conflict and consensus in terms of overlapping communities and dynamic social ties. The next chapter will further expand the context set out in Chapter One, by reviewing and synthesising some of the relevant academic literature on partnership and community. This is in order to outline the scope for developing partnership theory and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF PARTNERSHIP USING A COMMUNITY THEORY LENS

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is to examine how conceptualising a partnership in terms of an overlap between communities is useful in understanding the development of consensus and conflict within the Broadley Vision partnership. This involves an examination of how a partnership is formed; what partners bring with them in terms of norms, values and identities; the nature of the relationships between participants and how different types of relationship might affect the development of conflict and consensus within a partnership. This chapter draws on academic partnership literature and sociological literature on community, social ties and social capital. One aim of this chapter is to address the extent to which the partnership literature currently understands the concept of partnership in terms of ‘overlapping communities’ and as an instance of a new, embryonic ‘community’.

This chapter makes a case for linking concepts of ‘community’ and ‘partnership’ in order to further understand aspects of partnership practice. There is very little in the partnership literature that currently adopts this view. Harrison et al (2003: 96), in their book on partnership working, devote one page to asking ‘Are partnerships like communities?’ They briefly consider whether an instance of partnership between multiple agencies could be viewed as a ‘community of agencies’, but do not refer to any academic community literature and do not develop the idea in any detail. My interest in engaging with the community literature¹ to understand partnership practice stemmed from the data in this study. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the first emergent coding framework highlighted the significance of

¹ When I refer to ‘community literature’ I am specifically referring to the sociological literature on community studies, social ties and networks, and social capital. Each of these stands alone as a body of literature in its own right, but they all contribute to understandings of the concept of community. Other bodies of literature are also relevant to conceptualisations of community – such as work on social identity and collective action – but for the purposes of this thesis I limit my focus to relevant themes and issues raised in the community literature as defined above.

different types of social relations between partners, and partners' connections with other communities, which were themes not picked up systematically when using a coding framework developed from the partnership literature. I initially engaged with the community literature on community, social ties and social capital to help me better understand the different roles and functions of social relationships within and outside a partnership context.

This chapter begins by defining partnership. It then considers the notion of social co-ordination, as this overarching concept introduces the idea of bringing otherwise disparate social phenomena (individuals, groups, institutions, organisations, communities, etc.) into a relationship to achieve something new (Frances et al, 1991). Partnership is one way of doing this, but working in partnership does not embody one model of social co-ordination, so I will begin by exploring different models of social co-ordination and assess how they relate to different forms of partnership. This chapter then reviews some of the relevant themes and approaches appearing in the academic partnership literature. This is necessary to outline how the operation and trajectory of partnerships are currently understood and to identify where there are areas for development in this body of literature. This chapter will also review some relevant themes and approaches that emerge from the academic community literature, establishing the basis for regarding individuals as belonging to a number of different communities and the primacy of social ties in this research.

Finally, this chapter will identify ways in which partnership literature and partnership theory could be enhanced by drawing on certain ideas associated with academic community perspectives. The literature on community raises questions about the way in which partners' interactions are framed by their membership of other communities; and facilitates the development of a view of partnership as seeking to establish a new, temporary community for the duration of a project. Analysing the social ties between partners allows the consideration of implications that a dynamic mix of social ties might have for creating co-operation between partners. Engagement with the community literature, in conjunction with the data, suggests that it is important for partnership researchers and practitioners to be

aware of the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of overlapping communities and social ties in a partnership.

Partnership as organisational structure

It is often asserted that the terminology of partnership is slippery, carrying with it a variety of connotations (Ambrose, 2001: 17; Powell and Glendinning, 2002; Rummery, 2002; Cochrane, 2003; Taylor, 2003). This can cause confusion when reading and thinking about the concept. I will therefore begin by setting out how I will use the term. As a minimal definition, I will refer to a 'partnership' as the formation of a relationship between a minimum of two, otherwise independent, individuals or organisations with at least some common interests so as to plan and implement a project. Such a relationship is usually thought to be based on gaining synergy or added value from the bringing together of different types of contribution from each partner (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Any more precise a definition of partnership, which for example would encompass the kind of social co-ordination that is achieved through a partnership, however, is a matter of debate in the literature and this debate will be reviewed in the rest of this chapter.

Different disciplines have conducted studies of partnership over the years, but the types of partnership studied have varied. I will briefly outline the variety of partnerships that have been researched. Partnerships have been studied that take place between private sector organisations (Lorenz, 1991; Huxham and Vangen, 2005); between public sector agencies (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002); between public and private organisations (Ruane, 2002; Ward, 2002); between public and voluntary sector organisations (Sink, 1996; Barr and Huxham, 1996; Daly and Davis, 2002; Alcock and Scott, 2002; Craig and Taylor, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005); and between cross-sectoral organisations (Gray, 1996; Dickson et al, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Selsky and Parker, 2005). The partnership literature identifies different forms of partnership and suggests that the social phenomena can differ in relation to how and why they are created. The literature alludes to two broad forms of partnership arrangement: those that are mandatory

and those that are voluntary (this point will be addressed in more detail later in the chapter).

Some writers suggest that the literature does not employ a stark polarisation between models of partnership, presenting more of a continuum of partnership working (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Frost, 2005; Anning et al, 2006). It is suggested that at one end of the continuum a partnership may be cooperative, where individuals and/or organisations work together towards complementary objectives, whilst maintaining their independence (Anning et al, 2006). And at the other end of the continuum a partnership may see the merging or integration of partners, where different organisations and services merge to become one organisation (ibid). I will now consider the notion of social co-ordination, exploring different models of social co-ordination and assessing how they relate to different types of partnership.

How do models of social co-ordination relate to partnership?

Three models are usually cited when thinking about the co-ordination of social life. These different forms of social co-ordination are markets, hierarchies and networks (Thompson et al, 1991; Ouchi, 1991; Powell, 1991) and each model is reported to have distinctive co-ordinating mechanisms. The model most frequently associated with the co-ordination and operation of partnerships is that of networks (Hage and Alter, 1997; Rhodes, 1991, 1996; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Taylor, 2003; Gilchrist, 2004; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Anning et al, 2006), although it is also possible to identify instances of partnership that operate through markets and hierarchies. Therefore, in practice partnership can be associated with a variety of forms of social co-ordination (see Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) and Powell and Exworthy (2002) for discussions about how partnerships can be seen as distinct from markets, hierarchies and networks). I will now introduce each model of social co-ordination, so as to assess some of the ways that partnerships can be considered to be co-ordinated by markets, hierarchies and networks.

Markets

Markets as a model of social co-ordination are based on prices and contracts. This method of co-ordination is usually, though not exclusively, associated with the private sector. The operation of markets requires the 'exchange of goods and services between two parties at a known price' (Levacic, 1991: 21), therefore the benefits to be received are specified, little trust is required, and agreements are supported by the power of legal frameworks. Powell (1991) suggests that people are unlikely to form strong bonds of 'altruistic attachments' in markets, as they are free from any future commitments, but they do offer choice, flexibility and opportunity and are a mechanism for fast, simple communication. He suggests markets are a form of 'non-coercive organisation' that have coordinating but not integrative effects.

Some public-private partnerships operate through markets, as was the case of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), developed in the early days of the New Labour administration as a way to leverage private funds into public sector developments (Ruane, 2002). Partnerships that operate through markets are likely to be based on formal, contractual processes between partners, which will usually involve a relatively stable grouping of partners with defined structures and protocols (Pratt et al, 2000; Newman, 2001; Clegg and McNulty, 2002). Partnerships co-ordinated through markets are formed on a basis of trade between participants. Some commentators report that such relationships are primarily based on formal contracts, rather than on reciprocity or trust (Newman, 2003), although other authors claim that trust can still play an important role in social contexts that are co-ordinated through markets (Lorenz, 1991; Johanson and Mattsson, 1991; Goddard and Manion, 1998; Davies et al, 1999; Powell and Exworthy, 2002). However, generally in markets the formal contract outlines the distribution of benefits and costs between participants, so that all involved know what is expected of them and what to expect from others. The contracting individual or organisation usually specifies what it wants from different participants with specific timescales, rewards and sanctions attached. Thus, under contractual models of partnership, especially where a 'lead' partner is specified, some partners are more likely to be involved for delivery purposes rather than for strategy development.

When partnerships are contractual, partners' roles are also more likely to be clearly spelled out; as Pratt et al (2000) suggest, contractual models of partnership (which they term 'co-ordinated' partnerships) produce partnerships where roles and tasks are easily identifiable, and lines of accountability are clearer. In such situations, Powell and Glendinning (2002) suggest that this may mean that asymmetric knowledge or uneven power differences between partners should not unduly affect partnership operations, as in theory all partners should know what they are committing themselves to at the beginning of the collaboration. The idea is that where there are known disagreements between the distribution of costs and benefits at the beginning of the partnership (i.e. if a partner felt they would be entailing large costs for small benefits), partners are considered better able to re-negotiate or reject the contract being tendered.

However, other commentators point out the limitations of social co-ordination via markets. As we have already seen, markets, and therefore market-based partnerships, operate at the level of 'complete contracts' and such models tend to employ rational planning techniques to implement strategy (Newman, 2001). Rational planning requires participants to be able to predict any external changes that will affect the circumstances of the relationship and is not suitable in contexts subject to substantial uncertainty. Davies and Coates' (2005) account of the limitations of rational planning can be applied to a partnership context. Contracts are only 'complete' if all partners have full and accurate knowledge of the outcomes of working together. It is highly unusual to be able to fully specify a contract. The ownership of these unintended benefits and costs may then become a source of dispute in a partnership.

Transactions costs associated with market-type exchanges between contracting partners are likely to include the costs of information collection, legal costs, service costs themselves and uncertainties (Frances et al, 1991). Williamson (1975, 1985) argued that transactions between organisations that involve uncertainty about their outcome, which recur frequently and require substantial investments of money, time or energy that cannot be easily transferred are unlikely to be co-ordinated satisfactorily through markets, and are therefore more suitable to take place within

hierarchies. Thus, some commentators consider that when the transactions cost is high, organisations will have the incentive to 'internalise' them inside the boundaries of their organisational unit (such as conducting 'in-house' operations that were previously contracted out).

Hierarchies

Whereas a main role of markets is to coordinate economic activity *between* individuals or organisations, traditionally it has been hierarchical approaches that have coordinated activities *within* organisations. The central co-ordinating mechanism of hierarchies is a chain of command. Thus, the concept of hierarchy can be understood as comprising the overt operation of relations of superordination and subordination in the process of social coordination (Frances et al, 1991: 10), often administered by a set of rules 'which are invoked in a definite procedural configuration' (ibid). Such administrative techniques are designed to 'govern' the organisation in question. Thus, hierarchies will involve bureaucracy. This notion is often perceived derogatively, implying a lack of initiative and flexibility in decision-making, frequent reference upward in the hierarchy for decisions to be made or to gain the authority to sanction actions. Advantages to bureaucratic hierarchy are cited as including: a clear set of formal rules (which should make it more likely that all people and decisions are treated the same) and reducing randomness in decision-making (Jaques, 1991). Moreover, lines of authority are visible. Powell (1991) characterises hierarchies as having clear departmental boundaries, clear lines of authority, detailed reporting mechanisms and formal decision-making procedures. It is suggested that the strength of hierarchies lies in their reliability and accountability (Powell, 1991; Jaques, 1991).

It can be argued that some forms of partnership operate through hierarchies, for example where a new organisation is created through the merger or integration of other organisations or agencies (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002), as in Sure Start partnerships (Kara, 2006). There have been recent policy imperatives for this form of partnership. Partnerships have been created at government level, such as between health, social care and education in Sure Start partnerships, so as move away from professionally focused organisation towards more integrated lines of

management (Anning et al, 2006). Such forms of partnership may have their own manager, budget, staff and may even develop their own culture as do traditional organisations (Kara, 2006: 19). Where such integration occurs there are likely to be clear affiliation mechanisms and membership is less likely to be 'a fuzzy category with constantly shifting boundaries and allegiances' (Gilchrist, 2004: 17). However, integrated governance, strategy, processes and frontline delivery are reported to bring their own set of challenges for practitioners, such as how to reallocate resources across and within traditional funding streams; how to work in multi-disciplinary and co-located teams; and dual line management (for example, see Edwards and Fox, 2005: 53; Anning et al, 2006: 117-27).

Networks

The concept of a network is often considered to be an informal, 'flat' organisational form, made up of lateral rather than the vertical connections. Thompson (2003:30) notes that:

Networks have often been considered as above all 'informal' practices of co-ordination. They rely upon direct personal contact. They tend to be localised as a result, or confined to a particular clearly defined group with similar concerns, interests or aspirations. Such that they display a systematic orientation, these work through attributes like loyalty and trust rather than administrative orders or prices. The co-ordination of activities is achieved through the identity of a common purpose or interest, for which all will work for a collective result. These tend towards a 'flat' organisational structure, where at least there is a lot of formal equality between the participants.

Networks are usually considered to be neither groups nor organisations (Gilchrist, 2004; Jewson, 2007) and can exist *within* and *between* organisations. They can also be distinguished from hierarchies because of the autonomy of each participant (Hage and Alter, 1997: 96). However, as Powell and Exworthy (2002: 25) point out, there are usually degrees of both independence and interdependence between network members. Unlike the 'top-down' communication flows of a hierarchy, a network form of social co-ordination avoids bureaucratic structures and relies upon reciprocal flows of information (Hannah et al, 2006). Frances et al (1991: 15) argue that the most significant attribute of network operation is the formation and maintenance of *trust* between participants. It is seen as a necessary 'mechanism that can reduce uncertainty in contexts of interaction, and facilitate the functioning of organisations through the behaviour of social actors' (Busco et al, 2006: 17).

Tomkins (2001: 165) states that trust requires 'the adoption of a belief by one party in a relationship that the other party will not act against his or her interests'. In this sense, networks are thought to be the most appropriate mode of co-ordination when there is a need for efficient, reliable information, obtained from 'someone whom you have dealt with in the past and found to be reliable' (Powell, 1991: 272). They are thought to work better than other models of social co-ordination where tacit knowledge, speed and trust are required to 'get things done' (Taylor, 2003).

Obligation is another required vehicle in networks, through which parties remain connected to one another (Axelrod, 1984). Networks work by creating indebtedness and reliance between network members over the long term. However, whereas in a market context it is 'clear to everyone concerned when a 'debt' has been discharged' (Powell, 1991: 270), in networks such matters are not nearly as obvious. Networks are likely to be organised in a less open manner and may not have any obvious formal accountability mechanisms. As Lewicki et al. (1998) note, in a network there are likely to be multiple relationships amongst individuals and groups of individuals. Thus, elements of trust and distrust may co-exist. Lewicki et al (1998) suggest that to be effective networks must not have low levels of trust and high levels of distrust between partners, as this could see parties viewing their counterparts as having ulterior, harmful motives and becoming paranoid of other network members. This suggests it may be difficult to achieve social co-ordination through networks if participants have not worked together in the past so as to develop trust and predictability.

So, what is the central co-ordinating mechanism of partnership?

There is no clear agreement in the literature about whether partnerships rely on a principal co-ordinating mechanism (markets, hierarchy or network), although a great deal of the literature equates networks as the main model of co-ordination associated with partnership (Hage and Alter, 1997; Rhodes, 1991, 1996; Gilchrist, 2004; Anning et al, 2006). It is important to be aware of different models of social co-ordination for two main reasons: firstly, because a partnership will have to adopt a method of co-ordination and governance (Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) even suggest that different models of co-ordination are used during different

phases of a partnership's life). Secondly, partners may be more familiar with one form of social co-ordination outside of a partnership context than another, which may have implications for how they expect a partnership to be co-ordinated. For the purposes of this thesis, I am particularly interested in the issues faced by network-like partnerships, as this relates most closely with the instance of partnership researched for this study. I now move to explicitly focus on some of the relevant themes and approaches appearing in the academic partnership literature. This is necessary so as to outline how the operation and trajectory of partnerships are currently understood and to identify where there are areas for development in this body of literature. I review a wide range of partnership research, drawing particularly on the work of Huxham and Vangen (1996a, 1996b, 2005; Vangen and Huxham, 2003).

Coming from backgrounds in management science, Huxham and Vangen have been researching a range of collaborative endeavours for twenty years and have published extensively on the subject. They are pre-occupied with developing theory that can inform practice. The key argument in their 2005 publication, which draws on 12 partnership case studies, is that active management is required in order to collaborate. They assert that developing theory, which allows practitioners to understand the complex nature of collaborative situations, provides important underpinnings for the judgements needed to actively manage the issues arising from collaboration. I endorse Huxham and Vangen's approach, which seeks to resist problems of over-simplification by presenting multiple readings of a partnership context. As a result, they paint a complex and highly inter-related picture of partnership working. They thematically explore a range of issues that emerged across their case studies (such as trust, power, leadership, managing aims, negotiating purpose). Theory is developed around each theme that provides conceptual tools for thinking about how to manage collaborative situations, although they refuse to provide easy answers. I aim to build on their work by presenting the myriad interrelated matters that face those involved in the BV partnership. However, I develop Huxham and Vangen's work in two ways: firstly, I provide a chronological narrative, rich in thick description, of the development and trajectory of the BV partnership (see Chapter Four), which allows the reader to judge the credibility of the analysis provided in Chapter Five. Secondly, I highlight

the significance and implications of overlapping communities, and the dynamic and heterogeneous social ties in the BV partnership (concepts not addressed by Huxham and Vangen), which adds another layer or theme to their picture of complexity in collaborative situations.

Theories of Partnership

Theorisation of partnership tends to be located across disciplines, including sociology, organisation studies, business policy, management, political science, public policy and economics. There is no single tradition of partnership theory and different theoretical approaches relate to different aspects of partnership. Contributions from this variety of disciplinary perspectives derive from numerous theoretical underpinnings including exchange theory, resource-dependency theory, evolutionary theory, transaction cost economics and institutional theory, although as Huxham and Vangen (2005) point out, only a small amount of this research explicitly addresses partnership practice. Theoretical approaches have not set out to produce a comprehensive explanation of partnership processes, but they each offer insight into particular aspects of partnership working. I do not intend to provide an exhaustive coverage of the different theoretical underpinnings of partnership here; rather I highlight key theoretical perspectives that underline the potential challenges and opportunities presented by partnership working. My discussion of theory particularly focuses on the factors that are thought to influence the operation and trajectory of partnership.

Optimists, pessimists and realists

Theoretical approaches to partnership can be set within an overall framework of understanding that distinguishes between 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' perspectives (Challis et al, 1988; Powell and Exworthy, 2002). For optimists partnerships are created so that a shared vision between different partners can be realised; there is a desire to achieve added-value by joining together to achieve a goal. It assumes organisational altruism and rationality. Theories that underpin this perspective (e.g. exchange theory, see Levine and White, 1962) assume that partnership will result in

positive outcomes for all involved and that partners share a level of altruism so that a desire to achieve a joint outcome overrides a desire for individual gain.

This optimist approach focuses on the identification of factors that influence the success or failure of a partnership, which often leads to the development of 'tools' to support partnership working. Factors identified as leading to partnership success include: partner selection, mutual trust, shared vision, interdependence, open communication and appropriate distribution of power and appropriate governance structure (Hudson et al, 1999; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Harrison et al, 2003; Dhillon, 2005, 2007). Factors stated as leading to partnership failure include: conflicting agendas, clashes of personality, poor leadership and cultural differences (Sink, 1996; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Newman, 2001; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). There is much similarity in the factors found by different researchers in different partnership contexts, thus a relatively comprehensive representation of issues experienced in practice exists.

Many agencies have produced 'How to...' guides to partnership; for example, the Audit Commission (1998) produced a guide for those working in organisations whose partnership activities they hoped to influence. Similar documents have been produced by NIACE (2000), the Sure Start Unit (2002) and Markwell (2003). Such guides tend to stem from an optimist perspective, highlighting perceived 'success' factors that need to be incorporated, including developing a shared vision, building trust and communicating effectively. Such literature usually stems from a rationalist perspective, based on unacknowledged values of equality, justice and the assumed possibility of rational collective action, which implies a split between people acting as private individuals (with all their differences and complexities) and those same people acting in partnership contexts (Griffiths, 2000). Such a perspective considers that all partners in a partnership are 'equals' who can carry out rational decision-making in a collaborative environment. It implies that consensus can be reached between partners via rational decision-making processes. However, such positions often ignore the external contexts and internal complexities of partnerships.

Pessimists assume that individual and group interests are ‘multiple and divergent’ (Powell and Exworthy, 2002: 23), producing tensions, conflict and competition in partnership contexts. They think that partnerships are created so that individual partners maintain or develop their power in relation to others, prioritising individual or organisational gain over altruistic outcomes; partnerships are created because of a need for resources by individual partners. This theoretical approach draws from resource-dependency theory, where one partner is dependent on the resources controlled by another partner to realise desired outcomes. Thus, power ‘resides implicitly in the other’s dependency’ (Emerson, 1962: 32). However, resource-dependency literature does not tend to focus on a partnership as a unit of analysis; rather it takes an organisation and explores how it responds to its external environment (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) develop a third perspective, which they describe as a ‘realist perspective’. They suggest that realists think that altruism and individual gain can coexist. This approach does not assume that partnership will take place easily or that it will be possible to overcome all barriers; rather it underlines the significance of learning as part of a partnership process (Alter and Hage, 1993; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). This is a view that I share, and a perspective that I think it is necessary to adopt if you are going to conduct a critical evaluation of partnership. Taking up this approach is one way of challenging the optimist theory that is so prevalent in policy and practice.

There is a degree of agreement between academics, policymakers and practitioners about the perceived key ingredients of a successful partnership. Factors such as shared interests and vision, the identification of benefits, organisational arrangements, capacity for joint implementation, and trust seem to be common across studies. These are dominant themes in the literature that seek to explain the operation and trajectory of partnerships and are discussed in turn below.

Themes from partnership research

Are shared interests all it takes?

The existence of shared aims, interests or common goals between partners is often stated as being very important (Evans and Killoran, 2000; NIACE, 2000; Sure Start Unit, 2002; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Powell and Exworthy, 2002; Renewal.net, 2005). Many publications on partnership identify shared interests between partnership members as critical for partnership success (Sure Start Unit, 2002; NIACE, 2000; Renewal.net, 2005). The Audit Commission (1998: 8) describes the concept of partnership as a 'joint working arrangement' where at least two partners that are otherwise independent bodies agree to come together and co-operate to realise a common goal. This focus on a shared goal is also emphasised by the Treasury (H.M. Treasury, 2002: 6) who contend that a partnership's members 'need to be motivated by a common vision in which they all believe and a confidence in their collective ability to achieve it'.

However, the extent to which 'shared aims' are those of whole organisations, the leaders of organisations, the individuals within organisations, or a combination of these, is not clear in the literature. The question of which individuals or parts of organisations share the partnership's aims may be important, as when no clear distinction is made between these possibilities, the implicit supposition is likely to be that organisational partners are acting as representatives of the organisation/s. Statements that focus on what partners share also tend to neglect other aims of partners that may conflict. Newman (2003: 21) comments that 'naïve...views of partnership focus on what the parties have in common and ignore...differences'. Mayo (1997: 4) develops this by stating that partnerships must be 'genuinely based upon shared interests' but that they must also generate 'agreed mechanisms for negotiating differences'. Mayo's definition of 'differences', however, is rather loose. It is not clear whether she is referring to partners' differences over partnership aims, ideas for strategy development, or opinions on implementation. The fact is that partners can differ in many ways. For example, they can represent different sized organisations, with different structures and different decision-making

processes (Hoon-Halbauer, 1999; Ambrose, 2001; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Sawyer Wesner, 2008). This is one of the points I develop through this study.

Partners have core aims and interests stemming from the organisation that they belong to outside the partnership context so it is important to bear in mind the extent to which aims and interests are actually shared. Non-shared aims or interests between partners are thought to open up the potential for conflict in partnership² (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 61). Different aims between partners are reported to manifest themselves at the level of professional boundaries (job-roles); institutional boundaries (work-organisations); and/or interpersonal relationships and informal networks between partners (personal values) (Clegg and McNulty, 2002: 590). When tensions exist between these boundaries it is reported that there can be a negative impact on a partnership's success, by limiting the partnership's capacity to deliver its objectives (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). However, such tensions are most likely to affect network-like partnerships as these structures employ forms of social co-ordination that have less explicit means of accountability. Thus, ways of negotiating tensions between partners are not clearly spelled out.

Identification of benefits from working in partnership

The literature argues that partnerships require more than shared aims to achieve their objectives (Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 1996a; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Powell and Glendinning, 2002). Shared aims alone may see partners (at the organisational or individual level) viewing each other as rivals attempting to achieve the same outcome. Therefore it is seen as important that partners are able to see the potential benefits to be reaped by working together when considering the formation of a partnership (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Such residual net benefits for partners can include the achievement of initial aims and the organisational kudos gained from association with a successful partnership (Powell and Glendinning, 2002).

² This resonates strongly with themes in the community literature, but this is not cited or referred to in the partnership literature.

There are different incentives or conditions for creating or becoming involved in a partnership. For example, such common bases might include: a promise of budget enlargement (Mackintosh, 1992; Huxham and Vangen, 2005); resource efficiency might be improved (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998); risk shared (Huxham and Vangen, 2005); learning from another partner may occur (Huxham and Vangen, 2005); or added value achieved (Mackintosh, 1992; Hastings, 1996; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). A partnership approach might also produce 'better knowledge' (Griffiths, 2000); be seen as ethically and politically desirable (Griffiths, 2000); or take place because there is existing trust between potential partners (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Huxham and Vangen (2005) acknowledge that few real partnerships would fit a single category and that some might have elements of all the incentives outlined above, but they do not consider the implications of a number of incentives existing in one partnership.

From a pessimist perspective, the promise of 'budget enlargement' for partners (Mackintosh, 1992) is a common incentive to collaborate with others. This means that the formation of a partnership allows financial resources to be accessed that are usually unavailable to individual organisations. Partnerships can facilitate a 'levering-in' of new resources, for example access to financial grants and in-kind contributions from other sectors or organisations. When incentives for collaboration focus primarily on gaining access to additional resources that could not be obtained by a single partner, however, the synergic side of partnership (that which produces 'added value') might not be fulfilled (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). A funding application might be secured by *claiming* that added value will be produced, but once extra funds and resources have been achieved the smokescreen of a synergic partnership may be disregarded so that partners can go about their separate businesses; thus not all partnerships seek to affect 'collaborative advantage' in practice (Huxham, 1996b; Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

Incentives to form partnerships can go beyond 'budget enlargement'. Some organisations working collaboratively with others can have 'the potential to increase resource efficiency, making better use of existing resources by reducing duplication and shared overheads' (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998: 315). Policymakers encourage these cost-saving and duplication-avoiding motivations, as

they want partnerships to achieve more with the same inputs (or even fewer) (ibid). The potentially cost-effective nature of partnerships and the possibility that partnerships might be able to find new ways of gaining access to additional resources are popular motivations behind many partnerships, especially those mandated by central government (Powell and Glendinning, 2002; Taylor, 2003).

Mackintosh (1992) refers to a 'synergy model' of partnership where the rationale for setting up a partnership is to produce added value by combining the assets and powers of the separate organisations. To be able to achieve more through collaboration than could be achieved individually, partners are said to need to merge knowledge, resources, approaches and operational cultures of different partners (Mackintosh, 1992; Hudson and Hardy, 2002). It is stated that to achieve 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham and Vangen, 2005), participating organisations must attempt to create synergy by working in ways that are more complementary and less competitive. This is seen as a potentially effective way to overcome threats of organisational individualism. This position, however, assumes that synergic gains outweigh the costs of being involved in partnership (Davies, 2002; Powell and Glendinning, 2002).

Different partners may have different motives for participating in the same partnership, although such differences may not prevent the partnership from working. It is possible, however, that certain incentives in the same partnership may not be compatible. The literature does not address how partners can estimate whether this is the case in practice. For example, one partner may choose to become involved because their organisation is experiencing funding difficulties. They may hope to surreptitiously garner extra funding (acquired through the wider partnership) to sustain the activities of their main business, although they may not be transparent about this motive. Another partner in the same partnership, however, may have opted to collaborate in the hope that working with other organisations could produce new ideas and creative solutions to current problems. The partner in search of synergic benefits from partnership may become frustrated by the partner seeking funding as the main priority, as partners motivated by a budget enlargement incentive are less likely to be stimulated to spend time and energy developing 'added value' through collaboration, as their main incentive may

be to do the bare minimum to acquire extra funds. This issue is picked up again in the next section, which deals with how costs and benefits are shared between partners.

The fact that partners' main incentives may differ could create tensions at the implementation stage of a partnership. Partners motivated by different types of incentives might not spend equal amounts of time and energy on the development of the partnership if they are hoping to realise different types of benefit from collaborating with others. Such a situation can be avoided if trust pre-exists between potential partners (Cropper, 1996; Gray, 1996; Finn, 1996; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Powell and Exworthy, 2002; Rummery, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). In fact, pre-existing trust between partners could end up acting as a motive for collaboration itself (see later section on 'trust' for a more detailed discussion). For a partnership to be effectively realised, however, the literature states that there has to be capacity for operating the partnership (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) and the next section assesses how the benefits and costs derived from partnership working might be distributed between partners.

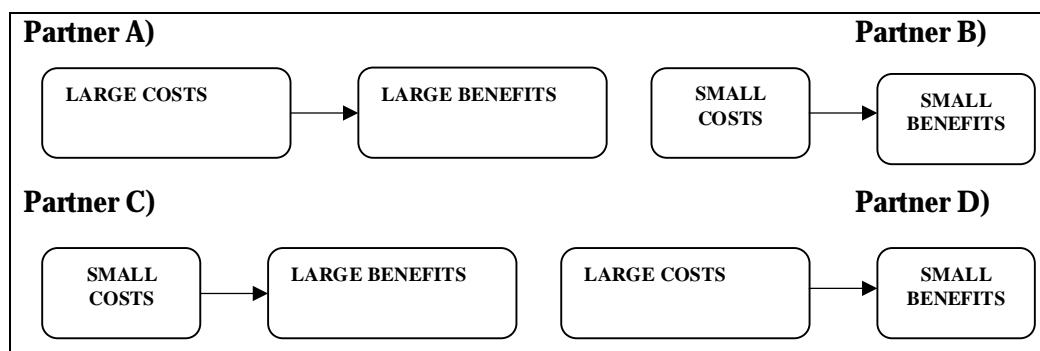
Sharing out the costs and benefits of working in partnership

If each partner can identify incentives to participate in a partnership, on top of the identification of shared aims, there may be mutual benefits to be drawn from the partnership for all partners. It must not be forgotten, however, that operating a partnership entails cost (Davies, 2002; Powell and Glendinning, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005) and may produce 'value-subtracted' for some or all partners (Davies, 2002). Costs incurred by partners might include financial outlay, time spent and resources invested. The implementation of partnership requires extra resources and efforts that are additional to partners' core commitments. For all partners to derive appropriate returns from working together, the partners need the joint capacity to implement the partnership. It is stated that to be effective, partnerships have to be able to create processes to distribute benefits and costs in ways that keep all partners satisfied (Powell and Glendinning, 2002).

Some authors (e.g. Mayo, 1997; Taylor, 1998) suggest that partners should try to work out whether the potential gains of partnership working justify the efforts invested by individual partners. This suggests that each partner needs to take into account the actual costs they incur by being involved in partnership, before they can assess the net benefits gained. However, the difficulties that partners face in estimating potential collaborative gains and costs at the outset of a partnership have received little attention.

Figure 2.1, below, demonstrates different examples of how the costs and benefits of partnership might be distributed between partners. Some partnerships may involve partners entailing large costs in order to receive large benefits (Partner A), while other partners in the same partnership entail small costs to receive small benefits (Partner B). Despite the different levels of costs entailed and benefits received, however, partnerships comprised of partners resembling A and B should result in positive net benefits for all partners.

Figure 2.1: Examples of how the costs and benefits of partnership can be distributed differently between partners.



In practice, however, the distribution of benefits and costs might be uneven between partners (Huxham, 1996b; Huxham and Vangen, 1996a, 1996b; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Vangen and Huxham, 2003). It is possible that some partners can spend vast amounts of time and resources on partnership activities (such as shouldering responsibility for the operational side of the partnership) that are outside their core commitments (Hudson and Hardy, 2002). This does not guarantee that these partners will obtain benefits to match or exceed their inputs (Partner D). The uneven distribution of net benefits between partners is reported

to cause friction among those participating (Huxham, 1996b; Huxham and Vangen, 1996a; 1996b). Partners resembling A, B or D might become increasingly fatigued with the working of a partnership, if they perceive others to be inputting less time and energy into the partnership (thus limiting the costs for their own organisation), yet still reaping the rewards from being associated with the partnership (Partner C) (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). It is stated that when incentives for being part of a partnership cease to be (for example, if aims and objectives cease to be shared or trust is broken between participants or the resourcing of the partnership is inadequate) that 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham and Vangen, 1996b) can set in, potentially hindering partnership working. When net benefits turn out not to be positive for all partners, it is quite likely that friction will build up, creating a barrier to a partnership achieving its outcome (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). This raises questions about the predictability of costs and benefits, and the ability of partners to insure against risks, so as to avoid disappointment. However, the literature does not make clear how tangible benefits are or whether different types of benefits can be measured against each other. Also, a problem in network-like partnerships is that much of what is expected is intangible

What other factors can be barriers to the effective operation of a partnership?

The academic literature includes discussion of other possible barriers to effective partnership working (Newman, 2001: 112-16; Hudson and Hardy, 2002: 52-62; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 110-16; Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 10-14; Kara, 2006: 25-6). Common barriers are discussed below, including leadership, lack of trust, culture clashes, power imbalances, and issues of membership. These themes are presented as separate issues, however, all of these feed into and impinge on one another, as Huxham and Vangen (2005:40) argue, 'partnership practice is embedded in holistic experience that cannot be dismantled'. Thus, each theme can be seen as part of a holistic picture rather than thought about in isolation. All of these themes were present in the data generated in the study of the BV partnership (see Chapter Four). On the surface, in relation to this thesis, the themes of trust, cultural perspectives and issues of membership may be anticipated as the most

important for the development of a theory of partnership, which conceptualises it as both an instance of overlap between communities and a new, embryonic community. However, the other themes may also need to be factored in.

Leadership factors

The issue of leadership is considered relevant for the operation and trajectory of a partnership (Eden, 1996; Himmelman, 1996; Luke, 1997; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) suggest that the very act of establishing partnership activity is a consequence of leadership. They give the example that in some instances a partnership will arise from individuals perceiving an opportunity and building a network to exploit its potential. Leadership in network-like partnerships can be problematic because they are thought to achieve co-ordination through more egalitarian and less formal means than a hierarchical form of organisation (Hudson and Hardy, 2002), and because of the autonomy of each partner (Hage and Alter, 1997). Thus, it may not be desirable for leadership to be the domain of a particular partner. In some partnership settings, leaders of hierarchical organisations may find themselves in a new environment, 'one where hierarchies have been replaced by networks and inter-organisational reliance and it is not possible to lead simply by virtue of one's formal authority in a unitary bureaucracy' (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 104).

The absence of traditional hierarchy between 'leader' and 'led' in most partnerships means that autocratic decision-making is not permissible, so alternative means have to be developed. Huxham and Vangen (2005: 75) posit that in partnerships leadership needs to be considered in a general sense, 'rather than as specifically the realm of senior executives or prominent public figures'. They equate leadership with 'the mechanisms that lead to the actual outcomes of a collaboration' (ibid) or put more simply, the factors that 'makes things happen' in a partnership. Leadership in this sense can be related to the employment of personal skills (such as persuasion), and through mechanisms to form and implement a partnership's strategy. Luke (1997) argues that 'catalytic leadership' is required in partnership contexts. This is described as being possessed by individuals who have the capacity to think and act strategically, interpersonal skills to facilitate joint working between

members, are able to relate to others, have a desire to achieve results and strong personal integrity. Such people may not be the most obviously powerful partners (see section on 'power').

Some studies point to the role of 'reticulists' in partnerships (Sink, 1996; Huxham, 1996a). These are partners who can span boundaries (such as between organisations). They are often described as being skilled communicators who can 'talk the right language' whatever context they are in, having the ability to gain entry to a variety of settings, and to 'connect up' others who may have common interests or goals. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) suggest that those playing 'boundary spanning' roles should be able to understand the constraints and opportunities provided by different organisational contexts and how these might affect partners' behaviour. Such roles are considered important because getting partners to interact is a key leadership activity, and 'reticulists' can facilitate this because of their ability to broker relations between partners.

Conceptualisations at the heart of mainstream leadership research (Bryman, 1996) all assume that a formal leader influences or transforms members of a group towards the achievement of particular objectives. However, it is not straightforward to transfer mainstream theories of leadership to partnership contexts. Huxham and Vangen's (2005) approach to the topic is to consider mechanisms that 'lead' partnership activity and outcomes in one direction and not another. It is about a different way of leading. Relational leadership is often emphasised in partnership settings (Murrell, 1997) and processes for inspiring, nurturing, supporting and communicating (Crosby and Bryson, 2004). Huxham and Vangen (2005) suggest that partnership agendas can be led by structures and processes (which they term 'contextual leadership'), as well as by participants involved in the partnership. In relation to leadership through structure, a more open partnership structure might allow any organisation or individual to attend partnership meetings. Such a structure would provide wide access to informing the agenda, but it may also prevent the setting and implementation of a clear agenda because it would be difficult to co-ordinate implementation due to participants dropping in and out. On other hand, a tightly controlled membership structure may be more likely to gain agreement and to implement the agenda, but it may

exclude key stakeholders from accessing and influencing the agenda. In relation to leadership through process, Huxham and Vangen (2005) state that the number of partners involved and the types of communication processes enacted (they contrast partnerships which communicate mainly through open meetings with those that principally communicate through email and/or telephone) can effectively 'lead' the partnership. However, they also acknowledge that partnership agendas can be led by participants, although they conjecture that these are generally 'emergent, informal leaders rather than those who lead from a position of authority' (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 75). Leadership behaviour may be viewed as manipulation (ibid). For example, partners may issue pre-prepared notes in a meeting, with a view to focusing discussion in what they see as an appropriate direction. Others may not view such behaviour negatively, unless they find it insulting or provoking.

Huxham and Vangen (2005:78) present a dilemma in relation to participants who carry out leadership activities to move the partnership forward. They suggest that although such activities may be constructive and facilitative in moving the partnership towards its objectives, research suggests that those carrying out such leadership activities are often also involved in activities and practices that are not '*within the spirit of collaboration*' (They describe practices that are embracing, empowering, involving and mobilising to be 'within the spirit of collaboration') (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 78, italics in original). Huxham and Vangen (2005) argue that many involved in such leadership activities also have to employ 'collaborative thuggery', which involves being skilled at excluding participants, 'manipulating agendas and playing the politics' (ibid), in order to move the partnership forward. This suggests that a mix of leadership approaches may be required to overcome problems of co-ordination in network-like partnerships.

Lack of trust

As already raised (see section on 'networks'), trust is considered to be the central co-ordinating mechanism of networks (Powell and Glendinning, 2002), and literature on hierarchies, markets and networks points to contrasts between the mechanism of trust associated with the co-ordination of networks, and the commands of hierarchies and the price mechanism in markets. It is therefore not

surprising that trust between partners is often cited as a pre-condition for successful partnership working (Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Rummery, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Dowling, Powell and Glendinning, 2004). Indeed, it is seen as a resource (as is power – see below) (Powell and Exworthy, 2002). In partnership contexts, trust can be described as having faith in partners' will and ability to help realise the sought after joint goal (Gulati, 1995; Lane and Bachmann, 1998). However, as Barnes and Sullivan's (2002) research with Health Action Zones suggests, where there is no history of working together, there is likely to be no foundation of trust between partners. Moreover, in practice it has been found that suspicion between partners, rather than trust, is usually the starting point (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). This can stem from incomplete contracts and high uncertainty over future benefits and costs. It can also be put down to partners not explicitly choosing the other partners in the partnership, and therefore possibly not having prior knowledge of other partners, which means that it may not be possible to predict other partners' behaviour and actions. In such instances, and especially where there is no formal contract, this raises the question about how partners can form expectations of one another at the start of the partnership. It may be that partners need to be trusting, which means taking a gamble that others will not act opportunistically (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994); as Gambetta (1988) suggests, the act of trusting is the willingness to be vulnerable.

In contexts where there is a lack of trust between partners at the start, trust-building becomes important. However, this is not seen as straightforward in practice, and the extent to which partners can develop trust between themselves will be influenced by the dynamics of the relationships, with positive experiences increasing trust and negative ones eroding it (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). The outcome of the partners' dynamics forms the history of the relationship. Cropper (1996) suggests that to build trust, it might help if partners agree modes of 'principled conduct' to provide parameters within which partners can work. He argues that these can initiate communication and understanding between partners (for example, about their beliefs and values and the extent to which they are shared), and he states that such interactions will promote 'a sense of inclusion, of predictability... in relationships' (1996:96). This raises the importance of

communication and the sharing of information, particularly where there is no pre-existing trust between partners, as a means of making the outcomes of relationships more predictable. However, it does not guarantee that trust will be built. Other factors, such as unequal power relations (see below), often hinder trust-building.

In contrast to Cropper's (1996) approach to building trust, Huxham and Vangen (2005) depict a trust-building loop, which presents two factors as important in beginning a trusting relationship, 'the first is concerned with the formation of expectations about the future of the collaboration...The second starting point involves risk taking' (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 68). They suggest that when partners see that risks taken *were* warranted and valued then trust is built between partners. However, where partners perceive that risks taken *were not* warranted or valued, trust-building cycles between partners are liable to collapse, leading to fatigue and inertia. They recommend that partners start with a 'small wins' approach, successfully implementing low-risk initiatives, which builds trust through mutual experience of success gained by working together. The majority line in the literature is that trust between partners is important, which is borne out by research that demonstrates that partnerships characterised by an absence of trust failed to sustain the partnership or to deliver on their objectives (Daly and Davis, 2002).

The partnership literature provides no explanation of variation in initial trust between partners, and does not address the implications that may result when trust pre-exists between some partners in a partnership setting and not others. Furthermore, there are strong links in the community and social capital literature between the notion of trust and the concept of social capital (see later in this chapter, under 'Social capital'), but the role of social capital in the development and maintenance of partnerships is under-researched and under-theorised in the partnership literature (Dhillon, 2009).

Culture clashes

Some barriers to partnership are rooted in the variety of practices and cultures of organisations and professional groups that individual partners bring with them to a

partnership setting (Huxham, 1996a; Ambrose, 2001; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Charnley, 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). An array of practices and cultures may arise within a partnership because organisations and professions are structured and managed differently through overt, formal rules, and implicit, informal norms of behaviour. Informal norms and patterns of behaviour are likely to be so ingrained in an organisation that they are not explicitly considered to be obstacles to working with others from different organisations or professional backgrounds. Barton and Quinn (2001) argue that the extent to which partners will be able to work together will be influenced by how shared these rules and norms between partners are. Through their analysis of Sure Start partnerships, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002: 110) assert that common organisational cultures, rules and norms between partners may influence the success of working together. However, they also note that partners might assume commonality with other partners based on certain grounds (such as all being childcare specialists) but ignore other differences, such as professional cultures and values, which can bring partners into conflict.

Ambrose's (2001) study of urban renewal partnerships posits that different cultures are manifest in the language used by partners; styles of meetings, tacit political agendas, dress codes and degrees of formality. These differences may lead to misinformation, rumour and suspicion (Huxham, 1996a). Huxham (1996b) states that partners using their own professional languages, which others do not understand, can make communication difficult. Thus, differences in organisational cultures and procedures can be seen to exacerbate communication difficulties because activities and decisions that seem straightforward to one partner might be carried out quite differently in other organisations.

Furthermore, Charnley's (2001) research of social care partnerships for older people, highlights that partners' differences that stem from distinct organisational or professional cultures can lead to mutual stereotyping between partners, which can impinge on establishing trust. Huxham (1996a: 243) also postulates that as well as facing practical difficulties of satisfying the norms of more than one organisation, that 'cultural and ideological differences can cause major communication problems through encouraging different interpretations of 'facts'.

She concludes that where partners have different aims, cultures and procedures that the partnership will face 'at best lengthy processes of clarification and at worst confusion and stagnation' (p244). Balloch and Taylor (2001) argue that partners' common-sense interpretations of the world, which they see as stemming from the organisations and professions that they belong to, need to be challenged and that partners need to be encouraged to step beyond the confines of their own training and experience. However, they do not address how partners' common-sense interpretations could be identified or challenged in practice.

Power imbalances

Power is theorised in different ways by different academic writers on partnership. Some apply a 'zero-sum' approach to power, where a gain in power by one partner necessitates a loss for another. For example, Alcock and Scott (2002) see the redistribution of power within partnerships as problematic because they perceive that the gains of some will cause the losses of other partners. Others employ a Foucauldian approach, seeing power as diffuse, localised and invisible; a relational practice to which all partners contribute and are subjected. Some writers on partnership develop their own conceptions of power. For example, Huxham and Vangen (2005:175) conceptualise a continuum of power from power-over (employing power for own gain) through power-to (employing power for mutual gain) to power-for (employing power for altruistic ends). 'Power-over' is reportedly attempted when trust fails between partners (Bachmann, 2001). The notion of 'bargaining power' relates to this, which refers to the influence that a partner can achieve by, for example, having the resources that another partner needs (such as finance, skills, knowledge, information) (Huxham and Vangen, 2005:175). A 'power-to' perspective deliberately tries to remove negative connotations of power, highlighting its meaning as 'the ability to do' and suggesting that working in partnership can 'unite and extend individual power' (ibid: 176). The 'power-for' position involves using partnership to transfer power to another partner or partners. This relates to Himmelman's (1996) conception of 'collaborative empowerment', where power is used by one partner to build the capacity of another. He understands the value of cross-sectoral partnership as its capacity to 'transform' power relations in society, through the sharing of power amongst

different partners (in his research, so as to achieve social justice for disadvantaged communities). He identifies two ways in which power may be shared: through 'collaborative betterment' or 'collaborative empowerment'. The former takes place when partners, external to a community, design and control a process into which the community is invited. He claims that this approach 'tends not to produce long-term ownership in communities or to increase significantly communities' control over their own destinies' (p.29). 'Collaborative empowerment', on the other hand, is 'the capacity to set priorities and control resources that are essential for increasing community self-determination' (p.30). However, Himmelman's analysis implies a degree of altruism among public and private partners, as they are seen as needing to give up control and influence in order to deliver this wider objective ('zero-sum' approach).

Commentators state that partners must address issues of power (Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Mayo and Taylor, 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Powell and Exworthy, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). This is particularly significant for network-like partnerships, as networks are 'flatter' organisational forms than hierarchies (Thompson et al, 1991), and must accomplish social co-ordination through more informal and democratic methods (Hudson and Hardy, 2002). Hudson and Hardy (2002) claim that partnerships are most effective where each partner is perceived to have a comparable status, even if some have more resources than others. This means avoiding having 'senior' and 'junior' or 'core' and 'peripheral' partners, as they contend that if some partners feel excluded from the partnership's core business, then suspicion and a breakdown of trust will result. The Cabinet Office (2001: 43) also claims that it is important for a partnership to comprise 'equal players'. Cropper (1996) suggests that ensuring equal status also means making sure that there is fairness in the operation of the partnership, which means not allowing one or two partners to dominate the agenda, dictate timescales or define the language for collaborative working. Such claims suggest that power asymmetries will place a limit on the ability of network-like partnerships to achieve co-ordination through egalitarian means.

Partnership research, however, suggests that ensuring fairness in a network-like partnership is not straightforward. For example, Balloch and Taylor (2001:8) argue

that, although partnership working is thought to represent principles of 'participatory democracy' and equality between partners, their research on public-voluntary partnerships suggests that government partners often determine the 'rules of the game', with voluntary sector partners frequently marginalised from making decisions. Ruane (2002) and Ward (2002) suggest that unequal power is evident in the analysis of public-private partnerships. Both suggest that the costs and benefits of partnership working appear to unduly benefit the private sector. Ward (2002: 225) states that the public sector has a strong desire to collaborate with the private sector, but that there is less evidence to suggest that the private sector has a similar desire, 'rather than just taking what it can get'. Evidence from Craig and Taylor (2002), Alcock and Scott (2002), Ruane (2002), Ward (2002) and Hughes and McLaughlin (2002) suggests that where power is unequal between partners, the most powerful partner/s will gain the most benefits and the least powerful will incur disproportionately high costs. Hughes and McLaughlin's (2002) research on partnerships between police and local authorities suggests that only in public-public partnerships is this balance likely to be more equal, as they found that public sector organisations are less likely to lose any perceptible power to other public sector organisations, if they are under similar pressures from central government to work collaboratively.

Writers like Stewart and Collett (1998), Balloch and Taylor (2001), Mayo and Taylor (2001) and Tett (2005) insist that it is possible to 'redress' or 'balance' power inequalities between partners in order to develop inclusive partnerships by introducing rational measures, such as making 'extra places around decision-making tables' available to community members or individuals new to partnership working (Mayo and Taylor, 2001: 41). However, the possibility of balancing inequalities between partners must depend to some extent on what sorts of inequity are being dealt with. For example, if the inequality stems from partners' different levels of experience of working in partnership, it may be possible to introduce some measures to increase 'new' partners' knowledge of partnership processes, but I expect that measures would have to surpass merely including 'extra places around decision-making tables'.

Balloch and Taylor (2001) suggest that power relationships can be reflected in the resources available to different partners. For example, they state that those who 'hold the purse strings' are often perceived to have power in a partnership. Similarly, Huxham and Vangen (2005: 64) found that partners perceive the power in partnerships to relate to those who have control of the financial resources, which suggests that those who do not have access to the financial resources are automatically deprived of power. However, they also state that all partners have the 'power of exit', where partners can use the threat of pulling out of the partnership (and taking their resources with them) to try to influence the way partnership activities are negotiated and carried out. They go on to assert that there are many points of power in how partnership activities are decided and carried out.

Structural relationships between partners are argued to be a source of power in some instances (Huxham and Vangen, 2005:178). For example, a partner formally acknowledged as the 'lead partner organisation', or a partner who has direct relationships with many other partners, may be in a strong position through structural relations to influence other partners. Other examples of points of power are depicted as: initial conversations, naming the partnership, choosing who to invite or involve as other partners, arranging the meetings, chairing meetings and deciding the location of the meetings. Partners in a position to influence any of these points can be considered to have power over the partnership's operation and direction, and Huxham and Vangen (2005: 64) emphasise that an important characteristic of points of power in a partnership is that 'they are not static', that power continually shifts.

Issues of membership and representation

Membership ambiguity is a key theme in the partnership literature, but although attention is drawn to 'who' is involved, there has been much less focus on 'how' partners are involved. Membership issues are stated as contributing to the complexity in partnerships. For example, if an individual partner representing an organisation in a partnership leaves (acquires a new job, is on sick leave, retires, etc.) the relationship between the partnership and the organisation may also change (Hudson and Hardy, 2002: 57). There is also often ambiguity of who belongs to a

partnership (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 125). This is exacerbated in instances where partner organisations send different representatives to meetings, when new partners join, and when partners change their status and role. Huxham and Vangen (2005: 127) state that there is a 'likelihood that perceptions of who counts as a member and who does not will vary...because individuals often have very different perceptions of their own and others' role or membership status', which is likely to lead to a lack of clarity about who the members are. For new partners, getting to grips with the history and purpose of a partnership can be difficult as they were not involved in earlier phases. The introduction of a new member can also cause ructions in a partnership, as new partners will bring their own agendas, and established partners' concern is likely to be to maintain continuity. This often means persuading the new member to adopt the values and programme of activities already established (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 128).

A further ambiguity concerns whether the members of a partnership are the individuals who work together in a partnership, or the organisations that the individuals represent. For example, some individuals pull their organisations with them as opposed to organisations assigning individuals to a partnership to represent them (Barr and Huxham, 1996). Huxham and Vangen (2005) point out that it is usually assumed that individuals represent something beyond their own self-interest when they participate in a partnership. They suggest that individual partners may be 'representing their organisations to the extent that they may bring with them their organisations' cultures and views' (Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 130). Similarly, Alcock and Scott (2002:114) argue that partners bring with them their 'silo mentalities' from the organisation, which they represent. However, Huxham and Vangen (2005) also postulate that the degree to which an individual does represent their organisation is likely to be unclear and will frequently not even be considered by the individuals themselves. All of these potential membership factors contribute to the complexity in and of partnership working. This theme is particularly important for my thesis because the idea of partnership as an instance of overlapping communities presumes that partners bring the culture of their core organisational and/or professional community with them, and to that extent can be considered to be representative of their wider communities.

Why a turn to the community literature? Scope for developing the partnership literature

Partnerships bring together partners that are different, in a bid to produce added value, but the literature shows that this bringing together of difference also produces a problem of social co-ordination, and many potential barriers to partnership working are outlined. The themes presented above suggest that complexity is at the heart of the partnership working and made manifest in all sorts of ways. Some issues will work together to prevent effective partnership working; others may counteract each other. For example, partners that are different may want to learn from each other rather than seeing only insurmountable difference. However, the flows between the issues are presented as disjunctive and potentially chaotic, and therefore, building a predictive model for success is problematic.

Preliminary analysis of the case study partnership at the centre of this research, confirms that the themes of shared interests, costs and benefits, leadership, trust, culture, power and membership, as alluded to in the partnership literature, were all themes that were present. These themes could be applied to an interpretation of the partnership's lifecycle to partially explain its operation and trajectory. However, other themes emerged inductively from the data that were not so easily explained by conceptual frameworks in the partnership literature (see Chapter Three). For example, the data suggested that the presence and absence of pre-existing social ties (such as friendships and work-related relationships) between partners were significant for the partnership's creation and development. The data also showed that each partner was a member of multiple communities, aspects of which they inevitably brought with them to the partnership. Such aspects included different norms and values, which had implications for how they dealt with the new social co-ordination problem that faced them in the partnership.

The partnership literature suggests that partners may bring organisational and professional values with them, but it does not refer to any other communities that might influence how partners think, behave, perceive and interact. It certainly does not refer to each partner possibly belonging to multiple communities, or what implications this may have when partners come together to form a voluntary,

cross-sectoral and network-like partnership. This is where a turn to community theory is fruitful. The community literature argues that people can be understood as the product of the dynamic membership of multiple communities. The application of this concept develops another layer of complexity in relation to partnership working, which has not been satisfactorily addressed by existing partnership research. Moreover, although the partnership literature postulates that partnership working can involve dealing with cultural, professional and personal differences between partners, it does not address whether this heterogeneity partially stems from an overlap between communities.

The partnership literature also does not sufficiently address the implications that a mix of social ties within a partnership might have for creating co-operation between partners. Turning to literature on social ties is one way to develop a new interpretation of the life of a partnership, and begins to address some of the deficiencies in the existing partnership literature. The literature on social ties helps to differentiate between the varieties of relationship that can exist at any one time in a social group, and the social capital literature helps, firstly, to understand the creation of a network-like partnership in terms of bridging social capital between individuals; and secondly, to explain how the social capital that partners can draw on might affect the operation of a partnership.

The next sections of this chapter review some relevant themes and approaches from the academic community literature for this thesis. Four main themes are focused on: definitions of community; social ties and social tie analysis; typologies of community (or social structures) as collections of different sorts of social tie; and social capital. I present these themes separately, however, they are often written about as being conceptually inter-related. I will conclude by identifying ways in which analysis of a partnership's life could be enhanced by drawing on these ideas.

Definitions of community

A baseline definition of community is a group of people who share something in common (Hoggett, 1997; Taylor, 2003; Delanty, 2003; Robinson et al, 2005; Jenkins, 2008). Without some commonality there can be no community. Understood at this broad definitional level, it could be implied that any collectivity, whether it be a partnership, a professional community, an ethnic group, a group of villagers, a book group or even a spontaneous collectivity (such as a crowd at a pop concert), could be defined as a community. Within this broad definition, sub-categories are routinely recognised and contested. Communities are frequently identified as groups of people sharing a geographical place, or who have a common interest or identity such as religion, politics, profession, ethnicity or class (Hillery, 1955; Butcher, 1993; Hoggett, 1997; Banks, 2003; Taylor, 2003; Robinson et al, 2005). The terms 'communities of interest' and 'communities of identity' are often used inter-changeably, however although they are sometimes blurred, I think of them as having some distinct aspects.

A community of identity suggests that individuals affiliate themselves with or are categorised by others as belonging to a certain identity-based social group. Communities of identity are based on social categories such as gender, race, history, nationality, sexuality, religious beliefs and ethnicity. For example, one community of identity is a 'professional community', where people share the same occupation. Some of those members may then join a professional society, making a more defined and formalised community, or what I would term a community of interest. This community of interest can be regarded as being situated within a wider community of identity. Therefore, a community of interest can be thought of as a group of people who share an interest or passion. They are likely to exchange ideas and thoughts about the specific interest with other members (sometimes regularly and frequently, perhaps face-to-face, perhaps virtually), but they may know little about each other outside of this area of interest. Some authors write of 'communities of circumstance' (Marsh, 1999) as another sub-category of community, which might include people sharing a set of circumstances or life experiences rather than a 'chosen' shared interest. Examples might include cancer sufferers attending a support group or inmates in a prison. However, other writers

would class such examples as communities of interest (Taylor, 2003; Gilchrist, 2004). Given these definitions, a partnership could be deemed a community of interest.

The sub-categories of community outlined above may involve members interacting directly with each other, but not necessarily so. However, in some communities people develop social ties with other members. 'Social ties' refer to bonds or relationships that develop between people, allowing interaction to take place within communities (Jewson, 2007). Social ties can have different characteristics. For example, a set of social ties in a community can be characterised by its density (the proportion of people who know each other) and level of 'closure' (whether ties are purely inward or outward looking) (see later section in this chapter, 'Social ties and social tie analysis'). Thus, a community can also be defined as a group of people who share something in common *and* interact with each other (Willmott, 1986; Crow and Allan, 1994; Popple, 1995; Hoggett, 1997; Bridge, 2002). Such a set of social ties between community members is often understood as forming a social network. Some authors refer to 'social networks' rather than communities (Lin, 2005; Burt, 2005; Wellman and Frank, 2005), and some authors refer to social networks as an aspect of communities (Wellman, 1999; Gilchrist, 2004). Wellman (1999) describes a community as a special type of bounded social network. Gilchrist (2004: 4) suggests that social networks can be based around work, faith, residential area or people's hobbies. I would regard Gilchrist's description of social networks as existing *within* a community of place, identity or interest.

As raised by Wellman (1999), 'boundaries' are often regarded as a defining feature of communities. Boundaries are based on ideas of who should be included and excluded, with community 'members' distinguished from 'non-members'. Therefore, community can be described as a relational concept, and is as much about difference as it is about similarity (Hughes and Mooney, 1998). That is not to say that all bounded communities are cohesive social groups. Many communities may contain internal divisions. Moreover, they do not necessarily have either a local consensus of values or conformity of behaviour (Cohen, 1985). However, many communities are understood to comprise a set of norms, values and expectations that are shared by group members; as well as sanctions, punishments

and rewards, that help to sustain the norms of the community (Halpern, 2005; Arneil, 2006) (see later section in this chapter, 'Social capital'). Social norms refer to the rules, values and expectancies that characterise the community members. Norms shape the character of members' social interactions with others and many are unwritten. Some norms may require members to act or think in certain ways and others may concern how members are supposed to feel about the community. They may also include habits between members, such as those of reciprocity. Of course, some shared norms may not be unique to one community, and may be shared with other social contexts too (Halpern, 2005).

Most community sanctions are informal and can include rewards as well as punishments (Luzzati, 2000). Members find ways of communicating their disapproval of acts that breach the unwritten codes of the community, such as a disapproving glance, an angry exchange of words or even the threat of action. Sanctions can also be indirect and subtle, such as through gossip. Norms and sanctions are inter-related. For example, community norms are likely to be held in place by sanctions, and effective sanctions may rest on the existence of shared norms. These shared norms and sanctions help to create and maintain the community's identity and boundary. A community's identity is also asserted or imagined through cultural traditions and symbols (Cohen, 1985). Conventions and customs are regarded as badges of belonging, and reinforce community boundaries, and can also help to identify 'friends' and 'allies' (Gilchrist, 2004). Members of some communities have their own slogans and motifs that unify members and exclude non-members. Such community codes are thought to produce a sense of mutual identity between members (Delanty, 2003).

Where mutual social identity exists between members of a community, a degree of collective consistency may be formed. It is thought that social consistency may be important for collective action (one outcome of community) in particular, and that producing conformity may be a way to render interaction between members predictable (Jenkins, 2008). Predictability is seen as significant in some communities because it affords individuals expectations of the behaviour of others and can reduce excessive uncertainty (Jenkins, 2008: 150). However, behavioural conformity is also thought to emerge out of uncertainty. For example, when a new

member of a community is unsure of rules and customs specific to the community, the behaviour and actions of 'oldtimers' may be an important source of information about the 'right' way to act (Wenger, 1998).

The literature on new social movements³ offers a different perspective on 'community' and what is necessary for collective action to take place. It suggests that individualism can be the basis of communal activity and that it can sustain collective action (Della Porta and Diani, 1999). Collective commitment is seen to be central to new social movement communities. Their objective is social transformation, thus it is the members' shared personal politics that creates and sustains the community (Melucci, 1996). Their common objective is central to their collective identity. This differs from a communitarian perspective, which views individualism as detrimental to community. Communitarianism perceives a decline in community (commonly measured by decreasing civic pride, social capital and voluntarism) as the result of an insidious spread of individualism (such views are held by Putnam, 1993, 2000; Etzioni, 1995, 2001) (see later section in this chapter, 'Social capital'). It sees 'personalist' ways of creating community (found in all kinds of social interest groups, that I define as communities of interest) as corrosive of community (Delanty, 2003). However, the new social movement literature challenges the communitarian dichotomy between individualism and community, arguing that seeking personal fulfilment is not necessarily incompatible with collective participation.

A radical politics view of community suggests that people can come together from diverse backgrounds in communal activism, 'united by a common commitment and the solidarity that results' (Delanty, 2003:122). In such cases, collective identities have either been the beginning or the outcome of the community. This perspective tends to stem from a constructivist approach, defining community as the product of action and practices rather than of structures or cultural values. Although, wider shared values and norms may ultimately result from such communities of shared commitment and collective action.

³ New social movements focus on collective politics to bring about social transformation. Examples of new social movements include feminism, gay rights movement, and the ecological movement (Delanty, 2003).

Thus, belonging to a community based on shared personal politics can give the individual a stronger sense of identity. Belonging to communities which contain social relationships can also provide individuals and groups with valuable resources (Halpern, 2005). By connecting individuals to other people who can help in a range of ways, such as offering emotional support and comfort, companionship, financial aid, baby-sitting, and information about job opportunities (see later section in this chapter, 'Social capital'). Belonging to a community can also affect how we see ourselves and others, and the values that we hold (Forrest and Kearns, 1999). However, it is important to state that in the modern world people rarely belong to one community (Ball and Stobart, 1997:126). Indeed, communities are plural and overlapping (Delanty, 2003: 79).

An individual is not tied only to one community but may have multiple and overlapping bonds (Amit, 2002). Many individuals will be members of multiple communities at any one time, including communities of identity, interest and place. In practice, community is experienced as overlapping memberships, and a multiplicity of identities and allegiances (Delanty, 2003: 91). Thus, complex interconnectivity between communities can take place (Massey, 1995). From a postmodern view of communities and social identity (Rutherford, 1990; Squires, 1994; Jenkins, 2008), communities mingle different aspects of individuals' experience and affiliations. As a result, overlapping communities can contain contradictory features and individuals may experience and have to negotiate conflicting identities. Thus, it can be suggested that an overlap between communities might be generated through interactions between individuals who belong to at least some different communities. Moreover, drawing on Durkheim (1964), it makes sense to think in terms of overlaps between *communities* because society is not composed of atomised individuals, in fact, it can be argued that the behaviour of individuals cannot be understood in isolation from the characteristics of the communities and the relationships in which they are embedded. The notion of overlapping communities also highlights the dynamics of belonging. Boundaries between social groups are rarely thought to be permanent or static (Hughes and Mooney, 1998:70). People can shift in and out of different communities at different times. This porosity of many community boundaries, however, does not

mean that boundaries are no longer relevant and that membership to all communities are open with no exclusions (ibid:71).

This section is relevant to understandings of partnership in a number of ways. Firstly, it suggests that a partnership can be deemed a sort of emergent community; as a bounded network (albeit often loosely) of partners that is formed to pursue a common goal. In this sense a partnership is perhaps best described as an embryonic community of interest. Secondly, a partnership requires that social ties develop between partners, in order to allow co-ordination and interaction to take place. What this section demonstrates most significantly, however, is the importance of individuals belonging to multiple communities. Partners will represent (or will be assumed by others to represent) other communities. The partnership literature acknowledges that partners often belong to different organisations and professions that may shape the way that partners think (about themselves and others) and act, sometimes causing disagreement. However, the partnership literature does not sufficiently address the extent to which partners belong to multiple communities (beyond work-related communities), although such memberships are acknowledged in different ways under different terminologies (e.g. culture, public/private differences, identities, etc). The community literature suggests that partners may transfer norms, values and sanctions (some of which will be obvious and others that will be less so) from their membership of a number of communities to the partnership setting. In a network-like partnership, the question that arises is which norms and values will be assumed by the partnership and how will this be decided? This implies that partnership communities cannot be assumed to start with a sense of mutual identity and understanding between partners, which could impact in part on the new partnership community's ability to negotiate aims and build trust. Thus, broader communities that partners have experience of might intrude in overt and covert ways into the interactions through which the new partnership community is instituted and developed. However, the extent to which it is evident *what* individuals are bringing with them to the new partnership community, from their participation in other communities, is not clear in either the partnership or the community literature, and may be far from obvious to the partners themselves.

Social ties and social tie analysis

As mentioned above, 'social ties' refer to bonds or relationships that develop between people, allowing interaction to take place within communities (Jewson, 2007). It is stated that social ties can occur in two main ways (Wellman and Potter, 1999): firstly, people might develop social ties based on their social characteristics and through the relationships they form; and secondly, social structures (e.g. organisations) might also create social ties by putting people into social positions (e.g. job roles) that juxtapose them with others and require interaction to take place. Thus, social ties can occur in a community for a variety of reasons. Social network theorists study who people are connected to and how. They argue that 'the threads that connect people vary in strength, directionality and density' (Gilchrist, 2004: 6), and some study social networks to understand the impact of the range of relationships that individuals have, such as what resources are provided (Burt, 2005; Lin, 2005). This relates to the notion of social capital (see later section in this chapter).

Social network theorists are usually structuralists and focus on analysing network characteristics such as 'structure', 'tie strength' and levels of 'tie embeddedness' (Wellman, 1999). However, studying social structures exclusively with network theory can ignore the power dimension in some sets of social ties, and can overlook the notion that having powerful friends often makes a difference. As suggested by Bourdieu's (1990) analysis of social practices, social ties affect people's access to resources and status; they are about whom you know and how you use them.

Network theorists suggest that social ties can be analysed through a number of concepts that enable the quality of the relations in a community to be described (Homans, 1941, 1951, 1961; Barnes, 1954; Mitchell, 1969; Wellman, 1999; Scott, 2000). My aim is to show how this approach contributes to understanding the operation and trajectory of a partnership. Network analysis introduces a set of concepts that can be used to analyse relations in social groups in a dynamic

manner. It can provide a means of mapping out the set of social ties for any community. The following dimensions of social ties are introduced below: intensity, density, reciprocity (or direction), durability and reachability (Wellman, 1999; Wellman and Potter, 1999; Scott, 2000; Lin, 2005; Wellman and Frank, 2005). I then move on to discuss how variation in these five dimensions of social ties affects the type of community formed.

Intensity of social ties

'Intensity' describes the extent to which members of a community are strongly connected to each other. Multi-stranded social ties⁴ are thought to be more 'intense' because they are more diffuse in character. In communities made up of multi-stranded ties, the individuals involved may all know and interact with one another in numerous situations. Granovetter (1973, 1982) conjectured that intense or strong social ties require ties that are 'intimate', 'multiplex' and 'frequent'. Intimate ties are stated as combining three characteristics (Wellman and Potter, 1999: 67):

- A sense that the relationship is special, with a voluntary investment in the tie and a desire for companionship with the tie partner.
- An interest in being together frequently across multiple social contexts over a long period.
- A sense of mutuality in the relationship, with the partners' needs known and supported.

On the other hand, single-stranded social ties are thought to be less intense. Granovetter (1973) found that less intense or weak social ties comprise less frequent contacts between people in different social situations. Such social ties might be created when outside situations bring people together, where they have no choice but to interact in order to accomplish their social roles (Wellman and Potter, 1999), such as a role in a mandated partnership.

⁴ Where a social tie between individuals exists in more than one social context, e.g. they might be old school friends, they live in the same street, they work for the same company, and their families go on holiday together twice a year. This would be described as a 'multi-stranded' social tie.

Reciprocity or Direction of social ties

Some social ties are likely to involve a transaction or exchange (Misztal, 2000), which can be considered as being 'directed' from one person to another (Wellman, 1999; Wellman and Potter, 1999). Such social ties can be analysed in terms of the extent to which the transaction or exchange is reciprocated (Scott, 2000; Wellman and Frank, 2005).

Durability of social ties

Some types of social ties are considered to be highly durable and long-term, whilst others are considered to be more transient and short-term. Social network theory argues that it is possible to analyse how enduring the underlying relations and obligations are that are activated in particular relationships (Scott, 2000). It is argued that ties that are constantly being activated in a variety of situations are highly durable, whereas those that last for only one or two activities are transient. It is also suggested that ties that exist for a limited purpose are likely to be more transient, whereas kinship ties are likely to be more durable, generally lasting a whole lifetime (Wellman and Potter, 1999). However, it can not be automatically assumed that the more contact between members the more supportive the relationship, although past research suggests that frequent contact can foster shared values, increase mutual awareness of needs and resources, encourage reciprocal exchanges and facilitate the delivery of aid (Homans, 1961).

Reachability of social ties

This refers to how easy it is for members of a community to contact one another through a limited number of steps (Wellman, 1999; Wellman and Frank, 2005). For example, how easy it is for ideas, gossip, or resources to be diffused throughout the community. This implies an exploration of levels of interaction in a community. Another point for analysis is how accessible members are for contact

and how much contact they have with others (Wellman and Potter, 1999; Scott, 2000).

Density of social ties in a community

Linked to 'intensity' as a dimension of social ties, the concept of social tie 'density' in a community is used to describe the 'mesh' and 'connectedness' of social ties in a community (Bott, 1955, 1956, 1957; Mitchell, 1969; Barnes, 1954). Communities with a high density of social ties are defined as having a high proportion of participants who are directly connected to one another. Thus, participants are in contact with one another independently of any particular member. In communities comprising a low density of social ties, many participants are not directly or actively connected but are linked indirectly through other participants (Jewson, 2007: 74). Levels of 'intensity' and 'density' can be used to describe how much of a community is made up of different sorts of ties between members. Such analysis techniques can identify cliques or clusters of social ties within a group, and some social network analysts are interested in further identifying individuals whose social ties bridge these cliques or 'structural holes' (Burt, 2005) in a community or network. This links to the notion of bridging social capital (see later section).

The five dimensions of social ties outlined above, largely describe the types of ties that can exist in a community (such as a partnership for the purposes of this thesis). These dimensions can be combined to fit typologies of community in previous studies, which is the focus of the next section, 'Typologies of community: collections of social ties'. The section above demonstrates that it would be possible to apply such an analysis of social ties to the relationships between members of a partnership. The partnership literature has recently started to pay attention to the role of social ties between partners (Dhillon, 2009), but the potential effects of different combinations of social tie between partners are not explored or taken into account in existing theorisations. For example, how might a partnership's operation and trajectory be shaped if some members already know each other and others are initially strangers? Moreover, social ties are not static, so ties that had been strong initially may become weaker over time and vice versa. The bodies of

literature that focus on multiple community membership and social networks emphasise that social ties in any community can be diverse and dynamic. As the next two sections will show, engagement with the social network and social capital literature suggests that it may be important for partnership researchers and practitioners to be aware of the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of social ties in partnerships.

Typologies of community: collections of social ties

The community studies literature has been characterised for decades by a debate that largely polarises two forms of community structure. Broadly, the debate distinguishes between social structures that are homogeneous and inward-looking (*gemeinschaft*) and those that are heterogeneous and outward-looking (*gesellschaft*) (Tonnie, 1957; Laumann, 1973; Bauman, 2001). Each form of community structure embodies a different set of social tie types, which produces specific sorts of outcome. These two main community structures are outlined below.

Gemeinschaft: 'Tight-knit' communities

'Gemeinschaft' is frequently described as consisting of multi-stranded social ties between community members (Bulmer, 1988; Barton, 2000; Forrest, 2004). This means that people know each other in a variety of roles (for example, as co-workers, friends, neighbours). Tonnie (1957) perceived that such groups of people were likely to share values, interests and a world view, and would co-operate with one another to achieve shared ends. Therefore, in terms of social tie characteristics, a *gemeinschaft*-like community would be predominantly composed of trusting social ties between close family and friends, who were in frequent contact, with little range but much intimacy. Thus, communities with a high level of intense social ties might be expected to be homogeneous and tightly-knit. In terms of 'direction' or 'reciprocity', the literature suggests that multi-stranded and tightly-knit social ties, can involve a 'complex balance of compensating relations,

reciprocated and unreciprocated' (Scott, 2000: 31). This might mean that financial support could flow in one direction and emotional support in the other.

In the social network literature, social structures with the above characteristics are defined as 'closed' or 'embedded' networks (Granovetter, 1973; Coleman, 1988; Burt, 2005). Burt (2005) suggests that 'closure' within a social group or network is about making it safe for members to trust each other. Furthermore, he argues that closed networks provide a 'wide bandwidth' for flows of information between members. This suggests that the more closed and intense the set of social ties, the more penetrating the information that circulates within it (for example, through the transmission of gossip). This 'wide bandwidth' in tight-knit communities is thought to control members' behaviour, as people in a closed network have a single source of reputation and can be expected to protect it (ibid). Closed social structures may also increase difficulties of moving ideas between groups (Schuller et al, 2000). The 'tight-knittedness' between members can be a powerful force for conservatism, and can be conceived as inhibiting rather than facilitating creativity within a community (Burt, 2005).

Gesellschaft: 'loose-knit' communities

In terms of social tie characteristics, a gesellschaft-like community would be predominantly composed of members who had specialised contact and little intimacy, but members would possess networks with much range across multiple communities (Tonnies, 1957; Bulmer, 1988; Barton, 2000; Forrest, 2004). Such a community is seen to be based on single-stranded ties between people, and characterised by social ties that are likely to be functional, fragmented, specialist and possibly short-term (Wellman and Potter, 1999). For example, members might only interact with each other in a single, specialised context such as co-workers in a place of employment. Granovetter (1973) suggested that communities with high proportions of weak, low intensity ties between members could be described as heterogeneous and 'sparsely knit'.

In the social network literature, social structures with the above characteristics are defined as 'open' networks (Coleman, 1988; Burt, 2005). Coleman (1988) argues

that in open social structures, collective sanctions are unlikely to exist. He sees this as a negative feature of loose-knit communities, as he believes that collective sanctions are necessary to ensure trustworthiness in a community. Some researchers argue that heterogeneity in community membership might produce negative outcomes, because members are more likely to have different social characteristics and interests, which could lead to unspecified tensions and divisions in the community. This means that substantial variation in interests, values and identities might be expected when a new, 'loose-knit' community is formed. Halpern (2005) argues that heterogeneous communities might be less likely to foster empathetic understandings and mutual support between members. He suggests that members cannot necessarily reproduce their diverse assumptions, expectations and ways of working that stem from their participation in other social contexts. However, literature from a radical pluralist perspective suggests that heterogeneity within a community may produce positive outcomes for the community and individual members (Walzer, 1994; Young, 1989, 1990, 2000). The intermingling of communities, that individuals belonging to multiple and overlapping social groups stimulates, might produce new ideas, opportunities and creativity within the 'loose-knit' community (this links with the concept of bridging social capital - to be discussed in the next section).

To summarise, the predominant view in the literature is that a set of multi-stranded, strong, intense, reciprocal, durable, easily reachable and dense social ties between community members, produces a social structure that is homogeneous and tight-knit. In contrast, a set of single-stranded, weak, less intense, weakly reciprocal and transient social ties, produces a social structure that is heterogeneous and loosely-knit. However, if the five dimensions of social ties – intensity, direction, durability, reachability and density (presented in the previous section) - are taken to be largely independent in nature, this suggests that although some combinations of social tie dimensions will indeed fit earlier typologies of community, it also suggests that many combinations will not (Wellman and Potter, 1999). For example, a low-density set of social ties might still exhibit high trust and effective co-operation between members, if the community's norms were highly explicit and its sanctions severe (Katz, 2000). Therefore it is likely that different

combinations of social tie within a social structure will affect how the community functions and operates. This will be explained further in the next section.

Given the broad definitions above, all partnerships are likely to resemble heterogeneous (in terms of tie types and characteristics), loose-knit sorts of community. However, as the social network literature points out, these loose-knit communities could each comprise a variety of different combinations of social tie between partners, which could also shift over time. The partnership literature does not adequately acknowledge that different partners in the same partnership might be socially 'tied' to the other partners in different ways. Moreover, it has little to say about what might happen if an uneven web of social ties (and levels of social capital – see next section) emerges in a partnership. The next section relates social ties and structures to the concept of social capital.

Social capital

Social capital is a highly contested concept (Gewirtz et al, 2005; Halpern, 2005; Arneil, 2006; Dhillon, 2009). It is applied to many research contexts by academics from different disciplinary perspectives and varying epistemological and ontological positions. For example, sociologists⁵ tend to understand the concept of social capital in terms of social structure, examining the concept using social network analysis, whereas political theorists⁶ understand social capital by researching trust and individuals' attitudes towards society and institutions. Popularised by theorists like Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993, 2000), social capital is related to the idea of social ties. It is the notion that social relationships are a valuable resource for individuals and groups, and goes beyond an interest in who is interacting with whom. Thus, social capital can be described as a relational asset. Burt (2005) describes it as the advantage created by a person's location in a structure of relationships. Putnam's (1993, 2000) view of social capital focuses on the benefits of engagement in civic activity for society. He argues that the qualities of trust and reciprocity that are developed in civic relationships facilitate citizens to

⁵ Coleman, Burt, Lin and Wellman are social capital theorists who employ a sociological approach.

⁶ Putnam and Fukuyama are social capital theorists that have more of a political perspective.

engage in collective action and 'increase their expectations about the nature of their relationship with the institutions of government' (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 172). Fukuyama (1995, 2001) argues that high levels of social capital and trust ease co-operation between people. The work of social capital theorists suggests that possessing social capital can help individuals and groups to achieve mutual goals through the deployment of relational resources. This implies that the concept should have some transferability to the analysis of partnership formation and operation, as partnership can be viewed as set of relationships that has been constructed to achieve a common goal. In relation to the problem of co-ordination in partnership, as raised earlier in this chapter, social capital theory suggests that if partners have high levels of social capital this will help to sustain the partnership and realise its aims⁷. The discussion of social capital set out here only denotes some of the key ideas connected with the concept; it cannot hope to provide a thorough and comprehensive examination that accounts for opposing definitions and perspectives (these can be found elsewhere, see Baron et al, 2000; Halpern, 2005).

Social capital is frequently described as emanating from three components of community: networks, norms and trust (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Field and Schuller, 2000). Similarly, Coleman (1988:98) argues that the important constituent parts of social relations that produce social capital are 'obligations, expectations and trustworthiness', 'information channels', and 'norms and effective sanctions'. Therefore, sources of social capital might include: associations, clubs, family, friendships, work places, and neighbourhoods, to name but a few. However, not all social capital theorists view the social capital that can exist in a range of settings as equally valid or 'useful'. For example, Field et al (2000) criticise Coleman for largely discounting 'constructed social organisation'⁸ as a source of social capital. Coleman places high value on homogeneous, closed communities for the creation of social capital. This echoes the communitarian perspective, introduced earlier, which locates a perceived decline in social capital as the result of 'personalism' (such as might be found in 'constructed social organisation') (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Etzioni, 1995, 2001). Coleman's interest in social capital that is created and used in tight-

⁷ This somewhat resonates with the literature on networks as a mode of social co-ordination.

⁸ Where people join together for a single purpose or narrow range of purposes, much like the 'loose-knit' communities defined in the preceding section.

knit communities would be defined elsewhere in the social capital literature as an example of 'bonding' social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Bonding social capital is developed within relatively tightly drawn groups; it is understood to be created via a high level of intra-community trust and associational activity (Putnam, 2000; Halpern, 2005). The significance of strong ties between members of a community is well documented elsewhere in the community literature (Granovetter, 1973). Bonding social capital is argued to be useful for individuals and groups because people with homogeneous social characteristics and multi-stranded social ties are more likely to have shared norms, values and similar interests, which can foster empathetic understanding and mutual support (Marsden, 1988). Shared expectations of reciprocity and mutual obligation create a general bias towards cooperation (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Fukuyama (1995: 10) also emphasises trust as a component of 'the ability of people to come together for common purpose in groups and organisations'. The existence of high levels of trust between members implies both an expectation of mutual commitment and a degree of predictability about other people's behaviour. Fukuyama (1995: 26) suggests that where trust exists between members of a community that 'these communities do not require extensive contractual and legal regulation of their relations because prior moral consensus gives members of the group a basis for mutual trust'. However, a by-product of bonding social capital might be the repression of difference and diversity, by limiting members' contacts with other social contexts, which can create a mistrust and suspicion of those individuals and groups who are perceived *not* to belong (Young, 1990; Sennett, 1996; Warburton, 1998; Taylor, 2003). Communities with high levels of bonding social capital can be socially stifling, narrow-minded, invasive of privacy, myopic and self-serving (Barton, 2000; Misztal, 2000: 90-1).

Another sub-dimension of social capital is 'bridging' social capital. This functions differently to bonding social capital. Bridging social capital is developed when more closed groups interact beyond the limits of their own social world and interact with other groups (Putnam, 2000). In this sense, it can create overlaps between different communities. 'Weaker', less exclusive and more cross-cutting social ties create horizontal links between communities, which puts people in

contact with others who are different in outlook, interests, education and social circles (Granovetter, 1973; Davies, 2001; Taylor, 2003) and therefore can create access to different resources. These weak and bridging social ties can create bridging social capital, which can then be drawn on by individuals and groups.

Many social capital theorists (including Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993, 2000) do not adequately acknowledge the negative sides of social capital (Field et al, 2000). There is a trend to see social capital as advantageous and benign for those who possess it, which can underplay the variable value of social capital. Research has shown that although social capital can contribute to equity and justice, it can also act as a burden to individuals and groups, underpinning social hierarchies and sometimes creating new sources of inequality (Foley and Edwards, 1998:7). Others argue that the predominant normative conceptualisations of social capital inadvertently ignore power relations that can affect economic, educational and social outcomes (Schuller et al., 2000; Maloney et al., 2000; Field et al., 2000). There is also a 'distributive dimension' of social capital, as differentials in ability to create and access social capital are likely to reinforce existing social, political and economic inequality (Edwards and Foley, 1998).

In relation to this thesis, I am primarily interested in the size and density of the sets of social ties within the BV partnership, as the data strongly suggested the resources that individuals had access to (or not) via social ties were significant for the partnership's operation (in positive and negative ways) (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). I use my engagement with the community literature, in conjunction with the data generated from the case study partnership, to develop a method of analysing partnership that is instructive. This broad body of literature has suggested that social tie variation between members of a community may be significant for social co-ordination. The community literature also suggests that members of a social group may bring resources, values, attitudes, behaviours and expectations with them from other communities to which they belong. I shall explore through Chapters Four, Five and Six in what ways BV partners' membership of multiple, overlapping communities, the partnership's combination of social ties, and partners' access to social capital affected how the partnership was formed and operated.

Conclusion

The first half of this chapter focused on the academic partnership literature and outlined the common themes that are cited as affecting the operation and trajectory of a partnership. Namely, shared interests, costs and benefits, leadership, trust, culture, power and membership. I demonstrated that this body of research and theory is deficient in two key respects. Firstly, it does not refer to partners' multiple community memberships (beyond the partnership community), aspects of which partners will inevitably bring with them to the partnership setting. Furthermore, the current partnership literature does not sufficiently conceptualise heterogeneity and conflict in partnership as partially stemming from an overlap between communities. Secondly, the partnership literature does not adequately address the implications that a mix of social ties within a partnership might have for creating co-operation between partners.

The second half of this chapter established that turning to the sociological literature on community, social ties and social capital is one way to address some of the deficiencies in the existing partnership literature. It showed that the literature on social ties helps to differentiate between varieties of relationship that can exist at any one time in a social group. Furthermore, it helps to understand the significance of variation in social ties for the formation and development of a partnership. In this chapter, I have started to explore some of what might be learned about partnership by engaging with the community literature. This has enabled the thesis to start to contribute to a new ways of understanding consensus and conflict within of a partnership. The notion of partnership as an instance of 'overlapping communities', the role of social ties in partnership, and the connections between these two ideas will be explored further, in relation to the fieldwork and academic literature, through Chapters Four, Five and Six. The next chapter presents the methodological approach to the study of the Broadley Vision partnership.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodology underpinning this research. It begins with an outline of my epistemological and ontological positions before presenting my research design. My role as researcher in the generation of data is considered. The research methods used and the data produced are discussed. An ethical approach was employed throughout the research process and is outlined in this chapter. This chapter will also explain the procedures used for data coding and interpretation.

This thesis presents a detailed study of the development of one initiative - the Broadley Vision partnership. It investigates the following research questions:

1. Are instances of overlapping communities inherently problematic for partnerships?
2. Are strong social ties between partners important for the co-ordination of non-mandatory, network-like, cross-sectoral partnerships?
3. Is there value in understanding partnership as the formation of a new community?

This thesis focuses more on the processes than the outcomes of the BV partnership, because I am primarily interested in understanding conflict and consensus within the partnership, rather than evaluating the merits of what it achieved. My research employs a broadly ethnographic case study approach to develop rich, nuanced and detailed data that will facilitate rounded and contextualised understandings of instances of conflict and consensus within the partnership.

Epistemology and Ontology

This study seeks to contribute to theories of partnership, by teasing out how conflict and consensus is understood through one case of partnership practice. How researchers design and execute their studies will depend on a variety of factors including their perspectives on what there is to know about the social world and their understandings of how this knowledge can be acquired. These are questions of ontology and epistemology. Broadly speaking, the key ontological debate surrounds the extent to which there is a shared social reality or multiple, context-specific social realities, and also whether or not social behaviour is governed by norms that can be seen as fixed and generalisable (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

Realism and relativism are considered to be two main ontological positions underpinning social research. These positions are generally considered to be the two extremes of an ontological continuum. Realists believe there is an external reality, which exists independently of people's understandings about it. Relativist positions, on the other hand, suggest that social reality is only knowable through socially constructed meanings. Relativists argue that there is no single social reality, only a series of competing social constructions. However, these polarised ontological positions have been debated for decades, and modified positions are now frequently adopted. In fact, many contemporary qualitative researchers argue that the social world is regulated by normative expectations and shared understandings, but that the norms that govern society are not necessarily fixed.

One of my ontological assumptions is that individuals' participation in a variety of social settings can potentially affect how they perceive situations and behave even though they may not explicitly refer to this when discussing their experiences and actions. I believe that meanings and representations can be shared, and that social behaviour can be affected and influenced by a variety of social structures and other social factors. To understand social phenomena researchers must seek to understand the social world that individuals and groups construct and reconstruct through their meanings on a daily basis.

This research has a largely interpretivist, rather than a positivist, epistemological position. However, those who see themselves as interpretivists often differ in what counts as interpretation, or how interpretation should be carried out (Kincaid, 1996). It is important to remain sensitised to relativism's attack on the 'arrogance of sureness' (Porter, 2002). However, I question some relativist approaches to interpretivism that appear to overlook the cultural consistency of the social world (Williams, 2002). I am not claiming that the social world is culturally homogeneous, but rather that there exist some shared and common norms, language and physical referents, which can allow at least some reciprocity of perspective between researcher and participants.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) present three assumptions that underpin an interpretive epistemology. Firstly, that the researcher and the social world can impact on each other; secondly, that objective and value-free research is impossible; and finally, that knowledge of the social world is mediated through people's understandings and meanings. This means that knowledge is produced through both the researcher's and the participants' understandings. Such research strives to generate data that will produce 'thick' rather than 'thin' descriptions of social life. Anti-positivist perspectives tend to favour approaches that explore the situated experiences of the research participants in order to focus on the richness and significance of the individuals' experiences (Snape and Spencer, 2003, Blaikie, 2000).

It is important to recognise the problematic nature of producing knowledge about the social world. In this research, I take a modified and pragmatic approach to the production of social knowledge. I want to be able to make some tentative claims regarding explanations of social phenomena, and yet I also want to seek these explanations via interpretations of individuals' behaviour and their own perceptions of their experiences.

I am claiming that while objectivity is impossible, it is possible to build an understanding of a specific social phenomenon, without claiming to have 'got it right' (Bhaskar, 1989). I have constructivist sympathies with qualitative research to

the extent that I do not believe that knowledge is there to be mined, but rather that meanings of participants' narratives are developed as the researcher interprets them. Thus, I see the researcher as being an active player in the development of data and meaning. Researchers who adopt an interpretivist approach see the role of the researcher forming an integral part of the inquiry, rather than attempting to assume a 'neutral' position in the research (Silverman, 1997). Therefore, the researcher cannot be, and often is not setting out to be, objective, and therefore findings are usually understood to be mediated through the researcher. This partially links to why I use the term 'data generation' rather than 'data collection'. I think the term 'data generation' is preferable because most qualitative perspectives reject the idea that a researcher can be a neutral collector of information about the social world, or that people are simply containers of data who can yield up that data at will (Mason, 2002). Instead, I see the researcher and others as being active in the construction of knowledge about the social world.

This means that I do acknowledge the necessity for a degree of reflexivity. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) suggest that it is important for researchers to be open and transparent about what they bring to the research enterprise in terms of assumptions and prejudices. Pillow (2003) argues that reflexivity is important to make visible the politics of representation, although she also acknowledges that such reflexive practice can become navel-gazing and self-indulgent. In interpretivist research, knowledge is generated by interpreting the data generated, but such readings can be produced in two main ways. 'Interpretive' readings involve researchers constructing versions of what *they* think the data mean or represent, or what they think can be inferred from them. 'Reflexive' readings on the other hand locate researchers as part of the data generated and seek to explore their own role in the process of data generation and interpretation. In this research, I try to strike a balance between acknowledging the shaping role of my own gaze (Mason, 2002), and also the difficulty of declaring my assumptions and pre-conceived ideas; after all, I may not be aware of all of them or how they impinge upon the research. Having said that, my field notes were often a site of reflexivity during the fieldwork process. I routinely questioned the extent to which aspects of my social and cultural make-up might be influencing what I was seeing and hearing, and how this

might affect how participants perceived me. I include two excerpts from my field notes below:

'In the meeting today, I could feel myself wanting to side with Ann, although I didn't let this be known. Writing these notes lets me step back and explore where these feelings might come from, so that I can try to make them not unduly affect what I 'see' when I'm back in the field. In relation to Ann, there are several aspects that I think make me feel more affiliated with her. The most obvious seems to be our connection in relation to the voluntary sector [I had worked for a range of voluntary sector organisations⁹ for eight years prior to accepting the scholarship]. We seem to have similar reference points. I feel like I often understand how she's thinking. Of course, I have to remind myself that I'm a researcher in this context and not a voluntary sector partner. [...] I also can't ignore the fact that we're both women in a male dominated partnership.'

(Field notes after meeting 3 – see Chapter Four)

'Today I conducted my first interview with Alan. It was a bit awkward at first. I felt like a school pupil in the head master's office and found it really hard to strike up rapport with him. [...] Also, he made a bit of a thing about whether I really came from the local area. I told him I was born and raised in the city, but he said 'Well, you wouldn't know. Where's your accent gone?' I didn't know what to say.'

(Field notes after interview with Cllr. Alan Grogan, 1st October 2001)

Both excerpts above demonstrate that I regularly reflected on what factors might be shaping my observations, feelings, and interactions in the field. I thought that my previous experience of the voluntary sector and my being female might have influenced how I was pre-disposed to feel positively towards Ann (in the beginning, at least). In relation to my initial relationship with Alan, I felt the age difference¹⁰ and the position of authority he held¹¹ affected how I felt in his company at first, and possibly how he positioned me (young, inexperienced). His comment about my lack of a regional accent, and the assumption that I would have had one once and had since 'lost' it, also suggests that he was broadly positioning me as being unlike him in terms of social class and culture, which may have affected the development of rapport (see later section in this chapter, 'Individual interviews with partnership members').

I am seeing the BV partners, their interactions and any artefacts they produce in relation to the BV partnership as sources of data for this piece of research.

⁹ These included Groundwork, The Princes Trust Volunteers, the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind people), NCH Action for Children, CSV (Community Service Volunteers), Middleport Environment Centre and the BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers).

¹⁰ I was 24 when I entered the field. Alan was in his 60s.

¹¹ Cllr. Alan Grogan was Leader of Newsby Borough Council when the study began.

Interpretive research often implements qualitative research methods so as to understand the actions, behaviours and experiences of people. Such methods allow a researcher to take an inductive or data-driven approach to understanding the social context within which a phenomenon is occurring.

Thus, I have adopted a qualitative, broadly ethnographic approach to this research as I felt this would best support the development of a contextualised account of conflict and consensus within a specific partnership. Traditional ethnography is an approach which sees researchers trying to gain ‘first-hand’ experience through ‘immersion’ in ‘natural’ settings (Fielding, 2008), and usually the ethnographer observes those participating in the research site over an extended period of time (Aull Davies, 2008). I did to some extent become partially ‘immersed’ in the social world of the participants in this study, and I hoped to learn something about conflict and consensus within this group by spending time in their company (Goffman, 1961). That said, I limited my interaction with the partners to specific partnership meetings and selected activities and events, rather than spending time with participants in their core organisational or home settings. This was because I was primarily interested in researching the development of conflict and consensus within the partnership. I chose to ‘get close to’ the partners at partnership meetings because I initially anticipated that these meetings would be the spaces where the participants would come together as a partnership group¹². I did not consider myself to be an ‘insider’ in the setting, as I did not have first-hand knowledge of working with any of the individuals or organisations involved in the BV partnership. I feel that this initial ‘outsider’ position was beneficial for the research, as I did not have to struggle to make the ‘familiar strange’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), which enabled me to ask questions of the setting and its participants. However, my lack of pre-existing personal connections with the partners meant that I had to work hard to develop trust and rapport with the participants (as mentioned earlier in this chapter, this was easier with some partners than others).

In relation to previous approaches to partnership research, my method is most closely aligned to studies that have qualitatively and longitudinally investigated a

¹² I was led to believe this by some of the partners at the start of the fieldwork.

single case of partnership (Arino and de la Torre, 1998; Dhillon, 2005, 2007, 2009). Other research method traditions in partnership research include: quantitative surveys of a large number of partnerships (Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Sedaitis, 1998; Smith and Beazley, 2000), mixed method research with a number of partnerships (Callaghan et al, 2000), longitudinal, qualitative research with a number of partnerships (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Barton and Quinn, 2001; Mayo and Taylor, 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Alcock and Scott, 2002; Davies, 2002; Ruane, 2002; Seddon et al, 2005), and action research (Williamson, 2001; Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

Research Design

In this section, I provide an account of the research process. I was studying in real time the formation and operation of a partnership; not an already existing organisation, but one which was 'becoming'. The aim of the methodology underpinning this thesis therefore was to generate data about firstly, how the partnership was created and secondly, how conflict and consensus within the newly formed Broadley Vision partnership occurred and was perceived. Data were generated in two main ways: through a contextual setting via the use of observation of partnership meetings, interactions and activities; and through a more reconstructed setting via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with partnership members. My ethnographic sensibilities also saw me gather a variety of BV related texts or artefacts, which I read and reflected on in relation to the research topic. I collected official, 'public' texts or artefacts produced by and/or for the partnership, such as agendas and formal minutes from partnership meetings, a funding proposal, proposed strategy documents and event feedback written by certain partners for the view of the other partners, and a partner's letter of 'resignation' (see examples in appendix). Other textual artefacts were collected too, such as email correspondence between partners and myself or to which I had been copied in. These collected BV partnership artefacts also formed part of the raw data from which supplementary field notes and reflections were produced.

Generating different data through different methods was useful for this study. Gerson and Horowitz (2002) report that observation and interview techniques are

often argued to be methods with different epistemological assumptions and therefore can be seen to be theoretically at odds with each other. However, they suggest that these methods can be seen to complement each other in significant ways, and that when combined in practice they can help to enrich our understandings of social life. It is important to be able to generate contextualised data. Thus, any decontextualised forms of knowledge generation become problematic. For example, the act of interviewing is regarded by some as a static-causal snapshot (Mason, 2002), which can be problematic if the researcher is seeking to understand social structures and processes. Thus, combining interviews with observation techniques can help to better contextualise the knowledge generated.

The observation of eighteen consecutive BV partnership meetings over a two year period (until the partnership's end in July 2003) allowed me to develop perceptions of the participants and their actions through observing their interactions with others. It also afforded a sense of trajectory and dynamism through viewing the shifts and changes that took place within and between meetings. The nine interviews with six partners were opportunities to speak with participants on their own about their understandings and experiences of conflict and consensus within the partnership. Where second interviews were carried out (at least 12 months after the first interviews) with three partners, this also generated data that highlighted the significant role that the shifting dynamics between partners played. These approaches combined meant that I could be sure I had gathered a sufficient breadth of relevant qualitative data to respond to the research questions posed by this thesis.

Sample

Data were generated from the group of people involved in the Broadley Vision partnership between August 2001 and July 2003. Participants became part of the research process because of their relation to the setting (i.e. they were already, or became, involved in the partnership that I was seeking to study). Studying a single case of a social phenomenon is considered by some to be inadequate for the

purposes of generalising to specific populations on the basis that the 'sample' cannot be deemed representative. However, ethnographic case study research does not necessarily seek to make fully generalisable knowledge claims (see later in chapter for more discussion). This research therefore focuses on issues relevant to a meso-level of social analysis, that is, a level above that of individual and household, yet one which is located and consequently contextualised within 'small scale social structures', such as neighbourhood studies, locality studies and workplace studies (Crow and Allan, 1994: 194).

Data Generation

I directly observed 17 out of 18 consecutive partnership meetings over a period of 24 months, between August 2001 and the partnership's end in July 2003. I also observed a selection of other activities related to the development of the partnership. I asked to attend such activities because I saw them as moments in the partnership's development, which could potentially affect BV's trajectory. These activities were worth observing even if they turned into dead ends for the partnership, as they offered more opportunities for me to observe how partners behaved and interacted. They included a meeting between two members of the partnership, Ronnie Smith and Howard Barber, and representatives from two Broadley community groups (August 2001, see Chapter Four); a meeting between two members of the partnership, Ronnie Smith and Ann Harrison, and seven members of the Broadley Croft Hall Community Association (September 2001, see Chapter Four), a leaflet-drop involving two members of the partnership (September 2001, see Chapter Four), Ronnie Smith and Alan Grogan, and two public launch events (the Broadley Vision launch in October 2001, and the Internet4all launch in November 2002, see Chapter Four). I also planned to conduct two semi-structured interviews with each of the partnership participants: the first set of interviews was planned to take place in October 2001 and the second set of interviews was planned to take place a year later. The idea was that interviews conducted with the same people, one year apart, would allow for changes in participants' experiences and views to be charted and explored. More

details on the actual experience of setting up and conducting these interviews are outlined in the 'Individual interviews' sub-section below.

Observation of partnership setting

Observational methods generate information concerning how individuals and groups behave in social settings (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002). They allow the generation of multidimensional data on social interaction in specific contexts as it occurs, rather than relying on people's retrospective accounts via interview techniques (Mason, 2002). Observation of partnership meetings was a significant aspect of the research methods for this study, as it offered an ideal opportunity to observe interactions between partnership participants and to gain insight into how the partnership was operating. I anticipated that the formal monthly partnership meeting would be the major forum for partner interaction and discussion of strategy and operation. Gaining access to the partnership meetings was not difficult to arrange, in fact I felt I was expected to attend because of how the PhD scholarship had come about. The meetings lasted between 90-120 minutes and were run in a variety of places (see Chapter Four), including the Leader of the Council's office in Newsby Borough Council, a meeting room in Newsby Public Library and a room in the Broadley Council Building (BCB) (which was the intended site of the BV project). Most of the meetings had an agenda, and formal minutes were produced and distributed between meetings 3 and 15.

I did initially wonder whether my being at meetings and events would affect the partners and how they behaved and interacted. I expected that they might censor themselves. However, I think my length of time in the field (I attended more meetings than any other participant) lessened researcher effects, which is supported by the sorts of behaviours and interactions that I was allowed to witness and record. Therefore, I found the observation of the partnership setting generated very rich qualitative data, and this aspect of the research methods had the advantage of not taking up additional time from the partnership members, unlike the in-depth interviews (see next section). The observations that took place were also a valuable prelude to the individual interviews, allowing me to make the best

use of the interview itself to focus on issues that I perceived to be specific to different individuals in relation to the research topics.

Observation is not considered a single, self-explanatory method. It is generally accepted that observation can be practised in various ways, ranging from total participation to mainly observation and various combinations in between (Bryman, 1988: 48-9; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I viewed myself as an observer-participant (Gold, 1958; Junker, 1960). I did not take on a role already existing in the field and was therefore explicitly known as a researcher to all BV participants and thus interacted with the participants first and foremost in the role of a researcher rather than as a fellow 'partner', although this distinction became blurred at times (to be discussed in Chapter Seven). If new partners were in attendance at any meeting I introduced myself as a researcher with an interest in what the partnership was trying to achieve and how it was doing it. In all partnership meetings I sat at the table with the partners. I mainly observed proceedings; although on occasions I did ask questions if I felt it was appropriate, and as the partnership progressed my opinion was sought by one or more partners, both within and outside partnership meetings, on several occasions (see Chapter Four). I made notes of my observations during the meetings and any questions that arose, which I typed up afterwards. All partners took pens and paper into the meetings and made their own notes, and someone was appointed to take official minutes of the meetings (never me), so noting down my own observations during the meeting did not feel out of place.

In relation to *what* I observed, my field notes were initially based on broad observations as I was not focusing on a particular theoretical concern in the beginning. This is not unusual in ethnographic research where the data generation process has been characterised as having a funnel shape; 'with very broad interests in its early phases but becoming narrower and more focused on specific kinds of data as the inquiry proceeds' (Aull Davies, 2008: 234). In my case, I knew I was interested in how the partnership operated so I made observations based on what was discussed at meetings, how issues were discussed, how the meetings were managed, how decisions were made, how tasks were tabled and shared out, how partners talked about their parent organisations or core concerns, any tensions that

arose between partners, how tensions were dealt with, the official and unofficial roles of partners in meetings, body language of partners, and interactions that took place between partners immediately before and after the official meeting. In relation to body language, I decided to record any elaborate gestures or facial expressions (such as raised eyebrows, folded arms, pointing of a finger whilst talking). I also noted the prevailing mood of each meeting or activity, which were more often tense than relaxed. Therefore, the observations I carried out involved me observing, participating in, interrogating, and reflecting on the social actions and interactions taking place at partnership meetings and during a number of other selected activities and events.

Individual interviews with partnership members

Interviews produce data on perceptions, motives and accounts that people offer for their actions and those of others (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002). It is important to remember that participants' capacities to verbalise, reflect and interact can affect the enterprise of interviewing, although I did not find this a problem with the partners I interviewed. I chose to conduct semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews with six BV participants because I wanted to yield rich insights into their experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings in relation to the formation and development of the partnership. I chose interviews over focus groups as I felt the participants might be inhibited to share their views and experiences in a group context. I perceived five of the six to be of equal professional status¹³, but a month into the fieldwork, it became clear that they did not agree on certain issues, and that there were tensions between partners. I wanted to be able to explore these tensions and differences of opinion, which emphasised the appropriateness of individual interviews.

I needed participants to be willing to let me observe the partnership setting and their roles within it, and I needed some to be willing to participate in interviews. I was keen for the research to not inconvenience people during busy working lives, and this necessitated a research method that would require no preparation

¹³ Five were senior managers, leaders or directors – although they were based in different sectors - one was a junior local authority officer.

beforehand and would demand little of their time. Thus, semi-structured interviews were the best way forward. These types of interviews are said to allow people to answer more on their own terms than a standardised interview permits (Gibbs, 1997). The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that I was free to probe behind the responses, thus I was able to enter into more of a dialogue with participants (May, 2001). The interviews were semi-structured by a thematic guide with prompts and invitations to expand on issues raised (Fielding, 1988). The thematic guide was informed largely by the issues and questions raised from my observations of the monthly partnership meetings and my preconceived ideas about what partnerships are and how they work (see appendix). Interview data provided ‘thick’ accounts of participants’ different perceptions and understandings of the operation and trajectory of the BV partnership. These data also provided insight into contradictions between what people said in private and how they behaved in public.

I conducted nine in-depth interviews in total (see table 3.1 below). Three were carried out two months into the field. Five were carried out a year later, and one was carried out four months later still. The timings of and views expressed during these interviews can be usefully linked to the chronological narrative provided in Chapter Four, which provides relevant contextual data. Three participants were interviewed twice and three participants were interviewed only once. I gained informed consent from each interviewee before every interview, after having discussed with each how the interview was to be recorded, transcribed and stored. I emphasised strategies for anonymity, as well as their right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the interview or future interviews at any point should they wish. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in full.

Table 3.1: Interviews carried out with 6 members of the BV partnership

Interview participant	1st Interview	2nd Interview
Cllr. Alan Grogan	1 st October 2001	13 th October 2002
Ronnie Smith	23 rd October 2001	29 th November 2002
Ann Harrison	29 th October 2001	14 th February 2003
Howard Barber	29 th October 2002	N/A
Cllr. Stuart Hogarth	29 th October 2002	N/A
Matthew Griffiths	13 th October 2002	N/A

I made choices about how the participants' language would be transcribed so that I would be able to generate meanings to interpret. The resulting transcripts were as accurate as possible, including all repeated words, sounds (such as 'er' and 'um'), sighs, laughs, intonation (such as sarcasm, bitterness, etc.) and speech habits (such as 'you know'). When using quotations from the transcripts in this thesis, I have to some extent 'cleaned up' the text and removed such features to make the content easier to read and to reduce the word count (unless I deemed the features important for the meaning being constructed). I am confident that this method of recording and transcription captures all the words and sounds spoken by participants. I am also confident that these data (from interviews and observation) demonstrate what people said about how they perceived the operation and trajectory of the partnership.

Before the first three interviews, I spent time finding out background and contextual information on the partnership because I had not had much contact with the partnership members prior to the first interviews taking place. Howard suggested that I set up two informal meetings - one with Ronnie (11th September 2001) and one with Ann (3rd October 2001) - as he felt these two partners would be able to 'fill me in' on the background to the partnership. These meetings were relatively unstructured and involved Ann and Ronnie telling me about their own backgrounds as well as their stories of how the partnership had been initiated, and plans for the partnership's development so as to realise the intended project. These meetings were not tape recorded, but I did take notes. These two meetings were very informative and helped me shape the schedules for the formal interviews, which meant that I was able to make more effective use of the time spent with interviewees.

The first three formal interviews took place in October 2001 at the inception of the fieldwork process. I interviewed partners individually in a private room (either their office or another suitable room) so that they would feel able to share their thoughts and experiences without being overheard by others. This helped to ensure confidentiality. The second set of interviews with Alan, Ann and Ronnie took place between November 2002 and February 2003. Again I interviewed them individually in private locations. Confidentiality was much more important in this

set of interviews as tensions had by now developed between members and I wanted to ask participants to talk about their perceptions and experiences of the tensions that I had observed at meetings. In order to make the participants feel comfortable to share their views with me, even in contexts where tensions ran high between partnership members, it was very important that rapport was established and that I was seen as an individual who could be trusted (Gaskell, 2002). I think the participants felt comfortable with me in the interviews because I had attended all but one partnership meetings from an early stage of the partnership – so I was familiar to them and they knew that I had ‘seen’ much of what had been taking place – and I had deliberately not given my opinions or ‘taken sides’ during these meetings, so I was seen by them to be ‘neutral’ (even though I did not necessarily see myself as neutral – see excerpt from my fieldnotes used earlier in this chapter). The development of rapport with the participants was important as I wished the partners to move beyond any perceived ‘official representation’ of the partnership (May, 2001; Whyte, 1984). I managed this with all participants apart from Cllr. Alan Grogan (see excerpt from my fieldnotes used earlier in this chapter).

Sometimes qualitative researchers are called upon to make commitments to one individual or group in preference to another, to ‘take sides’. During the fieldwork process I found myself having to manage very carefully issues of confidentiality between partnership members, which at times placed me in a difficult ethical position (see section on ethics below). For example, during my second interviews with Ann Harrison and Ronnie Smith, each attempted to extract information from me about how the other had responded to my enquiries and about where my sympathies lay. Newby (1977: 118) found himself in a similar situation when investigating rural networks:

One assurance I readily made and was determined to keep...was a guarantee of total confidentiality. This seems to me the right of every respondent, and it had to be firmly adhered to despite occasional nudges and winks over cups of tea to pass on the replies of others to certain questions. ...acting otherwise would probably have cut me off from any further sources of data, so my stance was largely governed by instrumental considerations. The confidentiality issue coincided with my moral stance.

Like Newby, I was very conscious of the need for confidentiality between partners. I also had to be careful when partners asked me what I thought was going on in relation to the operation and trajectory of the partnership. I managed to avoid

taking sides and effectively got around problematic and controversial issues without making my opinions known, but this does not mean that I did not at times find that I had been placed in an ethical dilemma.

My initial plan had been to carry out two semi-structured interviews with the five main instigators of the Broadley Vision partnership: Cllr. Alan Grogan, Ronnie Smith, Howard Barber, Ann Harrison and Cllr. Stuart Hogarth. I tried to conduct two interviews with Howard and Stuart. Both said they were happy to participate in a face-to-face interview with me but their first interviews were repeatedly cancelled at short notice due to their unforeseen work commitments. I tried to re-arrange these interviews several times but it was difficult to get them to commit to specific dates and times as Howard lived in Birmingham and worked in London, and was often involved in projects through his work all over the country, and Stuart, although local, divided his time between council business and running his own company.

I thought it would be relatively straightforward to re-arrange times with them directly before or after a partnership meeting. In Howard's case, his attendance at partnership meetings although regular was generally a 'flying visit', with him turning up just before the meeting and leaving immediately afterwards. In Stuart's case, he stopped officially participating in the partnership after the third meeting. Thus, I only managed to carry out one interview each with both Howard and Stuart, 15 months into the fieldwork process. I also only interviewed Matthew Griffiths once. I decided to carry out this interview with Matthew, 16 months into the fieldwork process, because even though he was not one of the founding members of the partnership and appeared to be a fairly peripheral figure at partnership meetings, he attended 11 out of the 18 partnership meetings and I was interested to explore his perceptions and experiences of the Broadley Vision partnership's trajectory and operations, especially at a time when relationships within the partnership seemed to be changing and breaking down between certain members. He was in a different position to the other partners interviewed as he had been explicitly 'told' by Alan, as an employee of the borough council, to attend the partnership meetings (with a view to Matthew being able to provide advice on sources of funding), whereas the other partners had chosen to be involved.

Initially, working out who were the main instigators of the partnership was relatively straightforward. However, as the partnership developed over time, it became less clear who counted as a partner and who did not. This goes some way to explaining why I did not choose to interview Martin, Julian, Keith, Clare, Susie or Clive, because at the time of the fieldwork I did not see them as being 'partners' in BV. Despite them being present at some meetings, I primarily saw Martin, Julian, Keith, Clare and Susie as people who had a stake in the success of BV in relation to the development of their own separate project in Broadley, rather than 'belonging' to the BV partnership. However, with hindsight, my field notes suggest that these individuals were implicated in the development and operation of the BV partnership. In Clive's case, he more explicitly aligned himself as a member of BV, but he did not do this until meeting 14, which was towards the end of the fieldwork process. With hindsight, I should have sought to interview these six people too, as they may also have had useful perspectives to share. However, I do not think that this invalidates the data that were generated in this study or the resulting claims.

Ethics

All social research studies raise ethical considerations (Lewis, 2003). Ethical considerations informed all stages of this research from planning to writing. An ethical approach was critical because I was directly interacting with the individuals comprising the partnership in order to generate data for this study, so there was always a possibility that involvement in the research would cause some level of harm to participants. This was something I worked very hard to minimise, particularly during the fieldwork process. I am not suggesting that I was observing dangerous situations or that I was asking questions about issues considered sensitive and/or private such as matters of critical illness or death. In this study any sensitivities arose from the 'political' nature of observing the BV partnership, talking to individuals about their roles in BV and asking for their perspectives on why the partnership was operating in the way it did, all whilst negotiating relationships of trust with the partners. I received verbal and emailed feedback

from Ann and Ronnie who said they felt that talking to me (in interviews) had given them pause for thought and allowed them to reflect on what had been happening in the partnership. They had both found it helpful in enabling them to make sense of what was taking place, even if I did not end up sharing their explanations of the partnership's operation and trajectory.

My ethical stance derived from a range of sources, such as my own experiences, values, politics, and those of the professional¹⁴ culture within which I was positioned. I abided by the norms of ethical acceptability which operate in my professional context, such as codes of ethical practice developed by the British Education Research Association and the British Sociological Association.

Informed consent was obtained verbally from all participants, in relation to both observation and interviews. This meant providing them with information about the purpose of the study, how it was funded, how the data generated would be used and what participation would require of them. Informed consent was based on an understanding that participation was voluntary. This was more difficult to communicate in relation to the observation of partnership meetings. Every time a new partner attended a meeting I had to be explicit about why I was there, what I was doing and my interests in observing the meetings. I always communicated that my field notes were anonymised, but I also had to offer that I would not take notes or sit in on meetings if any partner was uncomfortable with my being there. However, this situation never arose. In relation to both data generation methods, participants consented to take part and to me, as the researcher, using the data in the way described. However, I did not think of consent being absolute and so regularly asked for confirmation of consent as the fieldwork progressed, giving participants the chance to opt out at various stages. This was particularly important when tensions surfaced between partners, but again, no participants took up the opportunity to withdraw. This ultimately benefited the development of this study, as I would not have been able to generate such rich data had participants not have been happy for me to bear witness to and explore conflict and consensus within the partnership, warts and all.

¹⁴ Education research institute within Staffordshire University.

Data storage strategies were part of my ethical approach. Taped interviews were stored in a locked filing cabinet. Interview transcripts and field notes were anonymised and stored electronically on a password-protected computer. I was meticulous about ensuring confidentiality in the production of field notes, interview transcripts and the subsequent thesis, so as to avoid the attribution of comments to identifiable persons. Other ethical issues that I gave thought to include whether I was able to treat all participants equally. This was especially relevant to this study as Howard was heavily implicated in the funding of my scholarship, which could have compromised the research, although I do not think this was the case in practice¹⁵. Also, I had to remain consciously reflexive throughout the fieldwork process as I was aware that, at times, I sympathised more with Ann and Matthew and less with Howard and Ronnie. Constantly questioning why I thought and felt the way I did helped me to maintain a sense of criticality in my fieldwork and analysis. This, together with the period of time during which interpretation and analysis has been carried out (five years), has enabled me to present a balanced interpretation and explanation of the conflict and consensus within the BV partnership, rather than blaming individual partners, which could have been my initial inclination (as was theirs).

Data coding and interpretation

Interpretation of qualitative data is seldom clearly explained in academic texts, which means that it is often not entirely obvious how themes and ideas have emerged to be written about in the final report, article or chapter (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Robertson and Dearling, 2004; Kara, 2006). This section aims to make the coding techniques and approaches to analysis as transparent as possible. Text-based qualitative data analysis is a process of interpretation (Mason, 2002). One set of words (for example, interview transcripts and field notes) is studied by a researcher, pored over, 'sorted, sifted, probed and interrogated', and through this process another set of words (the thesis) is produced to explain the first set (Kara, 2006:58). An interpretive reading of the data will involve the researcher in constructing a version of what they think the data mean, or what they think can be

¹⁵ Howard said to me on several occasions that I should not feel beholden to him or UKTC (the company he worked for).

inferred from them. Thus, coding systems are not analytically neutral. In choosing or devising a particular system of coding data, certain assumptions are being made about the kinds of phenomena being coded and those that are not (Mason, 2002). Researchers usually try to ensure that interpretations primarily stem from the data, rather than from a pre-existing theoretical framework that has been imposed on the data (Mason, 2002), although this is easier said than done as my preconceived ideas will undoubtedly influence what I 'see' in the data and what I consider to be important and relevant.

In this research, the qualitative data include transcripts of interviews and field notes. The data generated were extensive and rich and analysing such qualitative data was a challenging process. The nine semi-structured interviews, the set of field notes from 17 directly observed partnership meetings, and the set of field notes from 13 partnership related events and activities, produced approximately 100,000 words of data to read and interpret. Handling such data can be disorganised and messy. To interpret such a large, rich body of data, it seemed sensible to use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), which has become a widely accepted strategy for the management of qualitative data (Lewins, 2008). I used NVivo software as it is a package I have had training on in the past and have experience of using in my professional context as a qualitative researcher in a university research institute. NVivo is flexible as a software tool and enables the researcher to code, sort and organise the data quickly. It also facilitates the use of coding frames and emergent coding, and to move easily between the data, the codes and the explanations being developed in the process (Kara, 2006).

Coding is an activity that allows the qualitative researcher to bring some order to the data. It is a process of 'identifying and recording one or more discrete passages of text...that in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea' (Gibbs, 2002: 57). In NVivo the researcher identifies, defines and names the codes. Codes can be attached to a section of text of any length from a word, to a phrase, to a sentence, a paragraph, an entire document and so on. Several different codes can be allotted to the same section of text where appropriate. Electronic versions of all field notes and interview transcripts were imported into NVivo.

Data analysis in this study involved a number of phases. The first was 'familiarisation' which involved repeated reading of the field notes and transcripts to get an overall sense of the content. From this it was possible to identify themes that were common across the field notes and interviews. These themes were integrated into an initial 'emergent' coding framework, which allowed a first thematic coding of all the data. All the data was coded three times, using three different ways of interpreting the data. The first coding frame used was a form of emergent coding. It was shaped by my own experience, understandings and feelings, before I had engaged in depth with the literature on partnership or community; in short, everything *I* could notice in the data in the context of my research (Kara, 2006). This process produced emergent codes derived directly from the data. The second coding frame was structured by the themes and issues raised by the literature on partnership reviewed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

For example, this data segment had a number of codes ascribed to it in the first emergent coding frame:

As far as I'm concerned right now there's only one thing that we need to do and that is sort out exactly what is happening. We've got a meeting a week today and I hope that we're going to get a few things sorted out and if that means that I actually then have no more part then that's what it means. So if I don't hear or see what I want to, I will make an announcement there and then.
(Ann Harrison, interview 2)

It was coded as 'Ann Harrison' (as was the whole document) because the text derived from the second interview with Ann. Having codes for individual participants was useful as I was then able to look at the data by each individual to see what they had said, what roles they had played in meetings and activities, and how they had been talked about by others. This sometimes formed a helpful contrast to exploring the data by theme alone. The section of data above was also coded for 'tensions' (because it hints at tensions that exist between Ann and other members of the partnership), and 'frustration' (as was most of the preceding paragraph), because it was clear that Ann was becoming increasingly frustrated with the operation of the partnership. In the second, 'partnership literature' coding frame, the segment above was entirely coded with 'partnership fatigue' (as Ann suggests that she is close to resigning her involvement in the partnership), 'operations' (because Ann talks about the group needing to 'sort out what is

happening’) and ‘barriers’ (because she is talking about the partnership not functioning well in relation to what she thinks should be happening).

I began by using these two coding frames to explore what I could learn about conflict and consensus within the BV partnership from the data. To begin with there was some overlap because the first emergent coding frame already covered many of the issues raised by the second. However, as I switched between the two coding frames, I saw how they also emphasised different aspects of the data, and in particular I began to see that the second coding frame did not encompass some of the issues highlighted by the first. Once the initial coding by the first two frames was complete and the preliminary interpretation had been done, it became clear that the second coding frame (based on themes from the partnership literature) was not enabling a full exploration of data when compared with the first emergent coding frame. The first coding frame highlighted issues of different types of relationships between partners over the lifespan of the partnership, for example, pre-existing friendships, developing networks, and the breakdown of relationships. This insight led me to identify a weakness in existing approaches to partnership, and therefore the need for other materials to help with analysis. Given the focus in the data on social connections and relationships, I turned to literature on community to guide a third further coding, as this literature seemed to encompass themes not present in the partnership literature, but which had emerged from my initial coding.

This led me to explore dimensions of the community literature, which sought to understand how relationships in a community could be characterised and analysed. Subsequently, I turned to the literature on community, social capital and social network analysis to help me devise a third coding frame that would enable me to interpret the data more fully in relation to participants’ relationships and social ties in the partnership. In this sense, the concept of social ties and relationships emerged from the data generated. This approach to data analysis meant that data have not been interpreted only in terms of what is deemed ‘interesting’, but in terms of what knowledge they provide in relation to understanding conflict and consensus within a partnership. The strategy of data analysis in this study has been founded on relating the themes emerging from my observations and the

participants' own words and meanings to existing academic frameworks of explanation. This strategy can be described as a 'framework' method of analysis, which involves moving back and forth from descriptive to explanatory accounts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

It can be seen that each of the three coding frames offers different ways of looking at the data, but they are all relevant in the context of this thesis. This system of using three coding frames for data interpretation aims to look at things from different angles, not to try to 'prove' anything, but to ensure that my thought processes were not limited by too narrow a point of view or, as far as possible, by my preconceived ideas. If the data were coded using one coding frame only I might have had fewer options for comparing and contrasting different aspects of the research. The use of more than one coding frame helped to widen my view of the data and the bodies of literature with which the research is linked, therefore assisting with the analysis of the data. This approach enabled me to ask questions of the data, such as 'What does the partnership literature tell me about the role of social ties between partners?' Even though the answer was 'very little', this was still a useful step forward for the research.

Once each of the coding frames had been used to code the data to saturation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), whereby reading through the data stopped resulting in new codes being attributed, the codes were then reviewed. I began by checking the codes that had only been used once or twice to see whether they represented an issue that had indeed only emerged once, or more likely, whether it was a theme that had been coded using a different descriptor elsewhere in the data. In such instances, I then had to revise the coding. For example, in the first coding frame the code 'fed up' registered only three times across the data. The coded sections of text were studied again and on another reading I decided to delete the code 'fed up' and re-code these three sections with the code 'frustration', because this better represented the meaning of the text. Once all three coding frames had been reviewed in this manner, I then focused my attention on the codes to see if they could be grouped under wider themes or topics. Each broader theme code was then used to extract segments from all the documents where this code had been used. The data coded with each code was extracted and reviewed to establish what

light it could shed on the research questions. What significantly emerged from the analysis was the way in which social ties, and partners bringing their norms and values from their broader community memberships with them to the partnership setting, were important factors in the development and management of conflict and consensus within the BV partnership, which is a topic currently under-researched and under-theorised in studies of partnership.

Methodological Validity

The positivist benchmarks of objectivity, reliability and validity do not seem appropriate for interpretive, qualitative research (Altheide and Johnson, 1998). Robson (1993: 403) suggests that appropriate criteria for assessing qualitative research can be thought of in terms of 'credibility', 'transferability' and 'confirmability'. Credibility sees the researcher demonstrating 'that the enquiry was carried out in a way which ensures that the subject of the enquiry was accurately identified and described (ibid). Transferability means that the research could 'be used in the development of further studies in a variety of settings' (ibid: 405). Confirmability sees the readers of the research being provided with enough information to 'judge the adequacy of the process' and 'assess whether the findings flow from the data' (ibid: 406). My aim was for this research to be credible, transferable and confirmable.

This study has focused on one case of partnership and has generated rich data from this setting and its participants, but it is important to consider in what ways these data might inform understanding of other partnership contexts beyond the specific instance presented here. The generation of theoretical concepts can be provided by qualitative studies, which can then be applied to contexts beyond the original research setting or sample (Mason, 2002). While there are a number of factors that may make this research's context unique, there are aspects that are likely to be identified in other contexts. Generalisations to other contexts may be possible, but must be viewed as tentative or hypothetical rather than conclusive.

Conclusion

Qualitative research should do more than describe an issue or phenomenon, it should provide an explanation (Mason, 2002). Moreover it should explicitly communicate how this has been achieved. This chapter began by setting the research in the context of my ontological and epistemological perspectives. This provides an illustration of the broad overall approach to the research asserted in Chapter One of this thesis. It also emphasises the situated nature of knowledge and rejects the seeking of 'objective truth' in social research, focusing instead on meaning in context.

'Observation' and 'interviews' were defined and discussed as methods of data generation. These research methods proved to be effective ways of generating rich qualitative data about participants' experiences of the operation and trajectory of the Broadley Vision partnership. The cleaned-up transcripts of the interviews with participants and the typed field notes from my observations at partnership meetings and other selected partnership events yielded just over 100,000 words of data. The ethical approach to the research was described and discussed.

NVivo software was used to store and code the data. Codes were devised with the help of three coding frames: one for emergent coding based on my perceptions and ideas as a researcher; one based on the partnership literature as set out in chapter 2; and one based on a coding framework devised in relation to social ties and social capital. An iterative process was employed to code and interpret the data. The first two coding frames contributed to a thematic interpretation of the data and the third to an interpretation of the partnership as both a new community and as an instance of an overlap between communities.

The next two chapters will demonstrate the richness of the data by offering a detailed chronological narrative of the partnership's operation and trajectory (Chapter Four) and a review of the interpretation of the themes that emerged as particularly significant through the coding frames (Chapter Five).

CHAPTER FOUR

'LUCK, FLUKES AND FATE'? NARRATING THE BROADLEY VISION PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

This chapter provides my interpretation of the BV partnership's development over the 24-month fieldwork process. This illustrates important contextual details in terms of timelines, initial relationships, significant interactions and processes enacted. It introduces how the partnership was created, what it was trying to achieve, who was involved at what points, and what resulted; and thus provides a micro-level view of the day-to-day activities and interactions associated with the development and operation of the partnership. This chapter is a crucial contextual anchor for the analysis and interpretation of conflict and consensus within the partnership that takes place in Chapter Five. It amounts to a detailed description of the social context in which the fieldwork took place. Such rich contextual detail is lacking in existing partnership research. Most partnership studies present their findings thematically, abstractly removed from the chronological order of events and episodes. For me, presenting the story of the partnership's trajectory is necessary for two reasons: it is a way to provide the readers of the thesis with important information so as to be able to 'judge the adequacy of the process' and 'assess whether the findings flow from the data' (Robson, 1993: 408); and it also illustrates the intricate and interwoven layering of relationships, processes, events and behaviours that contributed to the development of conflict and consensus within the BV partnership and its ultimate failure (which will be drawn on and developed in Chapter Five).

Any narrative account of this kind must remain essentially contestable. When I write about this study, in both this chapter and Chapter Five, I do so with an ethnographic sensibility of valuing thick description of the social context and the social practices that were taking place. This thick description has been constructed from a range of data. These include my detailed field notes - which recorded my

observations of unfolding events and partnership interactions over two years spent in the field - together with participants' accounts of their experiences (from interviews), and partnership artefacts - such as a written funding bid, meeting agendas and minutes, emails and letters (see Chapter Three). These show that different partners had different interpretations (such as theirs and others' roles, their relationships and loyalties, commitments to BV, etc.), and I illustrate some of these multiple accounts, as well as providing my own account of the BV partnership. I acknowledge that I saw myself and was seen by others as a researcher (rather than a 'partner'), thus my interests in attending meetings and other partnership activities were different to others'. However, as the most regular attendee at partnership meetings during the fieldwork process, I also held the privileged position of being able to question selected partners about their understandings of their experiences and views of the operation of BV.

This chapter begins by introducing the intended purpose of the partnership. It then outlines the trajectory of the partnership from instigation to end. Throughout the narrative, I signal when interviews with partners took place. I also include thumbnail sketches of each BV participant to coincide with *when* they first became involved with the partnership. These sketches include partners that were deemed to be 'founding' ('core') members, as well as more peripheral participants, who were implicated in the development of BV. The following individuals will be introduced (see table 4.1 below):

Table 4.1: BV partnership participants

BV partnership participant	Organisation	Sector	Status in core organisation
Ronnie Smith	Smith Enterprises Ltd.	Private	Managing Director
Cllr. Alan Grogan	Newsby Borough Council	Public	Leader of the Council (Labour Councillor for Broadley)
Ann Harrison	Voluntary Sector Training Project	Voluntary	Project Manager
Howard Barber	UKTC	Private	Senior Manager – Corporate Social Responsibility
Cllr. Stuart Hogarth	Newsby Borough Council	Public	Labour Councillor for ward neighbouring Broadley
Matthew Griffiths	Newsby Borough Council	Public	External Funding Officer
Katy Vigurs	Staffordshire University	Public	Research student
Martin Hewitts	UKTC	Private	Senior Manager – Corporate Social Responsibility

Julian Fox	All People Online	Voluntary	Chief Executive
Keith Winters	UKTC	Private	Project Manager – Corporate Social Responsibility
Clare Moorland	All People Online	Voluntary	Programme Manager
Susie Botham	All People Online	Voluntary	Project Officer
Clive Potterson	Broadley Rotary Club	Community	President

What was the intended purpose of the BV partnership?

The publicly-stated purpose of the partnership was to set up a project to develop a ‘communications and access to learning centre’ in the parish of Broadley, situated in the north of the Shire County. It was hoped that the centre would:

...enable local people to take responsibility for their own learning and work. It is aimed at capturing the vast array of knowledge and skill that exist within a community to benefit the learning of that community. The project has been likened to a community “Youth Club” but for all age groups. The project aims to use some outside skills and technology to facilitate and support the activities – technology is not an end in itself. The project is socially inclusive; one of our basic premises is that everyone has skills and knowledge to offer to the community. We do not see ourselves as traditional ‘educators’ or as playing a long-term part. We will simply act as facilitators and not create dependencies.

(Extract from a funding application bid submitted to a central government fund in June 2001)

This same funding bid also documented the partnership’s intended aims and targets in order to realise the project (see Table 4.3). However, this publicly communicated view of the partnership’s intended purpose and aims did not remain static, stable or shared between partners, as will be illustrated in this chapter and further explored in Chapter Five.

Location for the intended project - Why Broadley?

The official rationale (as written in a funding bid) for basing the project in Broadley was opaque and imprecise. It was stated that Broadley was located in the North of the Shire County:

... a traditional industrial location where existing skills are based around the traditional industries (e.g ceramics, mining engineering) and there has been little need for communication skills. However, these skills are now declining and there is a need to develop communication skills for the rapidly developing knowledge economy... A mapping exercise conducted by Newsby College also identified gaps in the provision of ICT and learning opportunities in rural areas of North Shire. This project will provide a facility in a rural area.

(Funding bid, June 2001)

The funding bid tried to construct a social and economic deficit in Broadley (and North Shire more widely) – albeit unconvincingly, as no data or statistics were quoted from official sources in the bid – which could be addressed by setting up a learning centre in the village. However, both Matthew and Stuart told me that Broadley was not socially or economically deprived by national standards:

Broadley is not deprived on the IMD [Index of Multiple Deprivation] basically. That only includes really deprived parts of Newsby, which is fair enough, the problems are there. Broadley disappears into insignificance I think. The schools' results, I imagine, are pretty average.

(Matthew, interview)

At Ronnie's request, I did some research at the beginning I looked at Broadley parish using different national and local agencies' indicators and statistics and what I found was that Broadley was relatively affluent with some small, very specific economic and social deprivation indicators.

(Cllr. Stuart Hogarth, interview)

Matthew stated that this meant that a project centred on Broadley was unlikely to 'win any public funding'. It was commonly understood amongst the partners, however, that Broadley had been chosen primarily due to the involvement of the Leader of Newsby Borough Council (Cllr. Alan Grogan). Alan was a long-term resident and an established Labour councillor for Broadley. He had access to a large, vacant, council-owned building in the centre of Broadley (the Broadley Council Building – BCB), which he was keen to see being put to good use. During my interviews with Ronnie, Howard and Stuart, they suggested that initially the promise of vacant premises in Broadley was an opportunity not to be missed.

[...] there was the leader of the council who was [...] a major member of Broadley and we had this opportunity of using the Broadley Council Building where the physical stuff could happen, it seemed like, well not a marriage made in heaven, but just like a no-brainer really.

(Howard, interview)

First of all it was just pragmatic, Alan thought we could swing the building. It just felt right [...] There was a building there, it was opportunistic.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

It's Broadley because of Alan. There was an empty building and he saw the chance to develop benefits for his community.
(Stuart, interview)

Ronnie told me (interview 1) that before the existence of BV, he had wanted to develop a communications and learning centre in Croxby, an 'officially deprived' area of Newsby, where he had been brought up as a child. However, he '*hadn't been able to get one person to jump on the band-wagon*' and found that:

It already had millions of pounds sunk into it for very similar things. Not the same but similar, I mean I would have done it differently but it's too far down track to actually recover. [...] Rows and rows of terminals that you find a way of getting people to sit in front of. Now that is not what I am after.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

Therefore, Ronnie in particular, but also Howard, saw the empty building in Broadley as a straightforward equation: a building was being made available; it was a starting point that could be built on. Stuart acknowledged this too, whilst also highlighting Alan's political incentives for suggesting Broadley. Ann also shared the pragmatic view that Broadley was chosen because of Alan and the vacant building:

It wouldn't have to be Broadley and to be quite frank with you the answer to that question is so easy, the building is there and it is being given to us. OK, it's in need of refurbishment before it can be used, but essentially we don't have to pay for that building other than £1 a month peppercorn rent for 25 years. Now that is a gift horse and we can't shun it. It's there and available.
(Ann, interview 1)

Later on in the interview, she also said that she thought the building could '*be used as significant matched funding*' in any future funding bids. However, Matthew was less convinced by the choice of location.

I kept thinking why Broadley? Why not consider other places? OK, we've got a building there that just happens to be under-used, it could be a location for something like this, but there are other buildings of the same nature in the Borough, you know, why not other areas?
(Matthew, interview)

Matthew's comments underline that he did not see the availability of a building in Broadley as enough of a reason to base a communications and learning project there. This hints at different understandings, principles and approaches to developing the project existing within the partnership. This is a recurrent theme throughout this chapter.

Chronological narrative of BV's creation and development

The following section presents a chronological narrative of the partnership's development of the Broadley Vision project. This account also includes the presentation of thumbnail sketches of each participant. These outline some of their social characteristics, background (where known) and core professional context/s. They also document each participant's stated incentives for involvement in the project and their perceived roles and responsibilities. The thumbnail sketches are introduced according to the chronological order of participants' involvement in the Broadley Vision partnership, as not all participants became involved at the same time nor remained involved for the same length of time (see Table of Partners' Attendance at Partnership Meetings in the appendix). This explicit and in-depth introduction to the participants, combined with a chronological narrative of the partnership's development, is an essential precursor to the conceptual developments of Chapters Five and Six. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this is a deeply contextualising approach that is lacking in the majority of partnership research.

Broadley Vision – A Journey Begins: September 2000

Ronnie Smith and Alan Grogan were introduced to each other via a mutual acquaintance at a professional conference in Birmingham, in September 2000. Neither had previously worked with the other. Alan offered Ronnie a lift back to Newsby town and it was reported (Ronnie, interview 1; Alan, interview 1) that during this car journey they identified that they had broadly similar and complementary interests in the development of the communication skills of local people in Newsby Borough.

Cllr. Alan Grogan

Organisation	Newsby Borough Council (NBC)
Sector type	Public – Local Authority
Position	Leader of NBC and Labour Councillor of Broadley Ward.
Location of organisation	Newsby
Place of residence	Broadley village

Alan Grogan was a key instigator of the partnership. He attended 7 out of the 18 partnership meetings (attended meetings 1, 2, 5, 8, 13, 15, 18). He was a white man in his sixties. He spoke with a strong regional accent. At the time of the fieldwork he was a Labour councillor for the ward of Broadley and had been for twenty years. He was also the leader of Newsby Borough Council for the majority of the fieldwork's duration (until May 2003). Alan was also the only partner living in the village of Broadley (he had done for forty years), which raised others' expectations of what Alan might contribute to BV. Cllr. Stuart Hogarth thought, '*Alan would know the people in Broadley who should be involved in the partnership*' (Interview). Howard and Ronnie shared this thought initially, and also thought that he would be able to tap into council resources '*I thought we'd be genuinely working with the council because of Alan's backing, which would mean we could get stuff happening quickly*' (Howard interview).

Prior to the development of the BV partnership Alan reported that he had been thinking for over ten years about an intervention to improve what he perceived as a '*lack of basic skills*' in many Broadley residents. He said in his first interview:

My idea was for a learning centre, a learning centre not of excellence, because I think that's a little too far fetched and pie in the sky, but certainly I did find that there was an element in Broadley that lacked the basic grasp of the 3 Rs shall we say, and that's the type of person I was trying to get at, because I could see from the way I'd been approached by different people, the problems that people were having because they couldn't read, [...] some of my supporters, who had backed me for years, suddenly weren't on the electoral register. Turns out that their children used to fill in the forms for them, so a generation of adults unable to read or write went unnoticed, until the children grew up and moved away from Broadley.

Alan couched his motives in moral and educational development terms, yet also implicitly demonstrated his political incentives for being involved, as Ronnie said (interview 1) '*Alan's motivations are political. I think he has two motivations, he really does genuinely want to help his people and the other is I think he'd like to be re-elected next year.*' Alan also perceived a growing divide between younger and older generations living in Broadley parish, which he said '*caused tensions in the community*'.

Alan suggested to Ronnie that a disused council building in Broadley (BCB) could be transformed into a local learning centre, where local people would be able to meet others and take part in '*some sort of learning activities*'. He stated in his first interview that he saw his role as '*provider and promoter of the project*' and said that he would use his position in the Local Authority to make the disused Broadley Council Building available. A year later, in his second interview, having secured the BCB, he suggested that his attendance at meetings waned because there came a point when he felt he could do little more for the development of the partnership:

I see my role as diminishing now, because I haven't got the expertise and experience that's needed to continue in that work, I shall continue to help the partnership and work with the partnership and stay on the partnership but I think it's gone a step above me now.

(Interview 2)

Ronnie said of Alan's role (interview 1) '*Alan will only deliver if he does it then and there, he's an instant person, if he says he can do this he gets up and does it.*' However, Ronnie and Howard ended up questioning Alan's commitment - '*I'd feel much more confident if Alan actually attended some of these meetings*' (Howard, interview) - and competence - '*He provided us with an out of date contact sheet for local groups, no wonder we had a poor response*' (Ronnie, interview 1). Ronnie referred to Alan in functional terms in interview 2, '*I only ring Alan when I need him to do something.*'

Alan appeared unaware of, or at least did not talk about, the mediating role between partners that he was perceived to perform by other participants. He was asked by Ann to step in and intervene when she experienced communication problems with Ronnie and Howard (Ann, interview 2). Ann said, '*he's given me personally tremendous support and he's probably the only reason that I'm still around. [...] I do feel tremendously loyal to him and he has shown me great respect, great loyalty and I feel I need to offer him the same.*' Ronnie explained in interview 2 that '*Alan's had a quiet word with me a couple of times, to try to keep everything smooth in the partnership.*'

Ronnie Smith

Organisation	Smith Enterprises Ltd. (his own company)
Sector type	Private – Company Limited by Shares
Position	Managing Director
Location of organisation	Newsby
Place of residence	Village in Newsby Borough (4 miles from Broadley)

Ronnie Smith was involved in Broadley Vision from the beginning, and was considered by himself and others as a key instigator of the project. Ronnie was a white man in his late fifties. He was a retired employee of UK Telecommunications Company (UKTC) and had since set up a small business consultancy company in Newsby, 'Smith Enterprises Ltd', of which he was Managing Director. He lived in a village in the Borough of Newsby about 8 miles away from the parish of Broadley. He had not been born in the Shire County, but his family had moved to Croxby (a deprived neighbouring ward to Broadley) when Ronnie was a child so that his father could seek employment as a miner. Ronnie left school at 16 and became an apprentice engineer which led to him joining a computing company. In the 1970s he joined UKTC as a lecturer to engineers at UKTC College. He became involved in UKTC's Total Quality Management Team in the 1980s, where he met Howard Barber. He described himself as 'a working-class boy done good' and a 'product of industry'. Ronnie had no previous personal or professional connections with the parish of Broadley. Prior to BV, Ronnie had been separately developing ideas about setting up learning and communication centres elsewhere in the Shire County. He had previously been successful in setting up such centres in Hungary. Closer to home, he had approached the Chief Executives of both Newsby Borough Council and the nearby City Council with his ideas, but reported that he had been 'unable to excite much interest'. He wanted to be involved in setting up a project that would:

...help local people to become better communicators...that would allow them to be self-sustaining in terms of their learning requirements and their communication needs, so that they don't actually have to go outside their community to work, they can work remotely from a space in the local facility...but it's not necessarily about learning or working. It could just be about local people sitting down and having a chat. So it's kind of a thing to bring the community back together. I guess it's to move it back a hundred years, so that everybody in the community wants to and does help everybody else. And the facility I have in mind would be about focusing that. [...] in practical terms, it will offer them the ability to connect to the Internet, to obtain learning by various different methods, not just use of computers but of multimedia. We'll put videos in, DVDs in, books even. So it's a way of obtaining learning. It'll offer them a library, a learning centre, a community centre, a good old-fashioned club; it'll offer them all of those things. A way of passing on their expertise, a way of feeling valued in their community, all of those things.

(Ronnie Smith, interview 1)

Ronnie said, 'my motivation is to get it going, not to complete it. I have no motivation whatsoever to run this, I just want to get it going and I'll keep pushing until it goes, I just hope there'll be someone who'll pick up the baton and run. That may be Ann. I don't know, I haven't got a clue, but somebody will' (interview 1). His motives and vision for the centre seemed to be unconsciously romantic and naïve. Matthew Griffiths said of Ronnie's motives: 'He's doing it off his own back, whether it's for philanthropic reasons or egotistical reasons, I've heard people suggest that, you know, that's why he's doing it. They're not really the right sorts of reasons for getting involved in something like this, are they?' (Matthew Griffiths, interview).

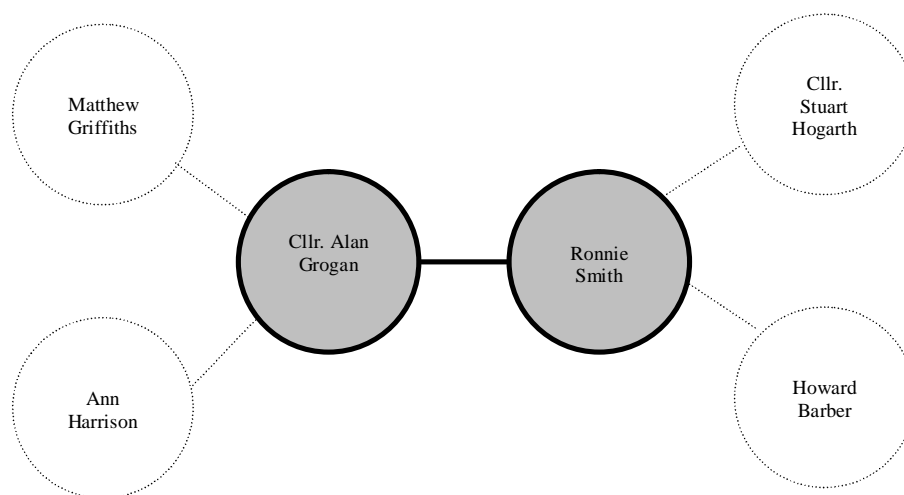
Prior to BV, Ronnie had professional relationships as well as personal friendships with both Cllr. Stuart Hogarth and Howard Barber. He attended 8 out of the 18 partnership meetings that took place during the fieldwork process. He attended meetings 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 and then did not attend again until meetings 15, 17 and 18. However, although he considered himself to be working towards the development of the Broadley Vision project continuously from 2000 until July 2003, he did not consider himself to be a participant of the partnership during the whole of this time. From May 2002-Feb 2003 he actively disassociated himself from the partnership, and yet he continued to work closely with Howard (who was still attending partnership meetings), and to a certain extent with Alan and Susie, on the development and realisation of the 'project'.

Over the lifespan of the partnership, Ronnie attempted to foster relationships with many groups and individuals that he felt would progress the development of the project. Initially, he encouraged Cllr. Stuart Hogarth (Labour councillor for the ward where Ronnie lived) to attend partnership meetings as he felt that Stuart had ideas and experiences that would usefully contribute to the setting up of the project. At the local level, he arranged to meet with some community groups, which saw him involved in presenting the 'vision' to the Broadley Croft Hall Community Association (BCHCA), the Broadley Rotary Club, the local Theatre Company and the Broadley Gardening Club. In relation to trying to secure funding he attended an interview with the Regional Government Office, had offered to 'play taxi driver' to an MEP in Strasbourg, and considered presenting the vision to local businesses, which he regarded as successful.

Between my first meeting with Ronnie and BV's collapse, I recorded seven instances of him saying that he was fed up with the partnership and questioning whether it was worth continuing. 'I'll maintain my enthusiasm until I think there's no point in doing it any more. Then I'll move on' (interview 1). Cllr. Stuart Hogarth suggested that Ronnie's frustration stemmed from his expectation that the project would be 'up and running and in the hands of local people quickly'.

The accidental meeting between Alan and Ronnie at a conference could be perceived as a meeting of two individuals, but each brought with him a range of social ties or relationships that were activated as the partnership developed (see later in this chapter and Chapter Five). Thus, a new network was born, which formed the beginning of the Broadley Vision partnership (see figure 4.2 below).

Figure 4.2: Network beginning of the BV partnership



Alan and Ronnie are represented above by the shaded circles joined by a solid black line. This connection began at the meeting in Birmingham and was developed and maintained over the next three years. The dotted lines represent the pre-existing social ties that both Alan and Ronnie had with others, and to whom they introduced the idea of setting up a community learning and communication centre in Broadley. Once the social ties outlined above were activated, this formed a new network, which became the initial informal partnership, comprising Ronnie Smith, Alan Grogan, Howard Barber, Ann Harrison and Cllr. Stuart Hogarth. Ronnie invited Cllr. Stuart Hogarth (friend, neighbour and political associate of Ronnie) to participate in the development of the project. Then, following an informal conversation in which Ronnie spoke of the project idea, Howard Barber (friend and former colleague of Ronnie) suggested that he participate. Alan invited Ann Harrison to participate. Originally, she had been to visit Alan to discuss her voluntary sector training project, which aimed *'to bring people into learning and providing a learning opportunity where learning is delivered but the majority of the learning takes place from*

people learning from each other [...] I went to see Alan and discuss this with him, because I wanted to get to places within the Borough to raise the profile of my project. Alan was completely receptive to it and he said 'Ann, I think it's time that you met Ronnie Smith along with me' (interview 1). A meeting took place between Alan, Ronnie, Ann, Stuart and Howard in November 2000. Shortly after, Alan also introduced Matthew Griffiths (External Projects Funding Officer at Newsby Borough Council) to the partnership, in the hope that he would source funding for the BV project. The five original members put together a loose idea for a communications and learning centre.

Launch of project idea to potential 'new' partners: February 2001

Five months after the initial meeting between Ronnie and Alan, this informal partnership formally launched the project idea to further potential partners, through a specific lunchtime event. Invitations were sent out to individuals regarded by members of the initial partnership as *'the great and the good of the Shire County'* (Ronnie, interview 1), including business leaders, higher and further education institutions and other relevant organisations or partnerships. Both Ann and Ronnie, in their first interviews, asserted that this launch did not attract as many people as they had hoped. However, it was attended by representatives from Staffordshire University, another higher education institution and Newsby FE College. At this event the other HEI and Newsby College pledged their support for the project in principle, but did not participate in BV after this date, other than signing 'letters of support' to accompany a funding application made on behalf of BV in June 2001. At this event representatives from Staffordshire University discussed the possibility of a researcher being involved in the development and evaluation of the project. In his interview, Howard said to me *'you came along as a new opportunity through my meeting someone from Staffordshire University early in 2001, I just thought, hey, we could get some academic stuff going with this as well'*. This raises questions about the nature (or lack) of strategic planning and also the extent to which other partners were involved in making decisions that would affect the partnership. Howard (and his Director) agreed to use UKTC funds to support a research scholarship at Staffordshire University for three years, which is how my

involvement was instigated, although I did not enter the field for the first time until August 2001. Howard had no previous connection with anyone at Staffordshire University.

Cllr. Stuart Hogarth	
Organisation	Newsby Borough Council / Labour Party / Employment Agency (his own business)
Sector type	Public / Private
Position	Councillor / Managing Director
Location of organisation	Newsby
Place of residence	Village in Newsby Borough (4 miles from Broadley) of which he was also the elected Labour Councillor
<p>Stuart Hogarth was a white man in his early fifties and was a Labour councillor for a ward in the borough of Newsby; the same ward in which both he and Ronnie Smith lived and a nearby ward to Broadley. He also set up and ran a local employment agency. Stuart knew Alan through their work for the Labour Party and Newsby Borough Council. He also described himself as a friend, neighbour, political associate and colleague of Ronnie prior to the setting up of the BV partnership. They had both previously been active members of their village's parish council and the local Labour Party, although Stuart commented that Ronnie was no longer participating in either of these groups:</p> <p><i>Some two to three years ago Ronnie and I discussed the concept of enabling people in rural communities to use IT and to develop their own IT knowledge and communication skills, to enhance their own employability and social cohesiveness, to make them better citizens as well. Ronnie then started to collaborate with Alan to put together plans for the realisation of the project by the actual practical and physical creation of a communications and IT centre in Broadley. I was invited by Ronnie - with Alan's agreement - to be a member of the initial partnership team.</i> (Stuart Hogarth, interview)</p> <p>Stuart had been interested in being involved with the BV partnership as he felt the resulting project would benefit other rural villages too and could be used to develop increased Labour Party engagement. He described being concerned with increasing democratic participation and wanted to develop the remote accessing of council services. He stated that he had carried out research at the beginning of the partnership to establish Broadley's socio-economic deprivation indicators and statistics, for use in a funding bid, although he summarised that Broadley was 'relatively affluent'.</p> <p>He expressed concern in his interview and at meeting 3 that there seemed to be 'no meaningful community representation' (meeting 3). He said he could not understand why Alan was not 'asking the group 'What can I do to help move things on?' Because when something is struggling in my ward, I get local people involved who I know and trust. You've got to get local people involved who've got the good of the community in their hearts or it won't work' (interview). Stuart said he had shared Ronnie's original vision, which he described as 'seeing this up and running as quickly as possible and to be managed by local people. Any outside people should have only been there to help, not to organise the project' (interview).</p> <p>By the time the fieldwork began, Stuart was becoming a more distant participant in the partnership. He attended only one of the eighteen partnership meetings during the fieldwork process (attended meeting 3 – November 2001), although he continued to send his apologies at meetings until meeting 8 (June 2002). He said he stopped participating because:</p> <p><i>I felt that the partnership was turning into a local government type of committee, where people were airing their educated spleens in order to do just that. There just wasn't enough focus on actual delivery and hard and fast practical outcomes [...] I stepped aside because I saw a good idea fizzling away and it began to annoy me.</i> (Stuart, interview)</p>	

Howard Barber

Organisation	UKTC
Sector type	Private
Position	Senior Manager of the 'communication skills programmes' within the Corporate Social Responsibility side of UKTC.
Location of organisation	London
Place of residence	City in the Midlands

Howard Barber, like Ann, was involved in the development of BV soon after Ronnie and Alan's initial conversation. He was a white man in his late forties with a Southern accent. His background was in engineering. When he left college, he got a job working for UKTC as an engineer. He had worked for the private sector company ever since, although at the time of the project he worked for the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of the company. He lived in Birmingham and regularly commuted to London, where his office and team was based. He had no personal or professional prior connections to the parish of Broadley. Howard explained how he became involved in the development of the Broadley Vision project:

Ronnie was just telling me about it and about what Alan had said about Broadley. And then I said 'Well, why don't we both talk to Alan', we might be able to start to do something with the idea that Ronnie and Alan had already discussed. So we went back to Alan and said we might have the opportunity to do something here. Then we had several meetings and kind of created the vision, I suppose.
(Howard Barber, interview)

Howard was a personal friend and ex-colleague of Ronnie (from when Ronnie worked at UKTC) – a relationship that pre-existed the partnership. He described his vision for the BV project as:

The purpose of the project, it's to see if we can use our resources and our expertise, and by 'our' I don't just mean UKTC, I mean people that are in positions to influence [...] to provide opportunities for a community to interact more. It's the old idea of trying to go back to a sense of community, I mean my picture would be to go back to the war days when you had street parties and that became the norm, you went out and you knew everybody.
(Howard, interview)

Howard used his core role in UKTC to contribute a number of resources to Broadley under the guise of BV. He arranged for UKTC volunteers to work in Broadley schools; he paid for a theatre group to work with Broadley schools on the subject of communication; he provided hundreds of UKTC magazines about communication skills to be delivered to Broadley residents; he provided 4 computers, printers and software to be set up in a room in the Broadley Council Building (BCB). He said:

I've contributed quite a lot to the vision and getting something started in the first place. I've actually contributed some UKTC resources into getting some things running and I'm desperately trying to find a way through this without saying 'I need to be in charge' and pull things forward. The main thing is, I couldn't do that anyway, I've got a job to do, and this is only a kind of side issue. I just think, if only there was someone there pulling it, what an awful lot they could get out of, not just UKTC, but all the people round the table.
(Howard, interview)

He did not want to lead or run the project. Like Ronnie, he wanted a group of local people to recognise the opportunity that he saw was being created by bringing a group of external partners together with different areas of expertise and resources to offer. Howard could not understand why local people were not more enthusiastic about the project:

HB: I must say, I have times when I think 'why do I bother?' because [...] the customer base, if you like, doesn't share the passion.

KV: What do you mean by the customer base?

HB: I mean the people we want to work with, so the citizens of Broadley, the schools, and coming from a business background I suppose, I kind of expected that once we'd set the vision, we'd be straight on getting in to doing something.

Howard secured his Director's agreement for UKTC to fund a PhD scholarship in the early days of the partnership's development. In the absence of any external funding for BV, he also ended up using his networks within UKTC to involve his colleague, Martin Hewitts (MH) and an organisation (All People Online - APO) that Martin was working with, in the hope that it 'would be a good thing for Broadley [...] because it loosely fitted our vision [...] and it's got actual official UKTC backing' (Howard, interview), as Ronnie said 'involving APO was a door for us [he and Howard] to siphon in UKTC money to Broadley. A backdoor for realising BV' (interview 2). Howard attended 10 of the 18 meetings (meetings 1, 5, 7-12, 15 and 18) and continued to attend the partnership meetings after Ronnie had stopped attending them, although they still worked together towards the development of the project goals outside of partnership meetings.

Ann Harrison

Organisation	Voluntary Sector Training Project
Sector type	Voluntary
Position	Project Manager / Training Facilitator
Location of organisation	Newsby
Place of residence	Newsby

Ann Harrison became involved in the development of BV soon after Ronnie and Alan's initial meeting. Ann Harrison was a white woman in her late forties. She was an ex-teacher and ex-further education lecturer. She had no previous personal or professional connection with the parish of Broadley or any of the other participants. She worked in the voluntary sector and was employed as the manager of a training project. This training project provided training and learning events for organisations in the voluntary and community sector in Newsby. These training events sought to deliver 'first-rung' learning opportunities in informal education environments for people with low levels of education.

Ann's core project experienced funding difficulties at the beginning of the fieldwork process. Consequently, she was absent from all initial meetings and activities that I attended. However, once she had confirmation that her core project was funded for a further three years she resumed active involvement in BV. She attended 14 consecutive partnership meetings (she did **not** attend meetings 1, 2, 17 and 18). Ann said she saw BV as the development of a community learning centre:

[...] with the expressed aims of increasing the opportunities for learning within a community setting, and that the learning is learner-led and learner-fed [...] It's about creating opportunity for learning that is accessible, flexible enough to accommodate the needs of what people will be saying to us. It can provide social, vocational, and leisure, past-time opportunities all under the same roof. You have a beetle drive or a jumble sale one minute and have people achieving accredited learning and people achieving some type of work or job opportunity the next as a result of the project. We want to create a centre that people feel is their own and can identify with it, but they can also inform what it offers. [...] I suppose what I have missed out and I've done it deliberately is not to harp on about I.T. and computer learning, because what I don't want to see is that the Broadley Vision becomes dominated by the fact that it's technology-based. For me it isn't.

(Ann, interview 1)

When asked how she would describe her role in BV, she said:

My role, I guess, has always been to use my strengths and experiences. Now they lie predominantly in being able to engage with people. It's actually about getting people involved. And about creating an opportunity where people can meet together and work together and learn and train together. Essentially it's to use my skills of getting people involved and developing people.

(Ann, interview 1)

Ronnie supported this view saying 'Ann's the closest thing we've got to community experience in the group' (Interview 1). However, Ann's role looked to become more central to the partnership's development at meeting 3, where she announced that her core project was in a position 'to lead Broadley Vision'. She added, 'I will lead the project, but I don't want to be project manager. I will take on the co-ordination of the project until funding for BV is secured. The BV partnership needs to make obtaining funding for BV a priority so that someone can be brought in to run the project full-time'. Ann's volunteering to take over the co-ordination of the partnership meetings saw her assign her core project's administrator to carry out partnership administration duties such as compiling and distributing meeting agendas and taking and distributing minutes (meetings 3-15). This was a significant contribution by Ann to BV's operation. However, her assumed role as partnership co-ordinator became a root of misunderstanding between her and Ronnie and Howard.

Ann did to different degrees develop social ties with participants. She appeared to work particularly closely with Matthew Griffiths (when the funding bid was being completed) and with Clare Moorland and Susie Botham (when All People Online became involved). She also valued the relationship that she had built with Alan Grogan. Ann did have connections outside the partnership, which she used in the context of her main project, though she was unable to make sustainable connections between these and the BV partnership. She often suggested at partnership meetings that contacts at Newsby College should be involved in the development of Broadley Vision. She wanted to involve the College's principal and the manager of 'College in the Community', but Ronnie and Howard did not want this connection to develop in the context of Broadley Vision. They did not want the college to be involved (see later on in chapter for more detailed discussion about the tensions that developed between Ann and Ronnie and Howard).

Ann officially resigned from the partnership after meeting 16.

Submission of a funding application: June 2001

After the open meeting event in February 2001, Cllr. Alan Grogan asked Newsby Borough Council's lead external funding officer to seek external funding opportunities for the Broadley Vision project. This role was then delegated to his junior officer, Matthew Griffiths. Matthew identified the opportunity offered by a central government fund. There was a time pressure attached to this funding opportunity, as the deadline was only a few weeks after Matthew had sourced it. The submitted funding application generated an interview, which was attended by Ronnie Smith (officially representing BV) on 10th September 2001.

Matthew Griffiths	
Organisation	Newsby Borough Council
Sector type	Public
Position	External Projects Funding Officer
Location of organisation	Newsby
Place of residence	A town in Shire County

Matthew Griffiths became involved in BV after Ronnie, Alan, Ann, Howard and Stuart had their first meeting. He had attended one partnership meeting prior to the fieldwork starting. He attended 12 out of 18 meetings (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). He was a white man in his late twenties and described being born into a working-class family who moved to Broadley when he was a small child. He reported having a happy childhood in the village. He won an academic scholarship to an independent day school in Newsby when he was eleven and moved away to study at university when he was eighteen. His parents and extended family still lived in the parish of Broadley. He was employed by Newsby Borough Council in the role of External Projects Funding Officer, which involved him identifying sources of funding that matched Newsby Borough Council's key priorities and helping Newsby organisations bid for such external funds.

Matthew became involved in the partnership via Alan Grogan. Originally, Alan contacted Matthew's line manager, who delegated the role of attending the BV partnership meetings to Matthew. Matthew did not consider himself to be a 'partner'; he said that he attended the partnership meetings because Alan, as leader of the council, had requested it. In his interview, Matthew said he felt that the intended project did not match with Newsby Borough Council's priority areas and therefore he saw it as being outside his and the wider local authority's interests and remit. Nevertheless, he identified a potential central government funding stream in 2001. He also said *'Really, we didn't have enough time, I didn't know enough about the project. The project wasn't well developed enough for it to be submitting for funding, but we made a submission anyway. And then I started attending the meetings after that. I must admit, I haven't been a shaper of the project. I've been tending to come along to see what I can do on the funding side more than anything.'* The partners at the time put together a funding bid, which they hoped would secure significant financial resources for the development of the project.

It was stated by Ann (meeting 3) that BV submitted this application for funding so that the group could employ someone to develop and run the project in a full-time capacity, which emphasised that partners were currently trying to realise the BV project on top of their core responsibilities. In my interview with Matthew, he talked about sitting at his computer with Ann for several days in order to develop the funding application. Ann (interview 1) talked about herself being the only one

of the five initial project instigators who had enough of an overview of the project to be able to do this. Neither she nor Matthew mentioned the input provided by Ronnie Smith into this process. Ronnie reported (Interview 1) that he had written several sections for the funding bid, which he had passed on to Ann. A significant part of the funding application was a table, which outlined specific activities to be carried out against a timeline, reproduced in first two columns of table 4.3 below. To aid comparison, I have added the third and fourth columns to illustrate the actual trajectory of the partnership.

Table 4.3: Broadley Vision's stated strategy and actual trajectory

Stated Timeline and Strategy		Actual trajectory	
Timeline	Activity	Timeline	Activity
February 2001	Presentation of project vision to 'influencers'	February 2001	Presentation of project vision to potential 'influencers'
May 2001	Local press article	Feb – Apr 2001	Howard (UKTC) and Staffordshire University negotiate to provide a doctoral studentship
	Meetings with local community groups to explain the vision and seek engagement	June 2001	Submission of a funding bid (that was ultimately unsuccessful)
June 2001	Letter to Broadley residents and business owners from leader of NBC (AG) to introduce the project	July 2001	Letters sent via Alan to invite local community groups to meet partnership group.
	Deliver 4000 UKTC communications booklets and 'how to use the Internet' booklets	August 2001	Ronnie and Howard presented the BV partnership's idea to three people who represented 2 local community groups.
Ongoing	Advertise communications workshops through local community groups, shops, businesses and the NBC newsletter	September 2001	Ronnie commissioned an artist's impression of the renovated Broadley Council Building (BCB) as a learning centre
July 2001	Website feedback and promotion		Ronnie attended funding interview (from June application) and was informed that the bid was unsuccessful
August 2001	Start regular update of project progress to the community via the website and local outlets.		Ronnie presented the BV partnership's idea to the Broadley Rotary Club
Summer 2001	Advertise other community based workshops		Ronnie and Ann presented the BV partnership's idea to the Broadley Croft Hall Community Association (BCHCA)
Winter 2001	BCB renovation start-up event		Letter to Broadley residents from leader of NBC (Alan) to introduce the project idea together with UKTC communications booklets and 'how to use the Internet' booklets
Winter 2001	Continuing workshops – held in available community premises - starting to be more widely	October 2001	Public launch of BV project idea in the Broadley Community Centre (BCC)

	advertised – widening the target population		Howard and Ronnie started work with local schools.
Autumn – Winter 2002	Launch Communications Centre	November 2001	Martin Hewitts (UKTC – Digital Inclusion) was invited by Howard (UKTC – Schools and Community Communication) to meet the partnership
		March 2002	Julian Fox (All People Online) invited by Howard and Martin to meet the partnership
		May 2002	Howard confirmed that UKTC and All People Online had decided that Broadley would be the location for the pilot of a national digital inclusion project (Internet4All project)
		June 2002	Alan secured the use of the Broadley Council Building (BCB) for the BV partnership
		October 2002	Susie Botham was appointed as Internet4All project officer.
			Renovation of one room in the BCB began.
			Howard presented a new strategy consisting of 6 separate ‘work packages’
		November 2002	Public launch of Internet4All project in Broadley Community Centre (BCC).
		May 2003	Ann left the partnership
		July 2003	BV partnership disbanded

The first two columns of Table 4.3 end with the ‘Launch of the Communications Centre’ at the end of 2001. With hindsight, this appears somewhat shortsighted. Had the funding application been successful, funding would have been provided for 2 years from September 2001, and yet there is no mention of the activities that would necessarily take place after the centre had been launched. For example, the on-going operation of the centre and plans to secure further funding are noticeably missing. The actual trajectory, presented in the third and fourth columns, demonstrates two activities that were not envisaged on the original plan; the PhD scholarship and the involvement of All People Online’s Internet4All project. It also shows that by the time the BV partnership disbanded in July 2003, it had not managed to launch the intended Communications and Learning Centre.

Seeking ‘community involvement’ - letters to community groups in Broadley: July 2001

As presented in the stated BV plan (see columns 1 and 2 in Table 4.3 above), the partnership had anticipated setting up meetings with community groups in Broadley to ‘seek engagement’. Alan had identified 25 community groups in Broadley, and a letter was written to each of these groups, signed by Alan Grogan, inviting them to meet the partnership group to hear about the project and what it could offer. Four responses were received, from the Broadley Theatre Group, Broadley Gardening Club, Broadley Croft Hall Community Association and Broadley Rotary Club, and dates were set up for members of the BV partnership to meet these groups. Ronnie and Howard considered this to be a poor response from the community of Broadley (field notes). It later became clear that Alan had provided an out-of-date contact list for local groups in Broadley. Ronnie and Howard showed the list of community groups to the community group representatives that they met on 17th August 2001 (see below) and they pointed out that 10 of the listed groups no longer existed. This raised questions about Alan’s up-to-date local knowledge, and possibly about his competency (did he not ‘know’ that the groups were not all current?).

The seeking of community involvement was a recurring theme for the BV partnership. Ann, Ronnie, Stuart and Howard’s visions for the project (see their thumbnail sketches above) suggested that they all envisaged that it would be ‘owned’, ‘managed’, ‘run’ and ‘fed’ by local people. As Howard said, *‘I’d like to see somebody driving it who is closer to Broadley. I mean the ideal for me would be we got to the point where somebody can actually take the project over’* (interview). However, as the developing narrative will illustrate, partners differed in how they conceived community involvement. Different purposes and processes were communicated.

An audience with Ronnie and Howard - meeting with community group representatives: 17th August 2001

This was the first time I met Ronnie and my first time entering the field. Howard had invited me along so that I could start to familiarise myself with the project and its development.

Katy Vigurs	
Organisation	Staffordshire University
Sector type	Public
Position	Research Student
Location of organisation	Neighbouring City to the Borough of Newsby
Place of residence	Suburb North of the Shire County, approx. 10 miles from Broadley
<p>As the research commenced I was a white woman in her early twenties, who was a research student from Staffordshire University. When introducing myself for the first time during a partnership meeting (1), I communicated that I was born and raised in the Shire County (although I did not have a regional accent) and that I had recently moved back to the area following three years studying in South Wales (BA) and a year studying in London (MA). I had no prior connections with any of the partners and had no prior connection with the village of Broadley. The studentship was the result of a discussion between the Director of a Research Institute at Staffordshire University and Howard Barber at the ‘open’ meeting for potential new partners in February 2001 (see above). Howard’s employing organisation (UKTC) funded the studentship at Staffordshire University and Howard was on the University-based interview panel that offered me the studentship. This meant that although I was not regarded as a ‘partner’, I was seen as an intrinsic element of the partnership, in that my research was envisaged to chart the development and impact of the intended project. I attended seventeen of the eighteen partnership meetings during the fieldwork process (did not attend meeting 7) plus related activities and events as charted in this chapter.</p>	

Ann Harrison could not attend any partnership activities between July-September 2001 as she had to re-apply for funding for her core project, which she felt had to take precedence (Ann, interview 1). Therefore it was Ronnie and Howard who volunteered to meet with two local representatives from the Broadley Theatre Group, and one from the Broadley Gardening Club. My field notes from this meeting recorded the following:

Ronnie kept talking about wanting Broadley people to come up with the ideas and to ‘own’ the vision for the centre-to-be. He and Howard struggled to communicate the project idea to the three people who had turned up. All three local community reps looked confused at what they were being presented with. RS and HB focused on talking about IT provision and training which did not appear to excite the audience. They told Ronnie and Howard about their respective community groups – how many members, when they meet, what they do, and problems their groups face. When questions were invited the audience asked about what funding was in place for BV and the practicalities of having a communal building which they predicted would be commandeered by dominant groups in Broadley. After the meeting Ronnie and Howard said to me that they were out of their depth, ‘We’re used to being consultants who initiate the ideas and solve problems’ (Ronnie). They are not used to facilitating community action and engagement.

These community group representatives were never heard from again in relation to the project. There was no attempt to follow these contacts up. This implies a disjuncture between Ronnie 'wanting people to come up with the ideas and own the vision' and the realisation of *his* vision of a Communications and Learning Centre. It seemed as though Ronnie and Howard thought that it was legitimate to 'sell' *their* vision to local people, '*When we've explained the whole range of things available we have to kind of sit back and wait to see if anyone's going to come and bite or not [...] gradually you can excite these things*' (Howard, interview). They expected local people to be excited by the BV proposition and to want to get involved in its development. When people were not eager to participate, Ronnie and Howard appeared to move on to see if they could find others who might be.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 1: 30th August 2001

Attended: RS, HB, AG, MG, KV

Apologies: AH and SH

This was the first formal partnership meeting and it took place in the Leader of the Council's office in Newsby Borough Council. It had an agenda produced by Ronnie Smith, and Alan Grogan chaired the meeting. No formal minutes were produced or circulated. The majority of the meeting was spent discussing the Broadley Vision launch event planned for October 2001. During this meeting I noted:

Ronnie and Howard said the launch had to be 'low-key', a grounded introduction for the local community. They said they wanted to stimulate the 'right' interest and 'not fall flat on our faces before the project has even got off the ground. We're not after a media frenzy'.
(Field notes, meeting 1)

Howard reported that BV had been offered (via his UKTC contacts) a package of support to produce a project website, '*that's £80,000 of web support for free*'. He and Ronnie suggested that local people could be involved in the design of the website at the launch, assuming that they knew what would excite and interest local people. I noted at this meeting that the partners at the table were reluctant to take

ownership of action points. This may have been because people were already over-committed in their core roles or it could indicate that levels of commitment to the project were not equal. At this meeting Ronnie aired his frustration that Newsby College had not provided an artist's impression of the renovated BCB which had been previously promised. He pointed out that this Newsby College contact had been provided by Ann.

Artist's impression of the 'Communication and Learning Centre': September 2001

Ronnie informed me during his first interview that he had been '*sick of waiting for the college to come up with the goods*', so he paid £300 of his own money to have an artist's impression drawn up. Ronnie felt this drawing would be important when trying to communicate the project idea publicly, '*we needed something that would show the technological and human sides of the centre, people need to know what the centre might look like*'. This reinforces Ronnie's approach to 'selling' the project idea to local people, rather than setting out to involve them in its development. Thus far, I had seen no evidence that any local people had suggested or requested a Communication and Learning Centre in their village. This did not appear to be a concern for Ronnie or Howard and I had yet to meet Ann to hear her approach. When the drawing had been produced, Ronnie talked of it as something that he had 'made happen'. He saw the drawing as a significant achievement, a step forward towards the development of the intended project. No other partners expressed any feelings about the drawing.

Ronnie attends funding interview: 10th September 2001

Ann's organisation was named as 'lead partner' in the funding bid, however Ann was not able to attend this interview due to working on a funding application for her core project, so Ronnie agreed to go in her absence. The funding body had explained to Ronnie that they were not able to fund 'big capital spends' so no funding would be available to renovate the BCB. In interview 1, Ronnie described

being frustrated by the funding body conducting the interview because they did not want the project to be located in Broadley (not deemed deprived enough, as predicted by Stuart and Matthew). Ronnie reported that the funding body offered the BV partnership £100,000 if the project's location was changed. He also reported that the funding made available was not flexible and could only be used to provide computer equipment and for 'bussing' people to the project's location. Ronnie rejected this offer there and then and later said to me that he was '*not prepared to change the project to satisfy a bunch of funding criteria*' (Interview 1). However, when Ann heard about this outcome after the event she tried to access this funding with another group of people. Ronnie later suggested that he thought Ann was not very happy about him rejecting this funding (interview 2). This suggests that Ronnie may either have assumed that all partners shared his vision of the project and his commitment to the location of Broadley – that he legitimately spoke for them - or he may have been aware that Alan (and his Council resources) might have been less interested in a modified and dislocated version of the project. His action to reject significant funding without consulting any other partners implies that he did not have an understanding of how to operate as part of a partnership or that he chose to disregard this. It also demonstrates a lack of awareness of other partners' situations. Ann was known to be struggling with funding for her own core project and yet he chose to not discuss the possibilities of this funding with Ann. He seemed to reject it because it did not fit *his* vision for the project.

Informal, pre-interview meeting with Ronnie Smith: 11th September 2001

Ronnie meets the Broadley Rotary Club: 12th September 2001

Ronnie reported during the first partnership meeting that the Broadley Rotary Club had been interested and receptive to the project idea after receiving an initial letter (sent July 2001). Ronnie was invited to attend one of their Rotary Club Dinners and gave an after-dinner presentation on the BV project. I expected Ronnie to communicate how this presentation had been received during a partnership meeting, but he did not and no-one asked him about it. From this, it seemed that

partners were showing a lack of awareness, or interest, in the full range of partnership activities.

Ronnie and Ann meet the Broadley Croft Hall Community Association (BCHCA): 17th September 2001

Attended: RS, AH, KV and 7 members of BCHCA

BCHCA was a community association made up of local residents, based in the small village of Croft Hall, which neighboured Broadley (same local authority ward as Broadley). The BCHCA had responsibility for a community centre (the BCHCC) in the village. At this meeting, Ronnie and Ann found out that BCHCA had a contract with Newsby College to provide access to one room fitted out with computers (not with internet access) in their community centre, so that the college could deliver basic computer courses in the community. The revenue BCHCA received from this activity was regarded as vital for maintaining the viability of the whole community centre. The provision of learning was regarded as an income stream, which allowed them to carry on servicing their own core interests (running evening quizzes, bingo, family history, line dancing, etc. for residents), which they saw as important for the vibrancy and reputation of their village.

This was the first time I had met Ann. Ann began this meeting by starting to introduce the BV project idea. Ronnie appeared bent on getting the BCHCA to agree to engage with the project's development with an explicit view to them eventually running the partnership and the project. He began by saying '*this project is about the community helping the community. We only want to start off the project, the community will run it*'. Then he said '*I wanted the project to be based in Broadley, but I'm prepared to move it elsewhere if Broadley doesn't want it*'. Furthermore, he moved to suggest that the BV partnership join with the BCHCA, saying '*We will throw our lot in with you. BV will cease to exist as an entity, control would be passed on to you*'. Ronnie came across as wanting to force the project idea and responsibility for its development on to the group, which reinforced his approach with the previous community groups. I noted in my field notes that Ann was thrown by Ronnie's approach and manner with the BCHCA. Ann and Ronnie had very different approaches to talking to this

group. Ann wanted to listen to the BCHCA and find out about their overall aims, operation and challenges. The BCHCA were wary and guarded and did not seem enthused or convinced by the project idea. They were explicit about being suspicious of the partnership's motives, especially the involvement of UKTC. One trustee asked *'I don't understand why UKTC is involved. What do they get out of it?'* The trustees said they were worried about getting involved because it might destabilise the relationship they had with Newsby College. They were also concerned that if Broadley Vision did set up a communications and learning centre in the BCB in neighbouring Broadley that this could be a potential threat to their own organisation and community centre, *'our centre might stop attracting learners if you put a centre in Broadley'*. The Chairman of the BCHCA said they wanted Newsby College to be involved in any further discussions. This meeting illustrates that even when groups have some shared interests, they may still see each other as potential rivals or threats rather than possible partners.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 2: 24th September 2001

Attended: RS, AG, MG, KV

Apologies: AH, HB, SH

There were no agenda or minutes produced for this meeting. Ronnie reported that BCHCA were interested and enthusiastic in the BV idea (not how I had interpreted the meeting). Ronnie also reported that he had passed over the responsibility for the project website to Ann. This was a source of tension that arose in my first interview with Ronnie. He was frustrated that Ann had not appeared to act on this, *'I asked Ann if she and Molly [Ann's project's administrator] were interested, Ann said Molly was very interested. But to be fair I haven't heard a thing about it and it certainly hasn't been done. That was two months ago. So I have some questions about that. But I don't see my role as to follow everybody up, to see when they've done things or not.'* When I asked Ann about the website in her first interview, she said she that it was a good professional development opportunity for her staff and that Molly *'would get around to it'*, but she also said that she felt the construction of a BV website was too soon.

The rest of meeting 2 was used to discuss the strategy and content for the BV project launch. It was obvious that Ronnie had discussed this with Howard prior to this meeting as Ronnie was suggesting how the day would work, explaining the content that he and Howard thought was appropriate and how UKTC staff would be '*drafted in*' to give support. Ann was not at this meeting, so it was unclear whether she had been consulted. Ronnie also asked Alan whether the invitations had been distributed to local residents. Alan said this had not happened (this again, raises questions about Alan's commitment and/or competence). Alan proposed that the partnership members could deliver invitation letters through people's doors in Broadley, at which Matthew looked over at me and raised his eyebrows, as if to suggest it was an inappropriate proposition (perhaps because Matthew was not attending meetings of his own accord – why would he *choose* to give up a Saturday afternoon for a project he had little personal interest in? Or because he thought Alan was seeking to distribute responsibility for a task that he had previously agreed to). However, Ronnie and Alan agreed to meet at the weekend to deliver letters to the housing estate that Alan lived on. I was asked to help out too, which I felt I should agree to. This raised the tension between my position as external researcher and being funded by one of the BV partners (see Chapter Seven, for more discussion of this issue). This seemingly minor incident is one of many that reveal a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities.

Pushing invitations through doors in Broadley: 30th September 2001

Ronnie, Alan and I distributed letters, signed by Cllr. Alan Grogan, inviting local people to '*the formal launch of Broadley Vision – the exciting new project which aims to provide vital new training for our community*' (text from letter). These letters were posted through letterboxes together with a UKTC-branded booklet on 'improving communication' to 200 households in Broadley. Ronnie and Alan seemed pleased with themselves after the activity. Ronnie said he felt 'buoyant' and 'energised' by '*actually doing something in Broadley*'. The act of 'doing' and feeling that progress was being achieved quickly were recurring themes in Ronnie's view of how the partnership should be operating.

First interview with Cllr Alan Grogan: 1st October 2001

Informal, pre-interview meeting with Ann Harrison: 3rd October 2001

Broadley Vision Project Launch Event: 6th October 2001

Attended: KV, RS, HB, AH, AG, 8 UKTC staff, 1 Smith Enterprises member of staff, 4 UKTC volunteers and 70 members of the public.

Not attended by: SH and MG

Ronnie and Howard were the main drivers of this day event. They brought members of staff with them, set up ICT equipment and a temporary Internet connection in the Broadley Community Centre, had organised for a local primary school (through UKTC volunteers programme) to deliver a presentation on communication skills, and ran activities and workshops. This was intended to be a flavour of what the Broadley Vision project could offer. However, Ann said to me that she did not feel the launch presented a clear message about what the project was or what the partnership was trying to do. Ronnie and Howard commented to me that they were very disappointed with what they perceived to be a low turnout for the event. In my first interview with Ronnie, he commented:

I still can't believe that there weren't thousands of people at the open day. I still find that hard to believe. I mean if I put a notice on the road saying 'internet access £5 an hour' the place would have been full. It doesn't make any sense. Does it to you? I find people's apathy difficult to live with. It's almost that they want to be charged, they want to be screwed
(Ronnie, interview 1)

This comment further illustrates Ronnie's growing frustration with local people. He thought that because Internet provision was being provided free for one day from a local community centre (BCC) that this would be an incentive and people would hurry along to the event. He seemed to think that the BV partnership (and their collective resources) was doing the village of Broadley a favour, and he could not understand why people were not interested in making use of this. This raises a

question about Ronnie's conception of what it means to serve a community. He later explained his approach:

I'm not market led, I'm not responding to need, I'm creating an opportunity [...] I believe that opportunities need to be created. I believe that people in rural areas are socially isolated and economically isolated and that they need to grasp the communications issues really, really well. [...] I want simply to provide some opportunities to open people's eyes. [...] If we in business waited for needs to develop nothing would have ever developed. Our approach is, you develop the mobile phone and then say to people 'you really do need this'. That's how things happen. It's naïve for a government to think that everything is needs-led. Because most people don't know what they need. So if I said to you, 'what do you think you might need in 5 years time?' You wouldn't have a clue. But if I show you a range of opportunities [...]
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Ronnie stated that his approach to developing projects was not 'needs-led'. He did not feel it was necessary to find out what local people might want from such an intervention. His approach was to create a vision that local people would buy in to. This approach was not expressed explicitly in the early stages of the fieldwork, although I started to see inherent differences in the way that Ann and Ronnie in particular operated (illustrated in more detail later in this chapter).

First interview with Ronnie Smith: 23rd October 2001

First interview with Ann Harrison: 29th October 2001

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 3: 23rd November 2001

Attended: KV, RS, AH, MG, MH, SH

Apologies: HB, AG

Martin Hewitts (UKTC) was introduced at this meeting and it was made clear that he represented a different aspect of UKTC to Howard. In his interview, Howard described the differences between their UKTC roles as: *'I'm the programme manager for the UKTC Volunteers scheme. I'm also responsible for all the communications learning material that's been produced by UKTC. Martin is running a campaign that he calls 'digital*

inclusion', although I would refer to it as community regeneration'. The involvement of Martin, therefore, would bring another set of interests to BV, which could influence the direction of the project's development. As already mentioned, the involvement of Martin was engineered by Howard and, at this point in time, was viewed as a way of siphoning UKTC resources into Broadley.

Martin Hewitts	
Organisation	UKTC
Sector type	Private – Company Limited by shares
Position	Senior Manager of the 'digital inclusion programmes' within the Corporate Social Responsibility side of UKTC.
Location of organisation	London
Place of residence	London
<p>Martin Hewitts attended three partnership meetings (3, 5, 6) and he also attended the Internet4All (I4A) project launch in Broadley in November 2002. He was a white man in his early fifties and lived and worked in London. He was employed by UKTC and reported to the same Director as Howard Barber. He was the manager of the digital inclusion programme, which was part of the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of the company. Part of UKTC's social investment policy was to run a digital inclusion programme, based on evidence (provided by All People Online) at the time that 29% of the UK population was classed as 'digitally excluded', which meant that they were supposedly 'missing out on access to information, cheaper goods and services and ways to keep in touch with family and friends' (from UKTC website in 2002). Martin commissioned All People Online to deliver the national pilot programme 'Internet4All'. Howard and Ronnie introduced Martin and his digital inclusion programme to the location of Broadley:</p> <p><i>I persuaded my Director to get Broadley part of this Internet4All thing because it clearly seemed to me that it's got to be a good thing for Broadley rather than a bad thing and it loosely fitted our vision.</i> (Howard, interview)</p> <p><i>We got them in, it was us that did that, me and Howard, I mean, without us they wouldn't even be in Broadley. [...] They talk as though they've done a deep and meaningful scientific experiment, that they used an in-depth analysis to pick Broadley, when I know it's just because we rang them up.</i> (Ronnie, interview 2)</p> <p>Martin's aim was to see one of the Internet4all pilot projects set up in Broadley. His contact with the BV partnership was a way to further the development of his own programme. This did not worry Howard and Ronnie initially, but later became a source of tension (see Chapter Five, 'Social ties that weaken over time'). Martin's involvement brought more people to BV, namely Julian Fox (Chief Executive of All People Online) and Keith Winters (UKTC's Project Manager for the Internet4all pilot project).</p>	

At this meeting, Ann talked about being disappointed at what she saw as the *'heavy IT focus of the launch'*. This illustrates that Ann's vision for the project was not based around technology, but it also suggests that her absence from meeting 2 may have impeded her influence on the planning and content of the launch event. She said she was keen to run one of her community training events on the topic of communication in Broadley, in February/March 2002, as *'it would genuinely involve a variety of local people'*, which suggests that Ann was not impressed with the way local people had been involved and consulted up to this date. There was also a

disagreement at this meeting between Ronnie, Stuart and Ann regarding the potential BV website. Ronnie and Stuart felt that setting up the website could be crucial in gaining interest and involvement from 'the community'. Ann said it was not the most pressing priority for her, even though she had previously agreed to develop the website: *'My priority is to do something more hands-on with the community, to get something going on the ground'*. This may suggest that Ann felt she needed to act to counteract the approaches to (or lack of) community involvement made by other partners. Her decision not to action the website idea also suggests that voluntary partnerships may run into problems when it comes to partners carrying out 'partnership' tasks, where there is a lack of mutual vision, commitment and trust between partners.

Ann, Stuart and Ronnie, all raised their concerns at this meeting about a lack of perceived progress on the development of the project thus far. Ronnie even explicitly questioned whether it was worth continuing: *'I'm thinking about folding the project, we haven't come far enough for my liking'*. Ronnie was still talking as though it was his project to close, mirroring his approach to the rejection of the funding. I asked whether the group had re-evaluated the partnership's vision and strategy since the unsuccessful funding bid. Ronnie was emphatic that he did not want the 'strategy document' to be re-invented: *'Why would we do that? We already have a clear and agreed route of progress'*. My question at this point was *'What strategy document?'* as I was concerned that partnership documentation existed that I had not been made aware of. Ronnie was referring to the stated strategy in the funding bid (June 2001), which I had not yet seen (Ann sent me a copy of the funding bid after this meeting). Ronnie later explained (see extract from email below) that he had been objecting to Ann's suggestion that BV needed to run one of her events to *'get things moving'*. He thought it had previously been agreed he and Howard would run a series of communication events in Broadley (as stated in Table 4.3).

Also at this meeting, Cllr. Stuart Hogarth said he was becoming increasingly concerned about the co-ordination of partnership activities and questioned who would be the driving force behind the partnership. As a rejoinder, Ann reported to the group that she had recently received core funding for her main project (£200,000 over three years) and that she saw one 'pillar' of her project's future

development as being related to the development of BV. Therefore, she said that she was in a position to take on the 'co-ordination' of the BV partnership until specific funding was secured for the development of the BV project. She did state, however, that she did not want to be seen as the partnership manager. She perceived her newly assumed role of co-ordinator to involve organising agendas and meeting minutes and to contact partners for activity updates prior to meetings. Ann saw this as a necessary role to keep the partnership together while waiting for funding to be granted. Ann thought that achieving funding was crucial to setting up the project, and that little progress could be achieved without it. Her volunteering to co-ordinate the partnership was perceived differently by other partners, although this did not become apparent until later in the partnership's trajectory.

Ronnie in particular seemed very frustrated and agitated at this meeting. I wrote in my field notes that I thought he left the meeting 'in a bit of a huff', which I worried at the time was due to my blatant questioning of BV's vision and strategy. I emailed Ronnie after this meeting (1st December 2001), as I was keen to limit any damage to the rapport I had built with him over the past four months. Ronnie responded (he copied Howard in too) that he thought the group had given Martin a bad impression of the capabilities of the BV partnership:

I was disappointed that we managed to give the impression to Martin Hewitts that we had done nothing for the past 12 months and that we were in great need of some business processes. He is a key person in terms of this project moving on and we needed to show him our successes – we managed to show him our failures! That meeting reinforced the view that we've done nothing but talk. [...] I was also disappointed that there seems to be a view that we didn't have a next step and that we now need to run one of Ann's events to get things moving Howard and I have repeatedly said that we would run communication events after the BV launch (we allocated 20 days for this) and this is in the strategy. [...] However, I just don't have the energy to handle all the shifts that seem to be going on, so I'm going to take a back seat on the partnership
(Email correspondence, Ronnie)

Ronnie was worried that his and Howard's reputations with Martin would be damaged by the partnership group's performance at meeting 3. He felt that the partnership had not presented itself as professional (in business terms) or successful. He wanted the partnership to impress Martin, partly because Martin had been specifically invited by Howard, and also because he and Howard hoped

that Martin's involvement might bring UKTC resources (staff, funding, equipment) to BV. When Ronnie mentioned the '*shifts that seem to be going on*', this suggests that he perceived the partnership's actual operation to be at odds with his approach and that others were not adhering to his approach.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 4: 11th January 2002

Attended: AH, RS, KV

Apologies: AG, MH, HB, Cllr. SH, MG

Ann and Matthew had prepared a discussion paper (see appendix) to stimulate discussion and re-evaluation of the partnership's aims and strategy at this meeting, which was the main item on the agenda. However, this item was not discussed as Ann had received no feedback from partners prior to the meeting, and Ronnie and I were the only other people at the meeting (Ronnie turned up one hour late), thus a full discussion could not be had. This agenda item was transferred to meeting 5. Before Ronnie arrived, Ann mentioned to me the difficulties that she was having in communicating with Howard and Martin from UKTC, since she took on the role of partnership co-ordinator: '*What's the point of giving me email addresses, and various telephone numbers, if they never get back to me?*' This suggests that Howard and Martin may either have been busy with their core projects or that they did not value Ann's assumed role in BV. When Ronnie eventually arrived he was agitated and seemed suspicious of what had taken place prior to him arriving at the meeting. He said to Ann that he had been thinking about what needed to happen to move the project on and that he thought the only way forward was to get the Chair of the BCHCA to lead the BV partnership. Ann went red in the face and said that she did not agree. Discussion from here was awkward and uncomfortable and Ann drew the meeting to a close 15 minutes after Ronnie had arrived.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 5: 22nd February 2002

Attended: AH, KV, MG, MH, AG, HB, Labour MP

Apologies: RS, SH

I was not surprised by Ronnie's absence at this meeting given his email comment (1st December 2001) about wanting to take a 'backseat' and the visible tensions between him and Ann at meeting 4. The Labour MP for Newsby attended this meeting. He had been invited by Ronnie in June 2001. Alan started the meeting by saying that he was the reason that the partnership had been created, but also said *'this partnership is the result of luck, flukes and fate. It just so happened that the right people were in the right place at the right time. We couldn't have planned it better'*. The MP reported that he had read the failed funding bid prior to the meeting and commented that he felt the project was not clearly defined or communicated, saying *'it's a nice but unrealistic idea at the moment'*. He asked Ann if she was able to summarise what the partnership was trying to achieve. She responded: *'It's about using the Broadley Council Building as a space to be owned and managed by the community as a learning centre. It won't be built on other community learning models'*. Ann talked again about her main concern being the achievement of 'significant' funding for the project. Howard, however, said that the partnership *'should not get hung up on funding issues. We'll have to manage on our own'*. Howard also said he wanted to respond formally to the discussion paper previously circulated by Ann and Matthew. He said he fundamentally disagreed with it, *'I am not at all interested in the project being based anywhere else. Locating the project in Broadley is essential in my eyes'*. It is possible that for Howard, Broadley had become more important since he had suggested one of Martin's digital inclusion pilot projects be based in Broadley. Ann and Matthew's discussion document did not take into account that other partners may have different motives and approaches, it related more to Ann and Matthew's previous experience, knowledge and interests.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 6: 20th March 2002

Attended: AH, MG, MH, JF, KV

Apologies: AG, RS, HB, SH

Julian Fox (Chief Executive of All People Online) made his first appearance at this partnership meeting. His introduction to the partnership came about through his prior work with Martin (UKTC). They were already working together to set up ten national pilot projects that aimed to tackle digital inclusion in local communities. Most of this meeting involved Julian presenting the aims of the planned

Internet4All projects. However, Ann did comment to the group that she would have liked to provide an update on how the BV partnership was progressing since the last meeting, but, despite requests, she had not received any updates from the partners.

Julian explained that the Internet4All project would employ a project officer for 12-months, to be based in Broadley, using UKTC funding. This person's role would be to work with local voluntary and community groups to review existing I.T. and Internet resources and facilities, as well as identifying local barriers to access, and to set and measure indicators of success. This person would also be contracted to collaborate with local voluntary groups and other organisations to enhance access to existing resources and facilities, developing local networks where possible.

Julian Fox	
Organisation	All People Online (APO)
Sector type	Voluntary
Position	Chief Executive of APO, a national charity which aims to promote digital inclusion
Location of organisation	Swindon
Place of residence	Swindon
<p>Julian Fox attended 2 out of 18 BV meetings (meetings 6 and 7). He was a white man in his mid-forties and was the Chief Executive of the Swindon-based voluntary sector organisation, All People Online, which was a national charity committed to promoting digital inclusion and researching and addressing issues of 'Universal Internet Access'. All People Online was being sponsored by UKTC to set up and manage a series of national pilots of the Internet4all project. It was not clear what his perceptions of the Broadley Vision partnership or the intended project were. His interests were clearly to set up an Internet4all project (as one of ten national pilots) in Broadley. Julian expressed concerns that the Broadley Vision partnership would try to commandeer the Internet4all Project Officer post that would be based in Broadley. He saw a potential conflict between the development of Broadley Vision and the Internet4all project.</p>	

Julian's report of the intended I4A project officer post indicated that it would complement the vision for the BV project. However, tensions between the I4A project and BV later arose (for example, see meeting 10).

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 7: 3rd May 2002

Attended: AH, JF, RS, MG, HB, KW

Apologies: MH, SH, AG, KV

This was the only partnership meeting during the fieldwork process that I was unable to attend. The information on this meeting is therefore necessarily drawn from the formal minutes taken by Ann's project's administrator. Keith Winters made his first appearance at this meeting. Keith was a UKTC employee and Project Manager with an interest in the UKTC-sponsored Internet4All project. This was also the last partnership meeting attended by Ronnie until February 2003. It was acknowledged in the minutes from this meeting that an action plan was now needed to co-ordinate the partners' activities in Broadley. This was declared as a future agenda item. When reflecting on the minutes from this meeting I noted in my field notes that Ann had not yet run one of her training events in Broadley, which had been promised to take place in February/March and then April 2002.

Keith Winters (KW)	
Organisation being represented	UKTC
Sector type	Private
Position	Worked for Martin Hewitts on the 'digital inclusion programmes' within the Corporate Social Responsibility side of UKTC.
Location of organisation	London
Place of residence	London
<p>Keith Winters was a white man in his late forties. He lived and worked in London. He worked for UKTC and was line managed by Martin Hewitts, so he too was involved with the digital inclusion programme which formed part of UKTC's Corporate Social Responsibility arm. Keith was primarily involved as a result of Martin and Howard setting up one of the Internet4all pilot projects in Broadley. Keith was UKTC's Project Manager for the Internet4all pilot project so he worked closely with Clare Moorland and Susie Botham of All People Online who were directly responsible for managing and delivering the I4A project in Broadley. Keith attended 7 of the partnership meetings (attended meetings 7-9, 13-15 and 18), but was openly confused by the concept of the Broadley Vision project and even more confused by the partnership process set up to realise the project (see his comments in later partnership meetings).</p>	

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 8: 19th June 2002

Attended: HB, KW, MG, AG, AH, KV

Apologies: RS, JF

Alan reported that he had secured the use of the BCB for the BV partnership. Alan left the meeting once he had reported this, 15 minutes into the meeting. Keith asked what BV was, but nobody answered. Instead, Ann mentioned again that she

was planning to run one of her training events for local people in Broadley in September. I saw Howard raise an eyebrow at this statement, which suggested that he had heard this promise before. Ann said she had concerns over partners working in parallel and said she wanted to see activities being better linked and co-ordinated. Howard was visibly frustrated by Ann's chairing of the meeting. He said *'I think a way forward would be to come up with a clear calendar of activities. That would be a good start to forming an action plan'*. This suggested that Howard was not satisfied with Ann's performance as partnership co-ordinator, which was supported by his comments in interview:

Ann offered to become the leader [...] For me it needs more than we've got at the moment. I feel like I'm turning up every time and all that's happening is we're going through a bit of an agenda and it doesn't matter whether people have done stuff. What makes things happen is what you're doing in-between, and you have to keep ringing and pushing to make sure it's going on. That's what Ann should be doing

(Howard, interview – October 2002 – 4 months later)

Howard had a different understanding of Ann's role. Thus, he felt she was an ineffectual leader, even though this is not how she conceptualised her function in BV. Ronnie commented similarly on his perception of Ann's role:

I thought she was project manager. And what I see is someone who calls meetings and asks for reports. Not project management. I mean the partnership should be asking the Project Manager 'So, what happened about this this month and what happened about that this month', and the project manager reports to the partnership. I mean that's what my project managers do. They tell me what's going on.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

It appeared that Ronnie had positioned Ann as someone who should be responsible to the partnership – someone who would work for the partners, in order to realise the (*his*) vision for the BV project.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 9: 17th July 2002

Attended: AH, HB, KW, KV

Apologies: RS, JF, MG, AG

This was the first meeting to take place in the BCB in Broadley. I noted *'This was a milestone for BV, but the atmosphere was flat and tense and there was hardly anyone there.'* I also commented in my field notes that: *'the room in the BCB that BV has access to is terribly dilapidated and there's a funny smell Damp?'* The reality of acquiring the Broadley Council Building (BCB) for BV gave the project a physical focus but this did not appear to make realising the learning centre any easier. At this meeting, Ann reported that she had met again with BCHCA, but it appeared that the nature of this meeting was to see if their community centre would be suitable to house All People Online's project worker, who was due to be appointed, rather than about their involvement in BV. Ann said she had suggested that BV might be able to help BCHCA install Internet access in their community centre. It now looked as though Ann felt she could speak for BV and offer services and resources (that she alone could not have provided) that would see other partners having to carry out the work. It also seemed that Ann was pursuing the objectives of All People Online rather than BV. This could have been because All People Online had a clear and focused remit. Howard immediately replied: *'So who's going to pay for and sort out the installation and line rental? If it's going to be me and my staff then I want to be sure that it will be of benefit to BV. I'm not happy for it only to be of use to Newsby College so they can put different courses on.'* Howard followed this up by saying he was concerned that business arrangements needed to be worked out between I4A and BV. This reflected a concern he raised in future meetings and his interview: *'I wouldn't say that the partnership is right between what I want to bring to the party and what Martin Hewitts wants to bring to the party.'*

Also at this meeting, Ann handed around an Action Plan for BV's development that she had drawn up (see appendix). This was the first document of its kind to be drawn up by Ann in the BV context (Ronnie had written the 'strategy' that was included in the funding bid). Howard expressed (interview) that he had been unimpressed by her attempt at an action plan: *'To be honest, I was dismayed at her attempt at a project plan. How was that going to help us move the project forwards? It couldn't be modified, it just had to be thrown away and started from scratch.'* This meeting ended with Howard agreeing, at Ann's request, that he would provide a set of costings before the next meeting, estimating how much it would cost to make the room in the BCB fit for purpose.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 10: 5th September 2002

Attended: AH, HB, CM, KV

Apologies: KW, RS, AG

This was Clare Moorland's first appearance at a BV meeting (see below for thumbnail sketch of Clare). She was the National Manager at All People Online for the Internet4All programme, and had an interest in seeing a successful I4A pilot project set up in Broadley. She would also be line managing the person appointed as I4A project officer in Broadley. Ann was visibly uptight and stressed at this meeting, she commented how frustrated she was that nobody had sent her any feedback on the action plan that she had drawn up and circulated at the last meeting. She said *'People haven't done what they have committed to. How am I supposed to be able to co-ordinate under these circumstances?'*

Howard raised separate concerns about the I4A project diluting the focus of the intended BV project. He was worried that I4A would divert attention from the setting up of a communications and learning centre in the Broadley Council Building. He explained, *'They may not set out to do it, but I just feel like they're going to steal our thunder. That's not why I got them involved'*. Howard expressed his worry that the setting up of the I4A project, in parallel to the development of the BV project, would confuse local people. He was becoming aware that the I4A project had its own budget and resources and a clear set of objectives, and was worried that it would overshadow anything that BV was trying to do. Clare said she had been told that the I4A project in Broadley was *'part of an umbrella campaign for BV, although I'm not clear what BV is yet'*. Howard's comments did not appear to concern her. Clare's main interest in this meeting was to discuss the logistics for the I4A launch in Broadley, which was planned for October 2002. Clare wanted to make use of partners' 'local knowledge' to inform her planning.

Howard and Ann spent 15 minutes discussing how they would communicate the BV project at the I4A launch. Howard said, *'We need to come up with a nice story to tell'* to which Ann replied *'I'm sure we can conjure something up. We just need to start linking all the separate threads together so that it makes sense'*. There was also discussion of the pending redecoration of the allocated room in the BCB. Howard wanted to know

who was going to redecorate the room and who was going to pay for it, which he estimated would cost £3600 (no detailed costing were provided as he had promised). Ann also asked 'So, who is going to fund this £3600?' Neither Ann nor Howard appeared keen to commit their own resources.

Clare Moorland	
Organisation	All People Online (APO)
Sector type	Voluntary
Position	National Programme Manager for the Internet4all pilot projects.
Location of organisation	Swindon
Place of residence	Hertfordshire
<p>Clare Moorland was a white woman in her late forties and was an employee of All People Online. She was directly line managed by the Chief Executive of the voluntary sector organisation, Julian Fox. Clare Moorland was the National Programme Manager for the Internet4all pilot projects, including the pilot that was initiated in Broadley. Clare's perceptions of the Broadley Vision partnership appeared to be mixed. In fact, she did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the partnership team or the proposed vision. Most of her comments in relation to the partnership team were focused on Ronnie and Howard. On the one hand, she was pleased that Ronnie and Howard agreed to arrange and fund the setting up of Internet access to the Broadley Council Building. This was beyond the remit of All People Online, but Internet access was vital to be able to run the Internet4all project. On the other hand, she expressed that she thought Ronnie and Howard were unreliable and could not be trusted to keep promises or stick to externally imposed deadlines. She also expressed concerns over the different interests and agendas at work within UKTC and how this might affect the Internet4all project. Her main interest was to set up an Internet4all project, as one of ten national pilots, in Broadley. Clare led the recruitment process for a Broadley-based Internet4all project officer. This process saw Susie Botham being employed. Clare Moorland attended 4 out of 18 partnership meetings (attended meetings 10-13).</p>	

Eventually, Ann said that her project would fund the redecoration costs, at which point Howard offered that he and Ronnie would redecorate the allocated room prior to the I4A public launch. Howard then said that he hoped to get local people involved in the redecoration of the room, *'After all, we're doing this for the community, so I would have thought they'd want to help us paint the room'*. There was no mention of *how* local people would be involved.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 11: 2nd October 2002

Attended: HB, AH, CM, SB, KV

Apologies: MG, KW, AG

This was the first meeting attended by Susie Botham, the newly appointed Broadley-based project officer for the I4A project.

Susie Botham	
Organisation	All People Online (APO)
Sector type	Voluntary
Position	Internet4all Project Officer in Broadley, reported to Clare Moorland
Location of organisation	Broadley
Place of residence	Newsby
<p>Susie was introduced to the Broadley Vision partnership at meeting 11. She attended all further meetings (11-18). Susie was a white woman in her mid-thirties. She had always lived in the Borough of Newsby, although she had never had anything to do with the parish of Broadley, either personally or professionally. Susie was the successful candidate for the 12-month contract for the position of Internet4all Project Officer. She had previously worked in a staff management role in a small industrial company and had most recently worked for the computing faculty of Staffordshire University in a project administration role. Susie was also a qualified youth worker and had a sessional youth work contract with Shire County Council. Susie was interested in the development of Broadley Vision as she thought they may be able to sustain her paid role in Broadley once the Internet4all project contract had expired. Susie used Ann's contacts in the local FE and voluntary sector to help her set up the Internet4all project. She also used Ronnie and Howard's technical expertise to make sure that the Broadley Council Building (BCB) had internet-enabled computers, which could be utilised for the Internet4all project. Susie ended up acting as a go-between for Ann and Ronnie / Howard.</p>	

There was a noticeably more relaxed atmosphere at this meeting, almost jovial and light-hearted, which was a contrast to every other meeting that I had attended since meeting 4. Howard had prepared his own version of an action plan for BV, which was distributed to the group (see appendix). This was not explicitly communicated as a replacement for Ann's version of an action plan (although Howard said otherwise in his interview). Ann seemed relaxed about the appearance of a new action plan, even grateful that someone had come forward with a plan that might move the partnership on. She may have taken this as signifier of Howard's commitment. Howard's plan was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation to describe the different 'work packages' (Howard's terminology) that made up the plan. These were presented (see table 4.4) and individuals volunteered to lead different work packages, although at this stage the content of each work package was not elaborated on. Howard's view was that each work package needed a specific working party with a named lead individual:

Table 4.4: Howard's BV action plan – Six 'work packages'

Work packages	Lead individual
Broadley Council Building	Howard
Schools and parents	Howard
Community groups	Ann and Susie
Internet4All	Susie
Borough Council	Howard
I4A Launch – 6 th November 2002	Clare and Susie

Howard suggested that each work package would be turned into a work plan with specific targets and timings that could then be reported on at partnership meetings. This appeared to be Howard's attempt to enhance partners' commitment to definite action points.

It was agreed that a review of this plan was needed after the I4A launch and that *'all members of the partnership group look through the document and email amendments to Ann'* (Field notes). Howard suggested that another meeting needed to be arranged between a number of BV partnership members so as to produce a final and agreed version of the strategy (this never happened). Ann suggested that BV partners needed to sit on other strategic partnerships in the borough, but Howard said he was worried that these other initiatives would sway the direction of BV. Clare Moorland wanted to know how BV was going to represent itself at the I4A launch. Howard said he thought BV would need two stands *'to tell the BV story'*, one to be placed in the Broadley Community Centre (BCC) where the I4A launch was taking place and one in Broadley Council Building (across the road from BCC) where BV was to be based. Nobody committed to planning, designing or producing content for the stands. It was also noticeable at this meeting that the BCB room had not been redecorated since the last meeting. Howard said he and Ronnie had been very busy, but that they were hoping to set up a working party so that at the weekend *'lots of people will drop-in to help us redecorate the room'*.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 12: 29th October 2002

Attended: AH, SB, HB, CM, MG, KV

Apologies: AG, KW

This meeting began with Howard saying how disappointed he was that BV was not mentioned anywhere on the I4A launch invitations or corresponding publicity materials, which he believed had been agreed by Martin and Keith. Howard even stated in his interview: *'Martin signed off that letter' [referring to I4A launch invitation]. I've had a go at him about signing off that letter [...] I actually said to him 'there's no mention of Broadley Vision in the letter', and he said 'well, that's not the letter I signed off then'. Well, I*

doubt that to be honest with you, I doubt that.' This suggests that there were tensions building between UKTC employees that stemmed from different interests. Clare Moorland did not apologise but she did say that BV was mentioned on the press release and would be mentioned during the official opening speech on the day of the launch.

Ann and Clare appeared not to be impressed because the BCB room still had not been redecorated, and they made sarcastic comments within Howard's earshot. Howard responded to them directly saying, *'Hey, this is your centre now too, why don't you come and help us? We're just making a start'*. Clare said she could not because she lived a two and a half hours drive from Broadley. Howard said *'Well, I live far away too, but I'll be making the effort'*. Clare appeared not to regard the decoration of the BCB as her responsibility. Ann said she would try to *'pop over at the weekend for an hour or so'*, although she did not turn up and neither did Matthew. Susie and I both took part in the redecorating activities, the weekend after this meeting. This seemed to please Ronnie and Howard.

Interview with Howard Barber: 29th October 2002

Internet4All Project Launch in Broadley: 6th November 2002

The room in the Broadley Council Building was still being decorated by Howard, Ronnie and their wives during this event, which made Clare angry. Clare said to me on the morning of the launch: *'It doesn't look very good, does it? The decorating should have been done weeks ago, not today when local people will be looking around. It's not very professional. I'm getting to the point where I don't feel comfortable about I4A being associated with BV'*. She had been into the BCB to check on the room's transformation and on leaving to return to the Broadley Community Centre (BCC) – where the I4A launch was being held, across the road from the BCB – she saw me arrive and came over to vent her frustration with Ronnie and Howard. I listened and then asked how plans for the I4A launch were coming along so as not to be seen to 'take sides'.

There was an uncomfortable contrast between the feel of the I4A launch in the BCC and the presentation of the BV project in the BCB room. The I4A launch was located in a smartly laid out room in the BCC, with clear corporate branding and logos. There was state of the art IT equipment with Internet access. It looked sharp and well planned and felt coherent – the work of Clare Moorland and Susie Botham (All People Online), although this was of course part of their core role. However, in the BCB room, BV presented the public with a half-redecorated room, a stained carpet, ladders and other decorating paraphernalia. There were two PCs set up on old desks with chairs that were too low for the desks. There was a table-top display in the corner of the room, which contained scant information on BV that had been provided by Ann. This contrasted horribly with the artists' impression of a state of the art community learning centre that Ronnie had previously commissioned, which was also displayed.

Ann did not attend the event, which appeared to further communicate to Ronnie and Howard her lack of commitment to BV. Ann's behaviour had begun to communicate the decision to distance herself from Ronnie and Howard (and possibly BV). Since meeting 10, she had developed a constructive relationship with Clare and Susie of All People Online, and seemed to be increasingly involved in activities to help the development of the I4A project in Broadley. It is possible that, in her regarding Ronnie and Howard's approach to the development of BV as inappropriate, that she chose to dissociate herself from this. It is also plausible she considered the development of the I4A project as a more palatable way of working towards the BV centre.

Still, at the I4A launch, there was also the co-ordination problem of how to get visitors from the BCC to look around the room in the BCB. Keith asked me: *'Who is supposed to be ushering people into the BCB? How are we supposed to sell it to people? No-one's said about how to go about this and there's not even a sign on the door'*. My response was that he find Howard and Clare and ask them. However, Keith's question to me raises the issue that I was being turned to by participants as someone who might have 'project' knowledge, despite my never seeking to be positioned as a 'partner'.

Howard and Ronnie demonstrated anger during this event too. They were furious in two regards. Firstly, about what they saw as a lack of a co-ordinated physical presence of BV as part of the I4A launch; and, secondly, about what they saw as a poor display of BV material that had been put together by Ann. Ronnie further illustrated both of these points in his second interview:

Howard had said to me, 'I've been to the partnership meeting' [meeting 11], we were clear that we're [he and Howard] going to do all the work and somebody else, Ann or whoever, was going to get a presentation together and I said 'well, make sure, Howard, that it's a good one', and he said, 'well, they've got bags of time so it should be good', and I mean it was awful. It was stuff I'd already printed off last time [for BV launch 6th October 2001]. I felt really let down. It was atrocious; it was all last minute stuff. All they [Ann and her administrator] had to do was say to us two months before that 'we're not going to do this', that would have been good enough, we'd have done it, and ours would have been better than theirs. I mean we can do that, we can do it ever so rapidly, all of that sort of stuff. But they agreed to do it. My thing is don't agree to do things if you're not going to do it. I was so staggered, I just couldn't believe it. We missed a really good opportunity. And there was no positioning [means actual physical position at the I4A launch in the BCC], nobody had thought it through. We [BV] ought to have been equal billing with the other two [All People Online and Internet4All project]. I couldn't believe it. That's why I didn't stay there very long I was so irritated by it, I mean I think I would have really given Julian Fox what for if I'd stayed there very long'

This passage raises questions about perceptions of other partners' commitment and competency, and partners' expectations of others. It also suggests a tension or rivalry developing between the BV and the I4A project, both of which involved the input of UKTC resources.

Ronnie told me that he was '*getting really fed up*' and Howard said that he was going to strongly complain to his Director at UKTC about the lack of coherence between I4A and BV. He said '*All People Online [APO] are over-shadowing the BV vision and this needs to be sorted out. Martin needs to take control of APO to make sure that they're toeing the line which was agreed at the beginning*'. Howard appeared to be feeling a lack of control over the role and function of the Internet4All project in relation to BV in Broadley, and was trying to use his influence in UKTC to gain some of the control back. Ronnie echoed this in his second interview, he said: '*I'm annoyed at UKTC as well, [...] Martin's OK but he's not hands on enough to get a grip of it, but Keith is just paddling his own canoe, he's running his own agenda and he really did annoy me, so I gave some really serious feedback to his line at the top*.' Even though Ronnie no longer worked

for UKTC, he still felt he could affect the actions of UKTC employees (like Keith), by 'feeding back' his thoughts to UKTC Senior Management.

At the I4A launch event, Ronnie also said to me that he had '*had enough of charity people*' – meaning Ann. He continued: '*to be honest, I'm thinking about taking it into my own hands. I'm going to see if I can get the current partnership group disbanded, I mean it doesn't have any power as a group anyway. I wouldn't even call them partners.*' This point suggests that Ronnie felt he was in a position to end the partnership (even though he had not attended a meeting since 11th January 2002 – meeting 4). It was not clear to whom he was referring as 'the partners' of the group, but it raises the issue of a voluntary partnership having no formal accountabilities as an entity. In his second interview, he elaborated:

RS: I don't know what's going on in terms of the partnership, I've totally ignored it so I'm just carrying on doing what I want to do. We've [he and Howard] decided what we're going to do and we'll do it. We're not going to ask anybody for anything I wouldn't even tell them to be honest. I only ring Alan when I need him to do something I'm still putting into place the vision that we've got. And I'm just going ahead and doing that and ignoring everybody else.

KV: Is that going to affect what the partnership is doing?

RS: They aren't doing anything so how can it affect it?

KV: I'm not sure. Do they know about this?

RS: No. Well, Howard does because we did it together. Alan clearly does. So the three of us are involved. I mean Alan's on the peripherals because he's a back seat driver.

This suggests that Ronnie no longer saw himself as part of the partnership, although Howard and Alan were still attending partnership meetings as well as dealing with Ronnie. It is as though Ronnie had decided who he could work productively with and who he could not, and this appears to be linked to whether he perceived that his version of the project vision was being advanced or whether he felt he could gain something useful from one of the partners (such as Alan). In his second interview, Ronnie explained how he would be setting up the Communications and Learning Centre in Broadley:

RS: See, I'm kind of hoping that if when we [he, Howard and Alan] open it and we get local people in [...] more people will come in and they will say 'we'll help you'. We have had people say they'll help us, and we've got the Parish Council who want us to talk to them about it [...] so

I'm hoping that they might say, 'we'll give you a hand to do this room up'. I mean, ideally, what I'd like to do is, I've seen how the Broadley Theatre Group work, I'm quite impressed with how they work, and I'd like to get some people, like the Theatre Group people, and maybe it's them, and say 'you do a really good job with this, how about doing this for us?'

KV: And what sort of thing are you talking about?

RS: Well, raising money, because they're good at it. They've done that, they do all sorts of activities in that theatre that's really good. They wouldn't have to maintain the computers at the moment, we can do that. But I'm absolutely certain that there are people in Broadley that could. So the plan will be that over the next few months [...] we'll start to try and get people involved. With the aim that a local group take it over, lock, stock and barrel, which is what I tried to do with the Broadley Croft Hall Community Association.

This highlights that Ronnie's approach to setting up the project had not altered since his interaction with local community groups in August/September 2001. This suggests that he did not see a problem with his approach.

Interview with Cllr. Stuart Hogarth: 7th November 2002

Second interview with Cllr. Alan Grogan: 13th November 2002

Interview with Matthew Griffiths: 13th November 2002

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 13: 20th November 2002

Attended: AH, AG, CM, SB, MG, KW, KV

Apologies: HB

Howard did not attend this meeting but had prepared a document containing scathing feedback on the Internet4all launch (see appendix). This document was brought to the meeting by Ronnie, who stayed only to hand copies of the document to Ann and then left. Nervous glances were exchanged between Clare, Ann, Keith and Susie. This was the first time Ann had seen Ronnie since May 2002. The group read the document in silence, then Ann commented: *'Right, let's keep this business-like'*. She stated that there were communication problems between members of the BV partnership, which she said *'is horribly ironic seeing as we all*

consider ourselves to be professionals and experts in communication. We need to practice what we preach'. During the rest of the meeting Ann seemed to be playing more of a role to help facilitate the smooth running of I4A. She had become friendly with Susie and Clare, and mentioned to them that she was finding it hard to work with Howard, especially with Ronnie *'pulling Howard's strings from behind the scenes'*. This suggests that Ann was aware of Ronnie's involvement with Howard outside the partnership and that she thought Ronnie was having a negative impact on her relationship with Howard. After the meeting Ann looked very tired and deflated and said to Susie and I that she was *'[...] sick of BV being this mystical project. If we can't demystify it, no-one will ever relate to it. Look at how local people are starting to relate to Susie and I4A, that's because Susie is actually in Broadley and doing something BV has never managed to do that'*. This point about the BV project being mystical echoes the Newsby MP's point in meeting 5 about the project's vision being a 'nice idea' but unrealistic and not well communicated.

Second interview with Ronnie Smith: 29th November 2002

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 14: 21st January 2003

Attended: AH, SB, CP, KW, KV

Apologies: HB, CM, AG, MG

This was the first meeting attended by Clive Potterson, President of the Broadley Rotary Club. The formal minutes of this meeting recorded the breakdown of relationships between partners. Keith questioned Ann about the status of the 'work packages' that were introduced by Howard in meeting 11. He wanted to know what targets and timescales the BV partnership was working towards. Ann took a deep breath, indicating her irritation, and responded:

'I have drawn up a plan for the work package that I was responsible for. Now, I have sent that to Howard, but he hasn't agreed it. At the moment we have a breakdown of communication which is severe. I mean, I heard today from Susie that Howard is coming up to Broadley, but I don't know why or what he'll be doing. It's a complete mess. Howard needs to talk to me and then things can get more sorted. With no information, I can't give anything more.'

I wrote in my field notes that I perceived Ann to be making use of Susie's go-between position with her on one side and Ronnie and Howard on the other.

Clive Potterson	
Organisation	Broadley Rotary Club Staffordshire University
Sector type	Community / Voluntary / Public
Position	President of Broadley Rotary Club Co-ordinator of Broadley website Lecturer at Staffordshire University
Location of organisation	Broadley
Place of residence	Broadley
<p>Clive was a white man in his late fifties. He had lived in Broadley for 30 years. He worked as a lecturer in the computing faculty of Staffordshire University and was completing an MSc in his spare time. He described himself as being very well connected locally. As the President of the Broadley Rotary Club, he had networks across a cross-section of business owners, executives, managers, political leaders, and professionals who lived in the parish of Broadley. He had also set up and co-ordinated the Broadley website, which other local groups used to communicate their activities and events. Clive had originally heard about Broadley Vision in his Rotary Club capacity, when he received a letter from Ronnie and Alan asking if they could give a presentation about the intended project to the Broadley Rotary Club. Clive felt there were complementary aims between Broadley Vision and the Rotary Club's wider objectives and also his own interests in relation to developing community communications through a community website. He felt that the club was well connected locally and were experienced at putting on well-attended public events in Broadley. He thought that they could have been an asset to the partnership and the project's development. Even though Clive heard about BV in September 2001, he did not start to attend the partnership meetings until meeting 14. He attended all further meetings (14-18). Clive said to me at meeting 14 that he could not understand why the partnership had not followed up the initial meeting with the Rotary Club (September 2001). Clive had had to be pro-active to find out what had happened to BV since September 2001, and to request attendance at meetings.</p>	

Ann was using Susie to keep abreast of Ronnie and Howard's actions and intentions in Broadley, which was information that she no longer had direct access to. Colin was quiet at this meeting, although he did contribute names of local electricians and plumbers that he thought would help with the renovation of the BCB.

Second interview with Ann Harrison: 14th February 2003

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 15: 21st February 2003

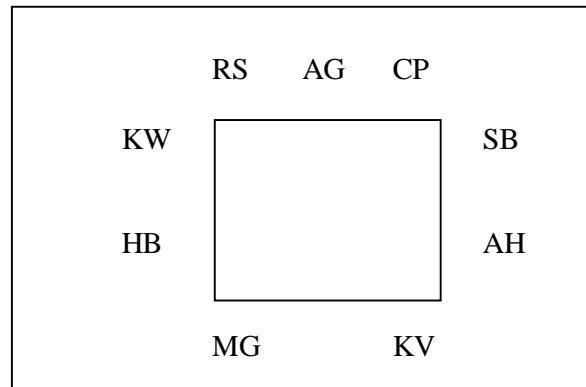
Attended: RS, HB, AG, AH, MG, SB, KW, CP, KV

In my second interview with Ann, seven days before this meeting, she had told me that, after meeting 14, she had asked Alan to arrange a private meeting between the two of them and Howard and Ronnie, in order to try to 'sort out' the problems, face-to-face and once and for all. Alan had not agreed to this but did agree to talk with Ronnie and Howard alone and then report back to Ann. Ann said that Alan had contacted her to say that Ronnie and Howard did not have a problem with her and that they would both be attending meeting 15 to help drive the BV project forwards. Ann was dissatisfied with this outcome and sounded nervous about the forthcoming meeting. I had anticipated this to be a highly significant meeting for the development (or collapse) of the BV partnership.

I noted that this was the meeting with the highest attendance. Ann was very quiet, pale and nervous immediately before the meeting, I noted that *'she looked tense, forlorn and fragile'*. Before the meeting commenced, I overheard Matthew and Keith discussing 'the bust-up' between Howard and Ann and questioning each other to see if either one had more 'information' on what had happened. Ronnie and Howard entered the room together just before the meeting was due to start, chatting casually and acting as though nothing had happened. Adopting less of an adversarial manner in the company of the other participants may have occurred because they wanted to appease Alan so as to maintain their relationship with or access to him.

Alan formally chaired the meeting, the first time I had seen him assume this role since meeting 1. He did not look happy and was very formal and officious in his handling of this meeting – again, a first. The only departure from this demeanour was the suppressed joviality between he and Ronnie. I noted *'Ronnie kept touching Alan's arm after he'd made a comment in the meeting as if to indicate that he's joking and means no harm. Ann looked unconvinced and rather non-plussed at this interaction'*. This spoke of Ronnie's personal access to Alan that potentially outweighed Ann's professional access to Alan. The participants chose to sit at the table in the positions as per figure 4.5 below, with Ann sat between me and Susie, opposite Ronnie, Keith and Howard.

Figure 4.5: Seating plan for meeting 15



It seemed inexplicable that the communications issue, or ‘General discussion on joint-working with guidelines for the way forward being established’, as it was listed on the agenda, was so low as item five on the agenda. From this, the majority of the meeting was taken up with discussion of item four - which focused on the status of the BCB. There was much ‘nuts and bolts’ talk of electrics, health and safety, furniture and software. It was when the issues of consumables was raised by Ronnie that Keith said, *‘But surely the issue is much broader than that. I mean, where’s the financing coming from? What’s your governance here?’* There was a long silence, then Matthew Griffiths responded quietly, *‘That’s something I’ve been suggesting for a while’*, possibly referring to his and Ann’s discussion document circulated at meeting 4.

Ann then spoke for the first time during this meeting: *‘Clearly the Bradley Vision can’t be sustained by this group in this way. The rhetoric sounds good – but we need people who can actually do it’*. To which Clive Potterson responded by asking *‘What terms are we operating under at the moment?’* Then Keith asked *‘Is there anyone here who knows the ins and outs of BV and what it’s trying to do? Enough to write a constitution – because I don’t’*. At which point Alan Grogan gestured at Matthew Griffiths. Matthew was clearly not comfortable about this and shook his head slowly. Clive Potterson suggested that *‘writing the words is the easy bit, but will anyone want to take on the responsibility?’* This was followed by another long silence, and nobody responded to this point. They began to discuss whether setting up a limited company or becoming a subsidiary of an existing charity would be best. Ann tried to bring the group back to discussing the

status of the partnership, saying *'But what BV needs is a formalised group to deal with the organisation and co-ordination. Not this ad hoc group. We need something solid'*.

It was at this point that Howard tried to casually raise the breakdown in communication, in a kind of by-the-by manner. He appeared to be trying to defuse and make light of the communication problems within the partnership. Ann, however, became very serious, saying *'I think you'll find that issue is item 5 on the agenda, Howard'*, making the whole proceedings feel very much more formal. With fifteen minutes to go until the meeting's end, agenda item 5 had not been discussed. Ann kept shifting in her seat and twice asked Alan if the discussion could be moved on, clearly she wanted to get to the issue that had been posited as the focus of this meeting. However, the main issues around communication were not raised, Alan suggesting that *'items not discussed be postponed until the next meeting'*. I noted that Susie, Ann, and Alan left the meeting looking disgruntled, de-motivated and annoyed, and that Clive, Matthew and Keith left looking confused. No formal minutes were circulated from this meeting nor any of the remaining meetings.

Clive sent an email to Ronnie two days after this meeting (I was copied in), which began:

'I came away from the last meeting completely confused as to who is responsible for what... I feel strongly that we should urgently sort out our formal constitution so that we know which body is responsible for what. I suspect that the council would also like a formal body with which to deal rather than an informal group. I guess it should look like one trustee appointed by each of the organisations involved. Possibly representatives from one or two more local bodies... Constitutional provision must also be made for continuity even after UKTC and others pull out at the end of their project time. The trustees need not be the actual day to day working panel.'

Regards Clive'

If Ronnie responded to Clive's email, I was not copied in. I waited to see whether Clive's suggestions would be discussed and acted on in future meetings. I did not actively chase Ronnie or Clive on this matter as I did not regard this as my role and did not want to be mistaken for a BV partner.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 16: 25th March 2003

Attended: AH, CP, MG, CM, SB, KV

Alan, Ronnie and Howard did not attend this meeting, which meant that the communication issues postponed from meeting 15 could not be resolved at this meeting either. Ann started the meeting by saying that she was not impressed with the length of time it was taking to get the room in the BCB ready for public use. Susie said that she would be working with Ronnie to set up and network the bank of PCs (donated by Howard's core project at UKTC) in the room, but said that Ronnie had not confirmed a date with her. This stimulated the following exchange about how Howard and Ronnie were not trusted by them:

Clare: *How do you think Ronnie and Howard would react to deadlines?*

Ann: *I think they have their own agenda. They stick to their own deadlines, no-one else's.*

Clare: *But they keep moving the goal posts.*

Susie, Ann and Clare spoke of their annoyance at Ronnie and Howard, perceiving them as the factor that was holding up progress. Ann then said that she wanted to discuss the status of the partnership group and said that she and Matthew had arranged a meeting with the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) to seek advice on the governance of organised groups. She said '*We need to look at being a constituted group and we need to look at bringing new, local people on board and perhaps getting rid of others*'. Clive and Susie had been sent the funding bid from 2001, to better inform them about BV prior to this meeting, and Clive queried how relevant this document was now. Ann responded, '*Yes, I'm afraid that's all we ever got written down and not all of it's relevant now. We're in a period of change and need to make some decisions about how to take this forward. It has become tremendously diluted since then*'. Clive put forward suggestions about how BV could raise its profile locally by connecting with a range of Rotary projects and other local projects. Susie took down all the information about the contacts, although it was not clear whether this was with regard to I4A's or BV's development. I noticed that Ann did not make any notes, but she did comment that it was a useful set of contact details and that these might be useful in relation to the next stages of the BV project's development, although these 'stages' were not defined.

After this meeting on 22nd May 2003, I and the other BV participants received a group email from Ann, which announced that she was formally removing herself from the partnership group (see appendix). She stated that she would not be attending any more meetings and would be withdrawing her resource commitment from the BV partnership with immediate effect. She ended her email with the following:

'I feel that it is now up to the partnership group to discuss and determine who, what, where and how Broadley Vision needs to continue. I trust that whatever is decided the good work of what has been achieved to date is maintained, developed and sustained.'

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 17: 28th May 2003

Attended: RS, CP, SB, MG, KV

No formal meeting conventions were followed at this meeting, so there were no written agenda, apologies or minutes. Ronnie appeared to lead the meeting, and began by saying that he was not surprised by Ann's departure: *'I've spent the past two and a half years being frustrated by Ann not having done anything. What I'm concerned about is that Howard has paid for all the resources and kit out of his own pocket – money that Ann said she'd cover. Her leaving leaves a lot of unanswered questions'*. He had commented during his second interview: *'Howard's getting some money out of Ann to pay for the flooring and stuff like that, which is great as far as I'm concerned, so there's a useful function.'* He came to see Ann's only purpose in relation to the realisation of the BV project as a source of finance, and Ann had thwarted him by quitting the partnership and taking her promised finance with her. However, the voluntary nature of the BV partnership and the state of the relationship between Ronnie and Ann meant that Ronnie was not in a position to follow up with Ann about the funding she had informally agreed to.

At this meeting, Ronnie said he wanted to relocate the BV project to BCHCC. He said the BCB had been nothing but trouble and that with Alan no longer being Leader of the Council, things could only get more difficult. He said: *'From my perspective, I get the feeling that BV is not a priority for the council. If they'd have wanted this to*

happen, they'd have made it happen'. Matthew leapt to the defence of the council saying that *'the Borough Council is not a learning organisation, delivering learning is not a priority'*. To which Ronnie responded, *'this project is not about learning it's about community'*. Matthew suggested that BV needed a councillor to be championing BV's cause. Ronnie replied, *'I'll contact some councillors and have a meeting but if they're not interested I'll just up-sticks. I tried for two years in my own village and I've tried for over two years in Broadley to try to get something going Somewhere will appreciate what we're trying to do'*, which reinforced that Ronnie did not conceive that his approach could be perceived as problematic. He thought the problem lay with other people and their apathy.

Clive contributed to this meeting by sharing local contacts that he thought might be able to play a role in the development of the BV project. He also suggested another empty building (an old chapel) in the village that might be suitable to house a communications centre in the village. Ronnie seemed not to pay any attention to Clive's inputs. Clive pragmatically asked whether the BV and I4A projects could be 'blurred'. Ronnie stated that he saw Susie as an opportunity for BV. He said to her: *'You have an actual role in Broadley. I'm going to put pressure on UKTC to put pressure on APO so that you can officially put more time into the development of BV as well as your I4A role'* Susie did not appear perturbed by this comment, and said she was already thinking about how she could continue the work of the I4A project once her 12-month contract had ended. She commented that she thought the development of a communications and learning centre in the BCB could create a post for her in the future. Ronnie ended the meeting saying (not for the first time) that he was worried about sustaining his energy levels in relation to the development of BV.

PARTNERSHIP MEETING 18: 21st July 2003

Attended: RS, SB, AG, HB, KW, CP, KV

This was the last BV meeting to take place. This was not foreseen at the time of the meeting. The meeting began with more discussion about the BCB. There were perceivable tensions between Ronnie and Alan at this meeting, with Howard working hard to mediate between the two. Ronnie suggested that the BV

partnership would not be taking on any building work in the BCB. He said *'As I see it now, we're simply tenants. This is no longer about the building'*. Alan was not happy about this, *'That's not how things were at the beginning Ronnie, and you know it'*. To which Ronnie responded, *'Yes, right at the beginning but things have shifted'*. I suspect that Alan felt that his interests (having the BCB renovated into a state of the art communications and learning centre) were being sidelined by Ronnie. It was also possible that he blamed Ronnie for Ann's departure from BV. Then, as if to appease Alan, Ronnie said, *'Of course, there's another option here, why don't we work with the BCC? The committee of the BCC have an actual relationship with the very people we want to reach. Yes, I like that – it's got a nice feel about it. I think it's worth exploring'* I held my breath to see how Alan would respond, but to my surprise he liked the idea, saying *'It's a win-win situation. You can all muck in together and the BCC is always looking for some workers'*. I noted that I perceived the group to be *'jumping from opportunity to opportunity without much thought or reflection'*. Clive was very quiet at this meeting. Keith asked *'So, who makes up the partnership now?'* To which Ronnie responded *'Anyone who turns up'*, which suggests that he did not see the existence of a partnership as essential for the realisation of the project. This was reinforced by his volunteering to take on all the action points discussed (meeting the new leader of the council; meeting with appropriate councillors; and exploring the prospect of working with the BCC), which perhaps suggested that he felt he could only rely on and trust himself. Or it could suggest that no-one else around the table was interested in either prolonging the project vision, or were reluctant to work with Ronnie. Keith said he could not see why he needed to come again. Ronnie ended the meeting by saying that he would email everyone with a date for a next meeting. This never happened.

What happened next?

I did not hear from Ann Harrison again after meeting 16. Susie carried on running the Internet4All project in Broadley, and her contract was extended by a year. She stayed in touch with Ronnie Smith, who she later called on to help her set up some computers with internet access for a youth group that she had started in Broadley (in the room in the BCB originally allocated to BV). Howard had nothing more to

do with Broadley after the last meeting, although other UKTC employees (Martin and Keith) remained peripherally involved in Broadley, through the Internet4all project. Howard and Ronnie invited Susie and I out for a meal in late 2006, to find out what we had gone on to do. Howard and Ronnie had remained friends and reported that they continued to work together on various projects. Ronnie also commented that he continued to have a personal friendship with Alan. Howard said he wanted to check that the demise of the BV partnership had not jeopardised my research. He expressed 'feeling guilty' that he had 'got me involved' through the funding of a PhD scholarship, and said he felt embarrassed that the project had not developed as expected. I reassured him that I had not had to quit the PhD as a result of the partnership ending prematurely.

Conclusion

It can be surmised from this chapter that the BV partnership could be regarded as having failed in two key respects: it did not realise the learning and communication centre in Broadley that was envisaged in the beginning; and it did not adequately anticipate, acknowledge or address the problems of social co-ordination that surfaced, which led to irreconcilable tensions between partners. It is clear from the narrative provided that key issues for the BV partnership included: a lack of clear vision between partners; imprecise role definitions; a varying, and at times ambiguous membership; a lack of an agreed strategy; inter-personal tensions; and the relative informality of the partnership (i.e. it lacked a constitution, governance structure, etc.).

This chapter has presented a chronological narrative of the BV partnership's trajectory, charting its serendipitous beginning in 2000, the gradual formation of a network-like partnership, some of the issues that arose and how these were (or were not) dealt with, and the abrupt end of the partnership in July 2003. It provides the complex context of the BV partnership's development and demise. Telling the story in this detailed way is the only way to disrupt the 'smooth' account of a partnership's formation and operation, which is presented in the majority of accounts of partnership research (see Chapter Three). This more

ethnographic approach is my way of resolving this. The story presented here can be read alongside and against the current literature on partnership and community, to provide new insights into and theorisations of conflicts and consensus within partnership working. It is necessary, given the complexity narrated here, to go beyond the partnership literature, hence my turn to the literature on community, social ties and social capital.

The next chapter will provide a conceptual unpicking of some of the issues tainting the operation and trajectory of the BV partnership. The rich observational and interview data, interwoven and more thickly described, above, invites a reading of the data that offers valuable insights into the deeper, relational issues that have been under-articulated in the partnership literature to date. This is now further developed in my analysis of partnership as instances of overlapping communities, and as the site of dynamic social ties.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERLAPPING COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL TIES: FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS OF SOCIAL CO-ORDINATION IN THE BV PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I was able to illustrate that the trajectory of the Broadley Vision partnership featured a lack of clear and detailed shared vision between partners; imprecise role definitions; a shifting membership; a lack of agreed strategy; inter-personal tensions; and relative informality of the partnership structure. This has raised questions, such as where did tensions stem from, and why was conflict not fully acknowledged, addressed and resolved. In Chapter Five, I develop analyses around the concepts of ‘overlapping communities’ and ‘social ties’. This will enable me to later discuss new ways of viewing conflict and consensus within partnership, having utilised and extended previous theoretical understandings (see Chapter Two). This chapter will be structured around two main headings, namely ‘Broadley Vision as instances of overlapping communities’ and ‘The BV partnership as a site of dynamic social ties’. Whilst these two main sections handle substantial concepts in a discrete fashion, this is in no way to defer from the complex inter-connectedness of these concepts as they were both experienced in the field, and as they have been developed through this thesis. This complexity will be introduced and discussed in Chapter Six. This structure has been devised to best facilitate ease of readership, whilst introducing concepts that are new to the partnership literature.

Broadley Vision as instances of overlapping communities

The emergence of this category of analysis partially stems from my long-term research process as well as from the data generated. My first interest in ‘community’ emerged through my observations of members of the BV partnership

speaking of ‘community’ as an unproblematic, geographic concept. This raised my interest in exploring more sophisticated conceptualisations of community, which prompted my initial engagement with the community literature. Later, I came to initially code partnership data emergently, based on my own naïve interpretation of interviews and observations. I further supplemented this reading by using a framework developed from literature on partnership, and it became obvious that some data were only superficially accounted for in terms of the partnership literature. These data tended toward instances of conflict and fore-grounded relationships that would otherwise fall under the explanatory label of cultural differences (Barton and Quinn, 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). This encouraged my return to the community literature to see if this body of literature could shed further light on conflict and consensus within the BV partnership. In this chapter, with my introduction of overlapping communities as a substantial concept for discretely locating and understanding similarities and differences between partners’ professional norms, personal attitudes, values and interests, I go beyond the formal, organisation-centric view that dominates partnership literature on cultural differences.

In the context of partnership working, an instance of overlapping communities occurs as individual partners’ personal and professional norms, attitudes, values and interests are juxtaposed with others’ norms, attitudes, values and interests. These are identifiable as being connected to partners’ memberships of particular communities (past and present). At times, identifying how individual partners’ norms, attitudes, values and interests are connected to membership of a particular community or communities will be clear and explicit, whilst at other times degrees of inference and interpretation will be called for in order to identify some of these. However, data are sufficiently rich so as to enable my identification and location of such instances. With this, I make no claims towards having identified all instances of overlapping communities through the course of the Broadley Vision partnership.

I have specifically chosen to call this category of analysis ‘overlapping *communities*’ for a number of reasons. Firstly, as identified in Chapter Two, a community is a group of people who share something in common (Hoggett, 1997; Taylor, 2003;

Delanty, 2003; Jenkins, 2008), thus communities are formed when people share a common interest, identity or a geographical place. Therefore, in BV, individual partners were seen to belong to a mix of interest-based, identity-based and place-based communities. Secondly, when partners came together to form BV, it was observed that aspects of their individual mix of communities overlapped with those of other partners. At times these instances of overlapping community memberships produced harmony between partners and at other times they produced conflict (to be discussed in detail in this Chapter).

The literature suggests that many communities produce sets of norms, values and expectations for their members; as well as sanctions, punishments and rewards that help to sustain the norms of the community (Cohen, 1985; Wellman, 1999; Halpern, 2005; Arneil, 2006). Such community codes are thought to produce a sense of mutual identity between members (Delanty, 2003). In this sense, aspects of an individual's identity and values can be understood to stem from belonging to one or more communities (Delanty, 2003; Jenkins, 2008). Thus, belonging to one or more communities can affect how we see ourselves and others, and the values that we hold (Forrest and Kearns, 1999). In a partnership setting, individual partners are likely to belong to a range of communities, which may shape how they think and act. Each partner may transfer norms, values and sanctions from a number of his/her community memberships to the partnership setting. Thus, partners bring aspects of their community memberships with them. It is on this basis that I have chosen to discuss Broadley Vision in terms of overlapping *communities*, rather than, say, overlapping identities. This is not to deny the possibility of identity as offering ways into making sense of conflict and consensus within the BV partnership, but is rather to attend primarily to community memberships as a unit of analysis that both resonates with the inception of BV and that makes a more distinct contribution to the partnership literature. Other researchers may reasonably have sought to alight upon and develop alternative concepts from the same circumstances and data.

As I introduce instances of overlaps between community memberships, the communication, (mis)understandings and (mis)management of these overlaps, within the partnership, would also have been partially mediated by the nature and

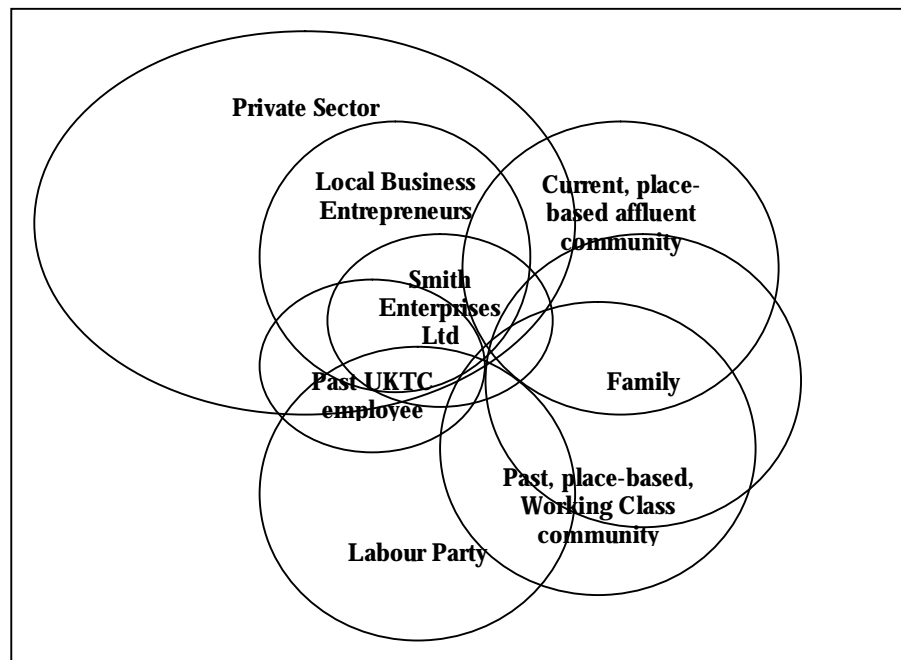
strength of partners' social ties (e.g. some overlaps would occur between individuals with strong pre-partnership social ties, other overlaps may call for other partners to act as a 'bridge'). The range of phenomena (e.g. knowledge, norms, attitudes, values, interests) that were drawn from partners' community memberships, and that were made relevant through their participation in the BV partnership, varied with fellow partners' community memberships and with the unique sets of social ties between partners. These phenomena ranged from the clearly professional – such as knowledge concerning funding criteria – through to the highly personal – such as values and attitudes explicitly linked to growing up in a particular place or set of circumstances. For ease of readership, however, in this section of my analysis I am going to focus on overlapping communities as a discrete concept. Prior to discussing instances of harmonious, conflicting and multiple overlaps between partners' community memberships, I will first illustrate instances of overlapping communities *within* partnership members.

Individuals as instances of overlap between communities

As asserted in the community literature, individuals can rarely be said to belong to just one community, and it is increasingly common to think of community membership as being plural and overlapping for individuals (Ball and Stobart, 1997; Amit, 2002; Delanty, 2003). Fieldwork data supported this, and I will start by illustrating how partners can be observed and understood as individual sites of overlapping communities in the partnership setting. In the two examples discussed below, the overlapping communities *within* individuals expose them to competing knowledge and pressure in the partnership context. This will now be explored in relation to Ronnie and Matthew and their respective multiple community memberships that were experienced, and which overlapped – at the level of them as individuals – at the point of their participation in the BV partnership. This section highlights how individual partners came to handle competing pressures – an important point to illustrate, so as not to imply that individuals were entirely consistent in the pressures and knowledge that their own community memberships brought about.

I begin with Ronnie as an example of an individual as a site of overlapping communities. Figure 5.1 below, demonstrates some of Ronnie's community memberships that were raised by him and other partners, during the fieldwork process, which were relevant in relation to the partnership context. These community memberships were drawn upon to explain, argue and justify matters pertaining to Ronnie's approach to and experience of the BV partnership.

Figure 5.1: Ronnie as a site of overlapping communities



In Ronnie's case, it appeared that an overlap between his current membership of the self-employed, local business community and his past memberships of the corporate social responsibility department of UKTC and a '*deprived, working-class community*' (Ronnie, interview 1), was significant in relation to his interests in, motivations for and approach towards the BV partnership. Ronnie was most obviously identifiable as a professional businessman. He wore a suit, drove an expensive car, was the managing director of his own company, talked the language of management consultancy, business models and budget strategies, and demonstrated on several occasions that he was able and prepared to invest his personal financial resources into the development of the BV project (see Chapter Four). However, his memberships (past and present) of a range of private sector

communities only go so far in explaining his interests and motivations in relation to the BV partnership. In his first interview, Ronnie explained:

My motivation is, I'd like it to be different for people. People don't appreciate me describing them as working-class but for me that's what they are, what I am [...] I would like the people in my class to have much more control and say over their lives. I'd like them to have a better chance than they've got now. [...] And I want to change that and I can't change the whole world, but I can change little bits of it, I can bring some of the so-called power that I've had invested in me because of things I've done, to bear on behalf of the people I want to win. And I guess that's what motivates me. I guess the second thing is that I have the time to do it now. I have the time to make a difference.

(Ronnie, interview 1)

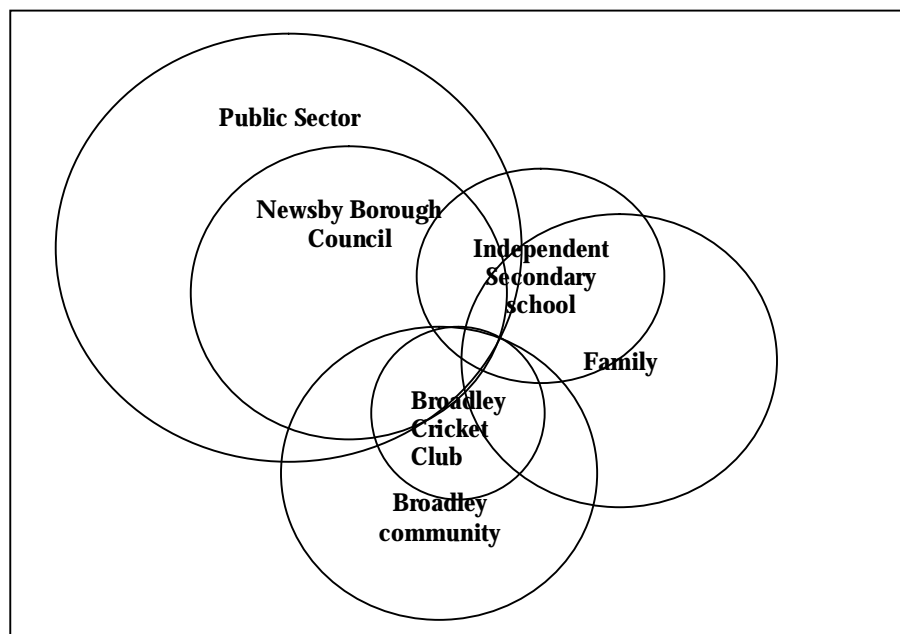
Ronnie's motivation can be understood by locating him as a one-time member of the deprived local area of Croxby (where his parents had raised him, lived and worked). His passion for the BV project came from the overlap between his personal biography – partially located in a working class community – and his current membership of 'elite', professional business networks. This overlap went some way to producing Ronnie's drive and energy. His professional community memberships allowed him to assume that he had relevant and useful knowledge, expertise and networks to contribute to the development of the project, and his past membership of a 'deprived' working class community gave his involvement personal meaning. As the quotation above shows, he viewed working class people, whom he self-identified with, to have little control over their lives, but he thought that with the 'right' support these people could experience greater autonomy. His interests could therefore be described as stemming from instances of overlapping communities within himself.

However, Ronnie, as a site of instances of overlapping communities, was exposed to competing knowledge and pressure in the partnership context. An example of this occurred when Ronnie attended the funding interview on behalf of the BV partnership on 10th September 2001 (see Chapter Four). At this meeting, Ronnie acquires knowledge that conflicts with the interests and knowledge that he brings from his own overlapping community memberships. The public funding body offered the BV partnership £100,000, if the project's location and approach was altered. The nature of the conflict for Ronnie appeared to be that ~~he~~ saw Broadley as a legitimate site for the project (legitimated for him by Alan's anecdotes of local

people from working-class backgrounds with little education – see Chapter Four). Ronnie’s values, interests and attachment to Broadley can be partially explained by his identification of himself (and his parents) as once being one of ‘them’ (i.e. people living and working in working class communities). His identifying with Alan’s anecdotes of the ‘common’ man in Broadley came into conflict with the public sector professionals at the funding meeting, who said that Broadley was not a legitimate site in relation to their funding criteria. Thus, Ronnie had been exposed to two sets of competing knowledge and felt he was required to take a position. His adherence to the Broadley-based focus of the project stands as evidence of Ronnie valuing the knowledge and opportunity that Alan had provided.

In relation to Matthew as a site of overlap between communities, figure 5.2 demonstrates some of Matthew’s community memberships, as raised by him during the fieldwork process, that were relevant in relation to the partnership context.

Figure 5.2: Matthew as an instance of overlapping communities



In Matthew’s case, it appeared that an overlap occurred between being a one-time resident of the Broadley geographic community (and the fact that his immediate

and extended family still lived there) and his being an employee of Newsby Borough Council (NBC). As demonstrated in Chapter Four, Matthew became involved in the BV partnership due to his position within NBC. He was told to attend partnership meetings, in his role of 'external funding officer', by Alan (who was Leader of the Council), with a view to sourcing funding opportunities for the partnership. However, Matthew's past membership of the Broadley geographic community (see quotation below) also appeared relevant in relation to the extent of his commitment and role in the development of the partnership:

KV: Were you brought up in Broadley?

Matthew: Yeah. [...] Both my grandparents live there, in fact, my two Granddads, they were both Broadley blokes. And both my Mum and Dad were born and live in the village.

KV: So there's a family history there as well?

Matthew: I know loads of people in Broadley, family, distant cousins, I mean I've got some distant relation to Alan - Alan's wife and my Granddad are distant cousins or something

KV: So what were your experiences of living in Broadley?

Matthew: Yeah, very good [...] I don't think of Broadley as being a deprived place particularly.

KV: Don't you ever feel like saying 'Why Broadley?' in meetings.

Matthew: I've tried. And of course it's difficult going against Alan. We've both got different perspectives. [...] In relation to the BV project, I imagine my parents, two 50 year old people who've lived in Broadley all their lives, would think, 'What's this Broadley Vision all about? I don't want to get involved', you know, 'It's got nothing to do with me, I go to work and I have my spare time to spend with the grandchildren' or whatever they do in their spare time. I'd find it very, very difficult to get them enthused and do anything about it. I just don't think the interest would be there. [...] I'm not quite sure if you asked local people, if they'd want it quite simply.

KV: So you haven't talked to your family or friends about Broadley Vision or tried to get them involved in its development?

Matthew: No.

Aspects of Matthew's overlapping community memberships, as outlined above, are interesting in relation to the BV partnership because both his professional and personal knowledge (derived from his participation in two different communities) led him to believe that Broadley was not a suitable location for the BV project. As shown in data included in Chapter Four, Matthew communicated professional knowledge around Broadley not being socially or economically deprived by

national standards, which he felt would affect the partnership's chances of winning external public funding. He also communicated personal tacit knowledge (see above extract) about the people he knew who lived in Broadley and how he thought that they would not be interested in the project. Like Ronnie, Matthew - as a site of overlapping communities - was exposed to competing knowledge and pressure in the partnership context. The knowledge he brought with him to the partnership setting from his overlapping communities conflicted with others', in particular Alan's, knowledge and interests from their overlapping communities (see 'Multiplicity of community overlaps between partners', below). This, combined with Matthew's 'junior' position in the Borough Council and his 'peripheral' position in the partnership, led to Matthew feeling uncomfortable and compromised in the partnership:

I do get frustrated, I come out the meetings and say to myself, 'Is that another two hours wasted or have I learnt anything or been able to help in any way'. And more often than not I feel like I haven't been able to. Sometimes it puts me in a difficult position.
(Matthew, interview)

Due to Alan's request, Matthew had to try to locate public funding streams for the partnership, despite feeling that the target audience would not be receptive to the project, and that the physical location of the project in Broadley would prevent the partnership from achieving funding. Matthew's relative lack of interest and commitment to the project – beyond what he was *required* to do - could therefore be described as stemming from instances of overlapping communities within himself.

In the example above, it would be tempting to read the conflict, faced by Matthew, in terms of overlaps between his and Alan's community memberships. This would see Matthew's NBC community membership (professional knowledge) and his Broadley familial community membership (local knowledge), as opposed to Alan's knowledge gathered from these same communities. However, I have chosen to locate this overlap *within* Matthew, as his conflict is resolved without any determined opposition to the pressure to seek public funding for the BV partnership. Whilst this resolution may have been unsatisfactory to Matthew, it did

enable him to proceed with his task, and to avoid the professional risk of refuting Alan's directions.

This section demonstrates that it is possible to view individual partners as sites of overlapping communities, before considering the partnership in terms of instances of overlapping communities *between* partners. This adds a layer of complexity to the concept by illustrating different levels of instances of overlapping communities, in relation to the BV partnership. The next section explores instances of harmonious overlap between partners' community memberships and their impact on the partnership's operation and trajectory.

Instances of harmonious overlap between communities

Chapter Four shows that, ultimately, a clear and detailed shared vision between all partners was not developed and sustained; however, at the initial formulation of BV it was the *sense* of a shared vision and assumed complementary interests that brought the founding partners together. The partners brought with them ideas, experiences, values and principles, from a variety of their community memberships, which allowed them to believe that there was common ground in the overlap created by them coming together: *'There seemed to be a common theme between the founding partners that learning needed to be viewed quite differently, and opportunities for learning needed to be more innovative, more flexible, and more creative'* (Ann, interview 1), *'We all share a set of values about helping people'* (Ronnie, interview 1). The perceived shared values in the group around wanting to 'help people' and develop 'innovative' and 'flexible' approaches to learning, stemmed from a range of different community memberships and experiences for each partner. At times, these community memberships and experiences would blur personal and professional interests.

Alan, as Broadley Councillor and resident, expressed in both interviews that his interest in setting up a learning centre in Broadley, stemmed from his interaction with a number of Broadley residents who were experiencing difficulties in their everyday lives due to literacy problems (see Chapter Four). Ronnie, as a self-

professed '*working class boy done good*' and '*product of industry*', articulated in his interviews how he identified with 'working class' families and felt a duty to 'help' people who he perceived to share his roots. Stuart, as Councillor of a neighbouring ward that was similarly rural to Broadley, communicated as his interest, '*I'm committed to improving democratic participation around these parts. I'd hoped this project would eventually benefit other rural villages [...] I want people to be able to access council services remotely*' (Stuart, interview).

Some partners' initial interests and passions for a new, Broadley-based learning centre, seemed to tie in very closely with their professional remits. Ann, as an adult learning professional working in the voluntary sector, suggested that her interest was in widening participation in learning activities in the borough of Newsby, '*My motivations are that I campaign for learning opportunities. I've got a passion for learning and for involving more people in learning that is appropriate to their needs. It really comes on that back of having taught in institutions of learning for a considerable amount of time. Currently, these institutions don't create a passion for learning in people*' (Ann, interview 1). Ann communicated a 'passion for learning' that appeared to have emerged from her previous professional experiences in learning institutions. Howard, as a long-standing UKTC employee, based in the corporate social responsibility arm of the company, asserted that he had a special interest in the role of communication skills for achieving community cohesion:

I don't know for sure, but I'm confident that local people's confidence in their ability to communicate, and to ask for things, can be improved by using resources that we've got to offer. I believe they'd be much better off in their lives as a result. [...] My main objective is to see if we can use our resources and expertise, and by 'our' I don't just mean UKTC, to provide opportunities for a community to interact more. [...] With my 'communication skills' hat on, my passion is that we need to teach children to communicate better, because not being able to communicate well is bad for relationships. It's the thing that engenders communities and society and helps to get things done. [...] This project very much fitted the way I saw UKTC was going which is 'if we're going to champion communication skills, we need to champion them in the context of them actually being valuable to people's everyday lives', hence my focus on stimulating activity in one community, Broadley.
(Howard, interview)

Howard articulated a wide-ranging passion for helping people, communities and society, by increasing both people's independence and sociability; a perspective

that appeared to stem from his position and experience in a particular professional community.

The range of partners' values and interests, illustrated above, which stemmed from a variety of community memberships, were deemed sufficient for the founding partners to feel that a shared desire and goal existed, as demonstrated by Ann:

In the beginning we'd got five people who were committed to improving people's lives by developing wider learning opportunities for people, using learning methodologies that are totally and utterly learner-focused, getting away from prescribed learning
(Ann, interview 1).

Initially, it can be inferred that partners thought the values and interests being brought to the partnership from different community memberships did produce an identifiable, harmonious overlap. As it turned out, this perceived harmony in the overlap was not enough to sustain the partnership. However, it *was* enough to get them together at the same table, and for surface-level bonding to take place between the five founding partners. The assumed harmony (in the overlap), created through partnership working, may go some way to explaining why the partners did not communicate co-operation or co-ordination concerns at the beginning of the fieldwork process. Indeed, partners (Ronnie, Alan, Ann, Stuart and Howard) communicated a broad agreement of a common goal; to set up a communications and learning centre in Broadley. Ann, Ronnie, Stuart and Alan each explicitly communicated this common aim during their interviews: '*The Broadley project is about developing a community learning centre*' (Ann, interview 1), '*The project is to set up a learning centre in Broadley.*' (Alan, interview 1), '*Originally, the idea was to put together plans for the realisation of a project by the actual practical and physical creation of a communications and I.T. centre in Broadley.*' (Stuart, interview), '*It's about setting up a communications centre in Broadley. It'll offer them [...] a learning centre, a community centre, a good old-fashioned club; it'll offer them all of those things.*' (Ronnie, interview 1). Thus, the perceived harmony in the overlap was productive enough to bring partners together. Beyond this early-stage and superficial accord, this broad set of shared values and interests became subject to interrogation by some of those who joined the partnership at a later date. For example, in Matthew's interview, he stated:

I'm still not sure really what the Broadley Vision is. [...] I still find it difficult to grasp what the Broadley Vision is meant to be. They all talk about it in slightly different ways.

(Matthew, interview)

After 18 months of involvement, Matthew could not describe what the BV partnership was trying to achieve. The quotation above suggests that he was not convinced that the overlap, accepted by the founding partners, amounted to a communicable shared vision. I also noted during meeting 15 that Keith Winters asked, '*Is there anyone here who knows the ins and outs of BV and what it's trying to do? [...] because I don't.*', to which he did not receive a reply. This suggests that, although original partners felt there was tacit overlap between their interests and values (at least in the beginning), communicating and justifying this to new BV participants was not easy. Therefore, the *extent* to which instances of overlap between the founding partners' communities were harmonious in relation to the BV partnership, beyond the broad, surface-level, was questionable. I have shown, above, how their interests and values can be viewed as stemming from different communities; despite the superficial, harmonious overlap identified by the original partners – which initially brought them together – their various community memberships also led to their being more forthright about particular approaches to developing partnership activity. This produced conflict in the instances of overlap between communities too (discussed in the subsequent section), which was at times problematic. The instance of harmonious overlap between communities, as illustrated above, came to reflect a lack of shared interrogation and reflection between the founding partners at the beginning of the partnership.

The harmonious overlap between *all* founding partners' interests and values – that they brought from their various community memberships – was neither deep nor explored within the partnership, but there were examples of pairs and clusters of partners who established substantial compatibility in their working practices. For example, Ronnie, Stuart and Howard exhibited considerable commonality in their approaches towards the start-up of new projects, which stemmed from their membership of communities based in the private sector:

I've set up two businesses in my life, so I'm very much coming from a place of self-reliance and the private sector [...] If it had been my project, when the funding bid failed I would have gone in

small-scale and got something going on the ground. I would have gone for part of the dream. Getting something up and running might be the best way we find out if there is any local interest. We might have to shelve it, but we will actually get in there and do it, not just for one 'open day', but for six months, using any facilities. Just get it up and running and work within your means. You get out there and do it.

(Stuart, interview)

Coming from a business background, I kind of expected that once we'd set the vision we'd be straight on getting in to doing something

(Howard, interview)

I'm not market-led, I'm not responding to need. I'm creating an opportunity. I want to provide some opportunities to open people's eyes. Some of them [opportunities] will be unnecessary, some will fail, but that's the nature of the beast. [...] If we in business waited for needs to develop, nothing would have ever developed. You can develop the mobile phone and then say 'You really do need this'. That's how things happen in business. It's naïve to think that everything has to be needs-led to be a success or valuable.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

Ronnie, Howard and Stuart had shared approaches to stimulating project activity. This enabled them to partially understand where each other was coming from in relation to *how* the BV project should be carried out. This was further illustrated during the fieldwork process, as these three partners directly and indirectly evidenced understanding of and support for one another during partnership meetings and interviews: '*Ronnie thinks the same as me, you've got to get out there and make things happen*' (Stuart, interview), '*Howard and I come from the same background, and we're of the opinion that things need to be done differently*' (Ronnie, interview 2). It was also noticeable that these partners did not speak disparagingly of one another in interviews or meetings. However, on top of the identifiable harmony in their overlaps, it cannot be ignored that Ronnie had pre-existing friendships (social ties) with both Howard and Stuart. Thus, Ronnie experienced multiple overlaps with Howard and Stuart in contexts outside of the partnership setting. As will be outlined in a later section, instances of multiple overlapping communities together with pre-existing, strong social ties between partners can be read as pertinent to the progress (or lack of) of the BV partnership.

Another example of commonality in partners' approaches towards the realisation of the BV project was demonstrated by Ann and Matthew, which can be argued to have stemmed from overlaps between aspects of their community memberships.

Ann was based in the voluntary sector and Matthew was based in the public sector, so in one sense they were emanating from different communities, but they found considerable harmony in the overlap between aspects of their community memberships that were brought to the partnership table.

The application form was put together mainly by, well entirely by myself and Ann Harrison, sat at this P.C., spending entire days together for a few days, trying to get extra support and evidence off some of the other partners and letters of support and that sort of thing [...] When the bid failed, Ann and I suggested moving in a slightly different direction, [...] we [he and Ann] feel that perhaps Broadley is not the best location, because it won't get enough funding because of a lack of deprivation statistics [...] Ann and I put a paper to the partnership, we suggested 'You could do this or that' to help move the project forwards...

(Matthew, interview)

Funding has always been a priority. We need funding to do what we are setting out to do. [...] I actually didn't know that there was a department in the Borough Council that was called 'External projects and funding' [...] When we started off with BV there wasn't an identifiable external funding officer that could have worked with us. Now that has changed and Matthew has been designated to the project. [...] We're all guided now through legislation and through the famed report that identifies the 2000 most deprived areas in the country, and what anybody working in public services is being told is that we have to target areas of greatest need. [...] I think we have to say, if we can provide a service for those deprived areas that isn't necessarily about being in those areas, then maybe we can work around some issues here. So Matthew and I have been looking at the possibilities of developing the participation of those people in deprived areas in either the Broadley building or we will outreach from Broadley to there, but we could still accommodate looking at those deprived areas and securing funding on the back of it. We think it's the only way to get the funding

(Ann, interview 1)

Outside the partnership setting, Matthew and Ann had separately been exposed to the same knowledge about criteria that needed to be met to achieve government funding, and they were both used to working within such public funding frameworks in their core professional remits. Spending entire days together, whilst completing the funding application, allowed them to acknowledge that they had a shared approach to project development. Their focus was primarily on achieving public funding for the development of the BV project, and adapting the project idea where necessary to make achieving funding more likely. For Ann and Matthew, this harmony, in what they brought to the partnership table from their memberships in other communities, meant they developed a shared understanding of how *they* thought the partnership needed to proceed. This allowed them to work jointly, outside partnership meetings, to put together a discussion paper (see

appendix and Chapter Four – meetings 4 and 5) that would query the direction and intentions of the partnership. Another significant point, here, is that unlike Ronnie and Stuart, and Ronnie and Howard, Ann and Matthew did not have pre-existing social ties from outside of the partnership context. Through working together on the funding bid, however, they established that they shared the same perspective about *how* the project should be realised.

The data also highlighted that overlapping membership of the same community did not necessarily mean that perspectives and approaches would be homogeneous and produce harmony. Data has already been used to illustrate that this was the case for Matthew and Alan. They both worked within Newsby Borough Council *and* lived (or had lived) in Broadley, but these common memberships did not produce a shared perspective between them in relation to BV. Similarly, Howard, Martin and Keith were all employed by UKTC and worked within the corporate social responsibility arm of the company, but this alone did not produce sameness of vision and perspective in relation to BV (this specific situation is explored in more detail under ‘The BV partnership as a site of dynamic social ties’). Thus, instances of harmonious overlap between communities were not necessarily dependent on partners belonging to the ‘same’ community; they appeared to be more about partners assuming or recognising that others had similar approaches or opinions to their own. Where instances of harmonious overlap between communities were more than superficial, this enabled certain clusters of partners to feel that they understood each other, and to work closely together in relation to the partnership’s development.

In this section, I have sought to illustrate how partners’ overlapping communities – in terms of what this saw them bring to the BV partnership – had an impact on the project’s progress and trajectory. In the context of a partnership that ultimately failed, it is unsurprising that examples of harmonious overlapping communities relate to superficial and limited progress. This does not, however, undermine instances of harmonious overlapping communities as important in coming to understand aspects of the partnership’s development.

Instances of conflicting overlap between communities

This section illustrates examples of partners bringing different norms and values with them from memberships of other communities. For example, they brought expectations about working processes and assumptions about appropriate project development time spans. The most visible examples of conflicting overlap between communities in the BV partnership occurred between Ronnie, Howard and Stuart, and Ann and Matthew. Data generated from the interviews suggested that Stuart, Ronnie, Howard, Ann and Matthew perceived there to be differences in working practices, values, attitudes and behaviours, between partners based in public (including voluntary organisations) and private sector communities. This section demonstrates some of the norms and values - that partners brought with them from their other community memberships and that would usually go unchallenged in partners' core professional communities - which were brought into conflict in the BV context. The partners communicated that they thought the heterogeneity in inter-sectoral norms and values adversely affected the capacity of the partnership to implement its vision. In his first interview, Ronnie showed that he was judging the effectiveness of the partnership through a lens derived from his membership of business communities within the private sector:

If I looked at this as a business, then it's highly ineffective. But I've no idea of what is effective in this environment. I find it frustrating if I just think about the council, they think in years when minutes would do. [...] Their whole time-span is different, what they expect to do in a given period is different and they're also very meeting oriented. They have lots and lots of meetings and I can't for the life of me work out what they're for.

(Ronnie, interview 1)

He did acknowledge that the partnership was taking place in a different context (i.e. it was not a purely private or public sector venture), and that he was not used to operating outside of a business context or with others who were not from a private sector background. However, he did not evidence any attempt to change or adapt his way of viewing the partnership, other than through the eyes of a businessman entrenched in the private sector community. This extract also shows that he perceived the public sector partners to be slow and inefficient in comparison to the private sector partners. In his absence of showing any understanding of why public sector employees might have 'lots and lots of

meetings', and not seeming to appreciate more democratic or participatory ways of reaching decisions, there seem to be layers of difference – of heterogeneity – between partners which led to conflict. This seemed particularly acute, in relation to accepted working processes and assumptions about time spans for project development. Ronnie, Howard and Stuart all expressed in interviews that they expected a relatively short lead-in time to getting the project up and running, as demonstrated by Ronnie, which stemmed from their previous experiences of working in a private sector setting. They unquestioningly brought these expectations with them to the partnership setting:

Last year I had a timescale of about six to eight months in my head. That's how long things take in industry. And we've been on it for 18 months [sounds exasperated]. I now don't have a picture about how long it's going to take. I have a picture about how long I can sustain my own enthusiasm though.

(Ronnie, interview 1)

Stuart went further, in suggesting that a short lead-in time was crucial for this type of project, and indicated that individuals from business communities, based in the private sector, are used to a 'strike while the iron is hot' approach:

In business you make mistakes. Business is not an academic exercise, you can't hope to realise the end product if you're going to sit and talk for several years. You miss the opportunity and eventually it fizzles out. You have to take the plunge.

(Stuart interview)

Stuart also demonstrates that he brought his private sector benchmarks with him to the partnership setting. Howard, too, felt frustrated by what he perceived to be public sector working practices and processes, which he experienced as clashing with his own private sector working practices that he brought with him to the partnership:

I had this view that things would be a lot simpler than they were. I mean, bashing your head against the council again and again, not being able to do what you want to do, when you want to, means you're constantly in someone else's hands and that's kind of frustrating [...] Progress is so drawn out. Even after all this time, we're still just tinkering around the edges. [...] What makes things happen is what people do in-between meetings, and as far as I can tell it's only me and Ronnie who have done anything recently.

(Howard, interview)

Howard, Stuart and Ronnie gave the impression that the partners they perceived to have come from the public sector operated slowly and inefficiently, as though public sector partners were holding back the realisation of the project. Ronnie experienced this heterogeneity as a 'big culture clash':

I just find it difficult to say the least, they have a different view to the world than I've got. It's a big culture dash. Bin Laden versus the West kind of culture dash.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

Furthermore, Stuart also suggested that there was a disjuncture between the levels of determination, awareness, understanding and appropriate skills being brought to the partnership by private sector and public sector partners:

I think Ronnie feels like me, that the project idea is of total irrelevance unless it's actually put into practice. This has not happened. The idea has stayed within the partnership group [...] because those people [Ann and Matthew], to my view, have not had enough entrepreneurial ambition, drive, knowledge and practical experience to get this thing up and running
(Stuart, interview)

Two main points are implied by the extracts above: that the non-private sector partners (referring particularly to Ann and Matthew) were perceived by private sector partners to be incapable of acting independently or opportunistically; and they were not seen to exhibit sufficient understanding and entrepreneurial skills to realise the project.

As these senses of difference were sustained, but never sufficiently communicated or tackled, this paved the way for polarisation amongst partners. In Ronnie's case, he implicitly communicated instances of conflicting overlap between communities, within the partnership context, with a plethora of 'us against them' statements:

It's almost as though any organisation that is not business oriented doesn't seem to be able to be proactive. And in it's reactivity it seems to operate this 'keeping your head down' policy. You know, 'if we keep our head down it'll all go away and it'll be a different flavour next month so therefore we don't need to do anything'. Risk averse, absolutely risk averse. It feels like trying to boil the ocean, it just feels so hard when I think about it.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

There's no budget strategy. It's totally alien to how we work.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

Ronnie: One thing I've learnt through this project is we don't mix, business and charities and to a certain extent local government just don't mix. [...] They don't operate in a business-like way whatsoever. [...] So certainly, I'd never ever get involved in another project from a business point of view with a charity, ever. We would never partner up with a charity.

KV: And were you concerned about that to start with?

Ronnie: No, that's developed. They just don't operate out of the same set of values we operate out of. They're interested in funders, they're not interested in doing. They have no work ethic that I can see. They don't work as hard as we do, I mean I'm quite bitter about it.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

The extracts above illustrate that Ronnie expressed concerns about the differences between public and private sector partners in his first interview, and was finding it difficult to know how to work with this heterogeneity within the partnership. One year later, Ronnie felt he could not work with (or perhaps even respect) any individuals that come from organisations that were not based in the private sector. He saw them as bringing different values and characteristics (describing them as reactive, risk averse, selfish, lazy and free-loaders) to the partnership, which he did not perceive to be compatible with the values and characteristics brought by him and others belonging to the private sector.

Ann also communicated negative instances of conflicting overlap between communities within the partnership context:

Ann: There is a lack of understanding from the private sector contingent in relation to how, for example, government, local and central, works. And I actually am probably doing them a great favour by saying that there is a lack of understanding because I don't know that it is a lack of understanding I think they understand it very, very well. What they're not prepared to do is work with it. So there's a down right disregard for processes.

KV: How does this affect the development of the project or the effectiveness of the partnership?

Ann: It's completely decimated it, there's no other word. It's ruined it.

(Ann, interview 2)

Ann perceived the partners from the private sector to be unwilling to 'work with' other approaches to project development processes. This suggests that she thought they were reluctant to compromise on *their* norms. However, there was little

evidence to suggest that public or private sector partners tried to understand the others' ways of working or comprehend how they saw things. Across the partnership, there was little to suggest any preparedness to compromise, in terms of the working practices that partners brought with them.

For example, Ann saw the submission of funding applications as *the* approach that the partnership was taking to realise the vision:

What you do in the voluntary sector, you identify funding regimes and bodies, and you get into the format and the jargon, and everything that is needed you fit in, because it is a game. If you stick to the rules you stand a much better chance than if you keep trying to break them.
(Ann, interview 1)

Ann brought tacit 'rules' with her from the voluntary sector community, which she thought needed to be abided by, by all partners. However, in her second interview, she suggested that other partners (referring in particular to Ronnie and Howard) were trying to disrupt these 'rules', which Ann felt was detrimental to the development of the project:

Now unfortunately, there are people on the partnership that will not want to phrase things in the 'speak' that is going to attract the funding. People have to realise that if they do want to get funding then we have to put things in certain ways. We have to get a credible and fundable story in line in order to get that money. And we need money, desperately if we're going to actually do something.
(Ann, interview 2)

Ronnie and Howard saw Ann's funding-driven approach as just *one* means of getting the project up and running. Ronnie and Howard did not hesitate to try other approaches when the funding application failed to achieve financial resources for the project. It appeared that Ann was attached to a particular *process* and Ronnie and Howard were attached to a particular *outcome*:

So really, it's very flexible in my head. I have a fixed outcome but not a fixed way of getting there.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

That funding thing was artificial, very artificial and in many ways I wish we hadn't done it because a lot of people have latched onto that and are hanging onto that, seeing it as the way we're doing it, and we're not. We've simply written it to try and raise some money.

(Ronnie, 2)

There was much data to suggest that partners' perceptions of differences in personal and professional values and practices - particularly those borne of the public and private sector communities - were judged to have limited the capacity of the partners to work together effectively. Partners were especially adept at recognising their differences - rather than commonalities - with other partners and the professional communities they stemmed from, but there was little evidence to suggest that they tried to constructively work together to address this heterogeneity and the conflict it produced.

To contrast with the examples of problematic heterogeneous overlaps between communities, I explored the data for instances of heterogeneous overlaps that were positively negotiated. There were few examples of partners, who presented stark contrasts between what they had derived and brought from their external community memberships, who then negotiated this heterogeneity in positive and constructive ways in the partnership context. The only evidence-based positive example in the BV partnership setting was located around the relationship between Martin and Keith of UKTC, with Julian, Clare and Susie of APO. UKTC and APO were two distinct organisational communities, one based in the private sector and the other based in the voluntary sector. From my observations in the field, comments made in interview and informal discussion, there were few visible conflicts between these parties in relation to the development of the I4A project in Broadley.

This lack of conflict between UKTC employees (Martin and Keith) and APO employees (Julian, Clare and Susie), despite them stemming from different communities, can be partially explained by the formal contract that existed between the two parties. This appeared to effectively manage any potentially conflicting overlap between the organisations and their employees. The time-limited, formal contract between UKTC and APO gave definition to roles, responsibilities and duties of those people directly involved in the planning and implementation of the I4A project. Thus, those individuals (Martin, Keith, Julian, Clare and Susie) were enacting a different mode of social co-ordination to the others (Alan, Ronnie, Howard, Ann, Stuart, Matthew and Clive). For those

primarily interested in the delivery of the I4A project in Broadley, there were no observational data to suggest that they had to continually negotiate roles, relationships and overlaps, which were observed between those chiefly concerned with the implementation of the BV project.

The BV partnership did not operate from a base of formal contracts, and thus, the partners were not able to utilise the contract to manage instances of heterogeneity which resulted in conflict between communities. In his second interview, Ronnie reflected on his experience of working in partnership in the BV setting, and invoked the need for formal, legal contracts between partners:

If I was to do this again, I would go the same way that we always go; we would have very clear contracts. Memorandums of understanding are not contractual. I'd have it really clear who was doing what, what they were going to deliver and when they were going to deliver it by. And I'd sue them when they didn't or sack them if they worked for me. Simple as that. None of this airy-fairy partnership stuff. So yes, if I was doing this again we would have set up a properly constituted organization which has not partners, but contractors to it. I'd rather employ people who will deliver.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

The extract above highlights Ronnie wanting (but ultimately failing) to exert control over the partnership. He wanted to have power over the way things were done, who they were done by and by when, as he felt this was the only way that the [his] original vision might be realised. Without contractual agreements in place (and without the existence of strong social ties between partners – discussed separately below), Ronnie had become aware of the short-falls of informal, incomplete contracts for managing instances of heterogeneous overlap between communities in a partnership setting. He invoked a desire for complete contracts as he thought this would solve the problems he perceived in the BV partnership, such as partners not delivering, being slow and inefficient, and being insubordinate.

The previous two sections have illustrated overlapping community memberships between individuals in relatively simple terms. That is, I have discussed these overlaps in terms of individuals' memberships of singular, isolated communities. In practice, however, overlapping communities can be more complex and varied than this. In the next section, I will go some way towards illustrating instances of layers of overlapping communities, as individual partners come together.

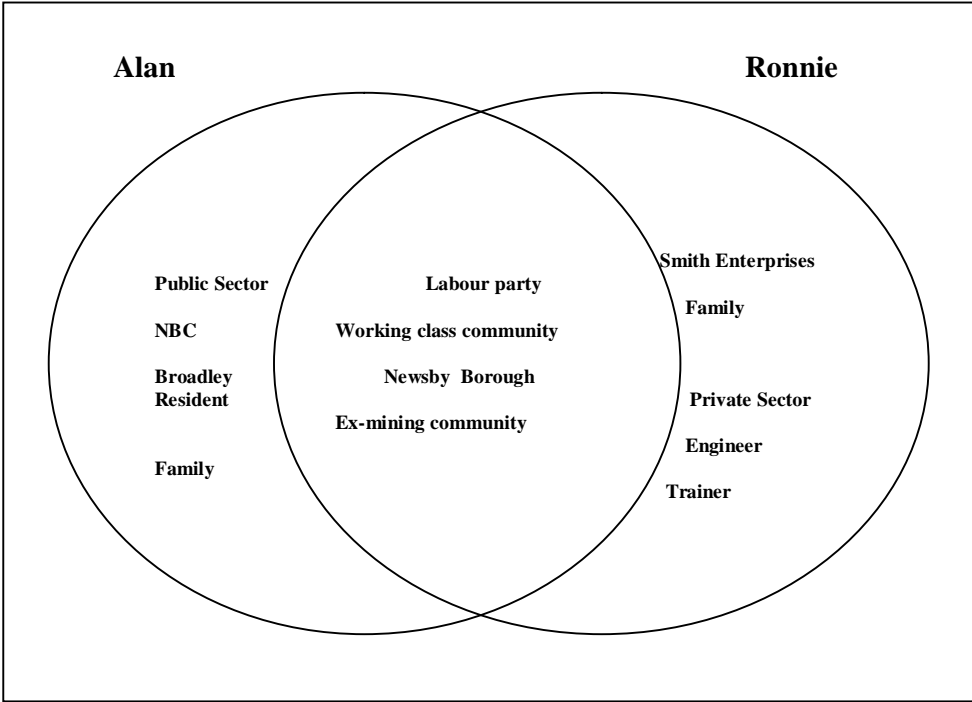
Multiplicity of community overlaps between partners

Multiplicity of community overlaps between partners refers to some partners' joint memberships of more than one community beyond the BV partnership. In this section, I illustrate through the data that overlapping community memberships can be multi-layered. There were instances of partners evidencing multiple overlaps of their community memberships, and where this occurred it produced either a sense of familiarity and their having faith in one another - supporting their ability to work together - or it produced a lack of faith in one another, which led to them struggling to work together. In this section, I exemplify both of these positions using two examples from the fieldwork. This allows me to further illustrate different types and degrees of overlapping communities that occurred in the BV partnership context.

The first example of partners exhibiting multiple community overlaps occurs between Alan and Ronnie. As detailed in Chapter Four, Alan and Ronnie did not know each other prior to working towards the development of the BV project, but in a short space of time they established a relationship, which served as a strong and trusting platform on which to seed the BV partnership. In their case, multiplicity of community overlaps was implicitly established during their first, coincidental meeting at a conference in Birmingham, and their subsequent shared car journey to Newsby Borough. Data cited earlier in this chapter, and in Chapter Four, suggests they quickly ascertained that they both saw themselves as having strong connections to working class, ex-mining communities and heritage, the Labour Party, and that they both had an interest in effecting positive social change in such communities. This relationship was sustained to the end of the BV partnership's life and beyond. Thus, one way of understanding how Alan and Ronnie came to generate such a strong working relationship, despite not having worked together before, is due to them establishing that they overlapped as members of at least two communities (see Figure 5.3 below). In Alan and Ronnie's case, their mutual acknowledgement that they shared both interests and values – consistent with their multiple overlapping community memberships - enabled

them to build a social tie, which facilitated the whole partnership’s development and was significant for its trajectory (see next section, ‘BV as a site of dynamic social ties’, for a detailed discussion of social ties within BV).

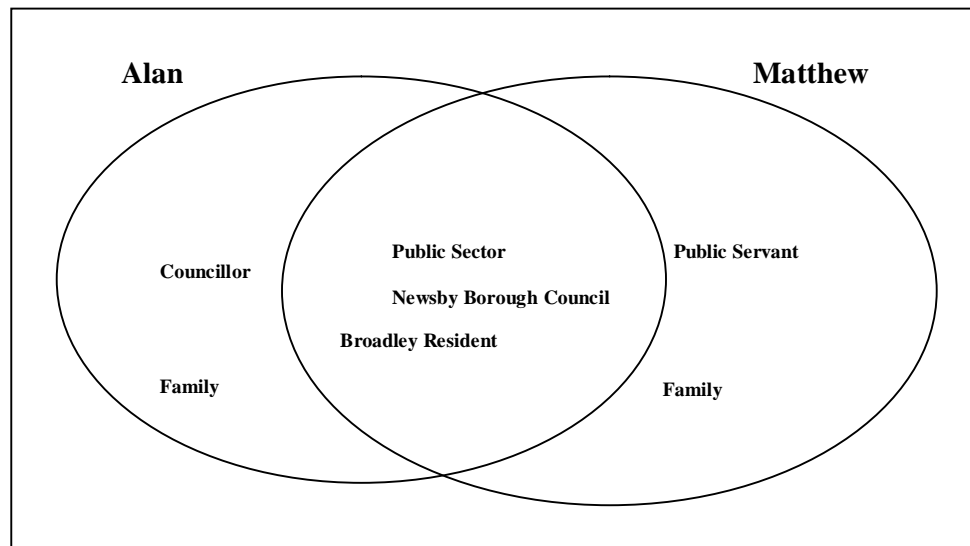
Figure 5.3: Data-illustrated overlaps between the communities of Alan and Ronnie



The data suggest that a sense of multiple overlapping communities between Alan and Ronnie contributed to the creation of a foundation for their working relationship (see overlap in Figure 5.3). The community memberships beyond the multiple overlaps between Alan and Ronnie, and what each might bring to the partnership from these (for example, Ronnie’s experience of enterprise; Alan’s authority and influence within the Borough Council and Broadley), was perceived to create added value. Thus, in Alan and Ronnie’s case, multiple community overlaps contributed to them establishing ‘sameness’, despite there also being differences between them. In the language of ‘us and them’, Alan and Ronnie largely saw themselves as being part of ‘us’ rather than ‘them’. It is arguable that this sense of ‘us’ might not have occurred to the same degree if some of those overlaps had not been recognised. For Alan and Ronnie, their multiple community overlaps seemed to create a confidence in their potential to work together.

Unlike the multiple community overlaps that partially produced the synergy between Alan and Ronnie, multiple community overlaps between partners can also be marked by layers of heterogeneity in values, beliefs and interests. As was illustrated in ‘Individuals as instances of overlap between communities’, above, both Alan and Matthew regarded themselves as belonging to Broadley and Newsby Borough Council (see Figure 5.4, below), however, this generated unease - for Matthew in particular. At the heart of this was the matter of he and Alan being so differently located within these communities, that they derived different, competing knowledge and experience, which they then brought to the BV partnership context. This knowledge and experience was derived from both personal and professional sources. Based around issues concerning the fundable legitimacy of Broadley Vision, this instance of multiple community overlaps seemed only to generate tension for Matthew (that was never properly addressed - see meeting 5, Chapter Four).

Figure 5.4: Data-illustrated overlaps between the communities of Alan and Matthew



From the two examples of multiple overlaps between individuals' community memberships, I have sought to demonstrate the concept of overlapping communities as one that warrants substantial interrogation of partners' personal and professional attitudes and motivations through the course of partnership

development. Throughout my accounts of overlapping communities, I have deliberately understated the roles and dynamics of social ties in partners' experiences of homogeneity and heterogeneity of values, beliefs and behaviours. Below, I will seek to illustrate how the concept of social ties is a valuable addition to the rethinking of partnership in terms of overlapping communities.

The BV partnership as a site of dynamic social ties

As introduced in Chapter Two, social ties refer to bonds or relationships that develop between people that support social interaction (personal or professional). In this thesis, the emergence of social ties as a theme of analysis stemmed primarily from the data. Comparisons of data, coded through the emergent and partnership coding frames (see Chapter Three), revealed that the latter coding frame - developed from the partnership literature - did not help to identify or explain all data coded through the emergent coding frame. This was especially prevalent in data concerned with the types and/or qualities of relationships between partners. This prompted my engagement with the community literature (including that on social ties). Interpretations of the data suggest that, along with the upshot of partners' overlapping community memberships shaping actions and experiences of partnership working, social ties between partners were vital, and yet implicit, in the establishment, operation and trajectory of the BV partnership. Social ties could strengthen or weaken through the course of communities overlapping; and this strength or weakness could also mediate partners' handling of community overlaps.

At times, identifying how partners were socially 'tied' to one another was clear and explicit, whilst at other times degrees of inference and interpretation were called for. However, data are sufficiently rich so as to enable an analysis of partners' social ties. With this, I make no claims towards having identified every aspect of partners' social ties with others. I focus on the dynamic aspects of social ties and their implications for consensus and conflict within the partnership, which were revealed through the course of Broadley Vision. Thus, this section addresses some of the characteristics and dynamics of partners' social ties within BV. It highlights the importance of social ties for the production of trust (or lack of) between

partners, which the literature emphasises as necessary in a network-like partnership (Gulati, 1995; Lane and Bachmann, 1998; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Dowling et al, 2004; Dhillon, 2007, 2009). Analysing a range of social ties within the BV partnership allows for an explanation of the variation in initial trust between the partners (as already evidenced in Chapter Four). This section also examines what benefits social ties between partners provided in relation to BV (e.g. trust, understanding, assets – finance, networks, knowledge, skills), and why this was significant.

Prior to discussing some of the social ties that pre-existed, were produced and maintained (or not) through the BV partnership, I will begin by looking at what the data suggest regarding how partners thought about the role and purpose of social ties with local people in relation to the development of BV. This is significant as such assumptions seemed to underline how partners expected social ties with local people to operate differently within BV.

Locating social ties in partners' ways of operating within BV

Social ties – forming new ones and activating pre-existing ones in relation to the pursuit of the BV project - differed between partners. It is possible to produce an initial reading of social ties by examining how partners approached business within the partnership. This section illustrates three partners' assumptions and default ways of working and behaving, and locates different notions of social ties within these ways of operating. Social ties are located in partners' initial and varied approaches to stimulating project activity. This sees social ties located differentially. However, this section does not propose that partners' different concerns for social tie formation were necessarily in conflict. This section illustrates partners' expectations of how social ties would function so as to achieve the BV project.

Ronnie's approach to setting up the project, and '*making stuff happen*' (Interview 1), as Chapter Four has already shown (see, for example, 'Seeking community involvement', 'An audience with Ronnie and Howard', 'Ronnie and Ann meet the BCHCA'), was largely dependent on the creation of new social ties with people in

Broadley. These people, it was hoped, would be willing to run and 'own' the BV project. Ronnie demonstrated that he was not disposed towards generating democratic community participation, in relation to developing the project idea or setting up the project; his key aim, initially, was to recruit Broadley residents who would be willing and able to take responsibility for *his* vision of the BV project and 'make it happen'. Ronnie's approach to furthering this strategy was to use his new social tie with Alan to gain access to individuals and groups within Broadley. Thus, Ronnie sought to use Alan as a bridge to social contexts that he, in isolation, would have found difficult to identify or access.

Overall, Ronnie's approach to stimulating partnership and project activity, was to work quickly to activate a mix of old (Howard and Stuart), new (Alan) and potential (Broadley residents) social ties. This approach to social ties contrasted with how Stuart suggested he would have stimulated activity, had the project been instigated by him. He explained (in interview) that he would have gathered people around him that he 'knew' could be relied upon, '*When something is struggling in my ward, I get people involved who I know and trust*'. He could not comprehend why Alan, in his own ward of Broadley, was not adopting the same approach:

I would have thought Alan would know the people in Broadley who should be involved. I can't understand why he's not asking the partnership group 'What can I do to help move things on?' I mean, Broadley is his territory. Why isn't he using his contacts?
(Stuart, interview)

Stuart suggested that he would have played a more direct and hands-on role, than Alan appeared to, especially towards involving local people in the development of BV. Stuart would have activated intimate, pre-existing social ties in the locality, whereas Ronnie tried to enlist local people through a less intimate, formal list of contacts provided by Alan - which had very limited success (see Chapter Four).

In generating early BV progress, Ann located social ties differently again to Ronnie and Stuart. A main difference between Ann and Ronnie's approach to social ties was time. Ronnie's approach was to get out and about in Broadley as quickly as possible, so as to meet local people and present them with the ideas behind the BV project (to essentially 'sell' it to them). He did this directly with representatives of

local groups (August-September 2001), and indirectly via a leaflet drop of BV launch invitations (September 2001). These were approaches that Ann did not condone:

AH: Essentially it needs to be something that is more than telling people what is going to happen. If you really want local people to be involved then you need to show them what that actually might be or look like. So much as I am happy for people [Ronnie, Howard, Alan] to distribute invitations and door-knock; it only provides a basic level of information. But for me the bottom line is to provide something that resembles what ultimately it is that you are working towards. And for me that is providing that opportunity for local people to come together and to want even more. And the only thing I can think of to do that is to put on one of my community training events. To put on an event and to say, 'Come and try it'. You'll be getting people involved and they'll be able to feel what it is you're trying to do, and only when they start to do that will they really start to understand. It's no good just putting up a picture [Artist's impression, commissioned by Ronnie] and saying 'This is what we want', because it is intangible for people.

KV: So how would you go about inviting people to a community training event in Broadley? What would that look like?

AH: I would identify groups and organisations that are voluntary sector-led and are community-based, so that's all sports, all uniformed organisations, every organisation you can think of. This would be my baseline. I'd start from here. Now a lot of those organisations' client bases are ordinary people, whatever that means. So they will bring other people in – friends, neighbours, family members. I certainly wouldn't approach it by sending an invitation to everyone in Broadley [as done by Ronnie and Alan]. I would send an invite to specific groups and organisations that deal with many people in that area. That should be the start point.

(Ann, interview 1)

It goes back to this woolly vision that others continue to cite, that, 'This needs to be given over to the community'. Before you give anything to anybody, community or anybody, they have to 'want' it, and they have to have the skills, the abilities and the resources to make something of it. You can't just say, 'Hey, haven't we done you a favour; that's your building go and do what you can with it'. People [Ronnie and Howard] as far as I'm concerned, have got wishy-washy ideals.

(Ann, interview 2)

From the data above, Ann's preferred approach to forming social ties with local people, would have involved the systematic identification of groups that operated in Broadley. Rather than meeting groups and trying to immediately 'sell' them the BV vision, Ann would, '*get a handle on what organisations exist in Broadley*', by visiting Broadley Library, all other local public venues, looking at community notice boards and the community website (initial meeting with Ann, 3rd October 2001). She would then offer each organisation an introductory interview and a follow-up meeting, which would culminate with a workshop event, '*I will be asking each organisation to identify their learning and training needs. I will then filter the responses and group*

the issues raised, and then put on a series of tailored workshops in Broadley, using my database of 65 facilitators' (initial meeting with Ann, 3rd October 2001). This envisaged a slower and steadier approach to building social ties with local people, making time for trust to develop between target groups and Ann. Such an approach may have reduced people's suspicion in early interactions with members of the partnership, which may have avoided responses such as those received by Ann and Ronnie from BCHCA (see Chapter Four, '17th September 2001').

Ann's planned approach to striking up social ties with local people further differed from Ronnie and Stuart, as she was keen for the partnership to achieve funding before local connections were made in earnest:

My role, I guess, [...] it's to use my skills of getting people involved and developing people. However, funding has always been a priority, and first I think we need funding to do what we are setting out to do. [...] It would have been good if we'd had some money to start work on the nuts and bolts of the project, like the building so that we had a focus for the locality straight away. It would have been an easy way to attract local people in. They could have seen what we were trying to do and would have known we were committed and serious about the project succeeding
(Ann, interview 1)

Ann thought that people would be more willing to participate in the BV project and trust the partnership group, if they could see that the BV partnership had already secured financial investment. In prioritising the sourcing of funds, Ann did not want to whole-heartedly reach out to local people until this had occurred. This was in stark contrast to Ronnie's more immediate 'hard-sell' approach (see his interaction with BCHCA, September 2001, Chapter Four) – which did not make time for establishing trust and rapport. In this sense, time for methodically building social ties with local groups was overlooked. From his own, rationalist perspective, the communication of the BV idea alone should have been enough to entice people. Even during meeting 17, without there having been any collective conciliatory reflection, Ronnie was still forging ahead with this approach, *'I'll contact some councillors and have a meeting but if they're not interested, I'll just up-sticks again. I tried for two years in my own village and I've tried for over two years in Broadley to get something going Somewhere, someone will appreciate what we're trying to do'*. He believed he just had to find the right person, someone who would 'appreciate' the vision and agree to take it on, rather than building social ties incrementally with local groups.

In this section, I have sought to illustrate three partners' differing approaches and understandings of how social ties should be activated and generated with local people in the development of BV. For Ronnie, social ties appeared to be a lesser concern, made relatively redundant by the righteousness and attraction that 'the vision' should have for people. For Stuart, an informal approach to activating intimate, pre-existing social ties was seen as the necessary primary starting point. For Ann, a formal, systematic approach to generating social ties with local people was seen as important, but secondary to the partnership group establishing the physical and material set-up for the project. This 'snapshot' suggests partners' contrasting dispositions - stemming from their overlapping communities - towards forging and developing social ties in the development of BV. As concepts that are highly relational and that are ultimately concerned with social co-ordination, overlapping communities and social ties are – in practice - inextricably linked. In the following sections, consistent with the idea of negotiation and movement, I will illustrate social ties as variously dynamic *and* unchanging through the course of BV.

Social ties within BV that pre-existed, were produced and maintained (or not) through partnership working

For the purposes of this section, I focus on four sets of partners and analyse the nature of their social ties at different points during BV's trajectory. This affords an exploration of how social ties shifted and changed over time in the BV partnership.

Social ties that became stronger over time: The example of Alan and Ronnie

As noted earlier in this chapter, the social tie that developed between Alan and Ronnie through their conference attendance in Birmingham, in 2000, was highly significant for the creation of the BV partnership:

RS: It [BV] came about because I met Alan Grogan at a meeting and for years I have been involved in learning and using computers to help to do this. [...] Alan had also had ideas about his own community and trying to get them together, trying to help sort out the problems between the young and the old people, the intergenerational stuff, generally, just trying to bring the community back together. [...] And we kind of just chatted about this over whatever it was we were drinking or eating at the time.

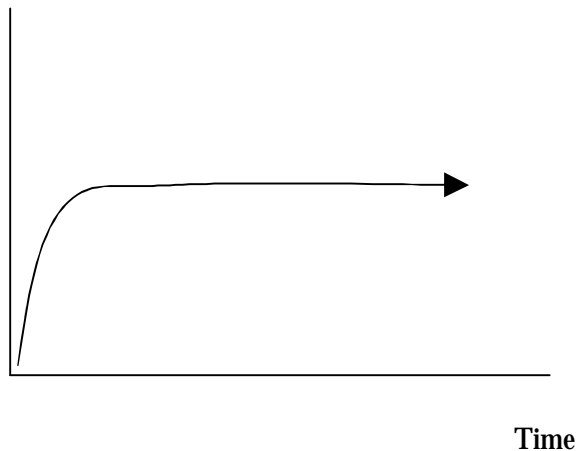
KV: Did you know Alan Grogan before?

RS: No. He was talking to someone I knew, so I just went across and talked to them and was introduced to Alan and we got chatting. And he offered me a lift back. So we developed the idea [for BV] between Birmingham and Newsby.

Their social tie would have been fairly weak in the beginning, as they had never worked together before and had no prior knowledge of one another. Data suggest their social tie grew stronger, relatively quickly - as highlighted in 'Multiplicity of community overlaps between partners', above (see illustrative diagram below, Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6: Social tie which became stronger over time

Strength of tie



Alan and Ronnie were able to make positive connections on several levels, in a short space of time, which culminated in, '[...] a *good personal relationship. We understand each other; we're from the same stock*' (Initial meeting with Ronnie, 11th September 2001). They established very early on that they were both well-connected (albeit differently), having access to people, resources and influence, as well as sharing a broad set of social interests:

When I met with Alan, it was obvious that he was interested in the same sorts of ideas as me; he just wasn't very good at articulating his wishes.
(Initial meeting with Ronnie, 11th September 2001)

It's like most things, you look at things in a pragmatic way, and Alan said he had a building so that was the start, and then he started to tell me about Broadley the place. [...] it sounded like it

contained the sort of target population I wanted to hit. It contained young and old people. It contained a spread of ex-miners. And I largely wanted to help the ex-mining community, but of course I can't operate without Alan and the others.

(Ronnie, interview 1)

Ronnie's a go-getter. I mean, it's taken me 13 years ~~get~~ this far by myself, but now that he's involved, it's as if someone hit the start button and we're away, so I'm pleased. We'll rocket forwards now.

(Alan, interview 1)

This social tie was formed relatively effortlessly, which, arguably, was pivotal for the operation and trajectory of the partnership. On 30th September 2001 (see Chapter Four), when delivering BV launch invitations to Broadley residences, I observed Ronnie and Alan outside of the formal BV partnership meeting context. Arriving at Alan's house, Ronnie was already there. Together they were sitting down having a cup of tea. I noted in my field notes:

Alan's wife let me in. I could hear Alan and Ronnie laughing loudly together as I went into the house. They both seem relaxed and comfortable in each other's company. There was much good-humoured banter between them – mainly about sport. Not only that, but Ronnie appeared completely at ease interacting with Alan's wife and grandchildren who were also milling about in the half hour before we started delivering the invitations.

(Field notes, 30th September 2001)

Activities such as this were important for the development of their social tie. Contact outside of the partnership meetings seemed to help the fostering of shared values and interests, increasing each other's mutual awareness of interests, aims and perspectives. Data suggested that Ronnie and Alan had much 'behind the scenes' contact and were able to reach each other easily as well as frequently:

I'm just doing a deal with Alan to use the other room in the BCB. Howard and I had a conversation with Alan, when we were driving the other day.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

Alan wants to keep it [BV partnership] smooth. Alan's had a quiet word with me a couple of times. I've told him that I will just keep out of it. (Ronnie, interview 2)

Their social tie was generally reciprocal, with these partners' perceiving resources, influence and support as flowing in both directions in relation to the BV project. However, this did not mean that working together was necessarily experienced as problem-free:

He's not good on ideas. I find working with him frustrating.
(Initial meeting with Ronnie, 11th September 2001)

I find Alan chairing the meetings difficult. (Interview 1)

As well as these frustrations, there were also instances of Alan letting Ronnie down over the partnership's duration. For example, Alan had provided Ronnie with an out-of-date list of local contacts (see 'Seeking community involvement: July 2001, Chapter Four), and, at meeting 2 (September 2001), it transpired that Alan had not had the BV launch invitations delivered as previously promised. Alan's lack of reliability, however, did not appear to bother Ronnie. He continued to work with and have faith in the value of working with Alan.

This can be partially explained by the strength of the social tie that they quickly established – which could also be attributed to their overlapping communities - and the fact that Ronnie felt confident about certain things that he could expect Alan to do:

Alan will do practical things.
(Initial meeting with Ronnie, 11th September 2001)

Alan will only deliver if he does it then and there, he's an instant person, if he says he can do this he gets up and does it.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

Ronnie demonstrated that he had developed a degree of predictability regarding Alan's behaviour. Their social tie (time spent together, frequency and ease of communication, positive experience of task-based behaviour) allowed Ronnie to sufficiently understand how Alan worked, which enabled a level of co-ordination and co-operation to develop. However, Ronnie appeared to increasingly regard his social tie with Alan as a functional resource over the duration of BV. Despite there being data to suggest that both men were instrumental for each other's purposes - in helping them to meet their personal-social objectives – Ronnie illustrated that his social tie with Alan performed, in the main, a highly practical role:

I only ring Alan when I need him to do something
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Ronnie also used his social tie with Alan to navigate problems with other partners, albeit it in a functional way. For example, Ronnie asked Alan to arrange for him to have his own set of keys to the BCB, after a problem occurred between him and Ann:

[...] a week later, I needed the keys to get into the BCB, and I'd arranged for Susie to have them so I could just nip across, and I find that Ann has demanded them from Susie because she heard that I wanted to use them. I mean, that's bloody pathetic, 'I own the keys', it's like stamping your feet. [...] Well, I've solved that problem now, we've all got keys [Susie separately confirmed that Ronnie had asked Alan for his own set of keys].
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Thus, Ronnie's relationship with Alan was important, particularly when he started to work towards the BV project outside the partnership setting. What is interesting about their social tie is that even when there were disagreements between he and Alan, there remained a confidence that they could trust and co-operate with each other:

RS: I mean there are some difficult discussions to have with the TA [Territorial Army], because Alan was a bit undiplomatic with them and told them they'd got to go, and me and Howard had a conversation with them and told them they didn't have to go.

KV: And what does Alan think now?

RS – Well, he's on our side, well, whether he is is irrelevant, his actions are what's important to us [he and Howard]. I care little about what people say, I just watch where their feet go because that's the important bit, and Alan is definitely with us.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Even when Alan found himself playing a different role – as explicit partnership mediator – at meeting 15 (see Chapter Four), his personal relationship with Ronnie was still clearly evidenced. Tensions were evidenced between Alan and Ronnie during the final partnership meeting (see meeting 18, Chapter Four), but this was immediately diffused in a straightforward manner and they appeared to be able to move on happily and amicably. To summarise, their social tie was new - it had no history prior to the idea for the BV project - but they were able to develop a relatively strong, albeit context specific, social tie which endured the whole lifespan of the partnership and continued beyond as a personal friendship (see 'What happened next?', Chapter Four). Alan and Ronnie quickly established a range of

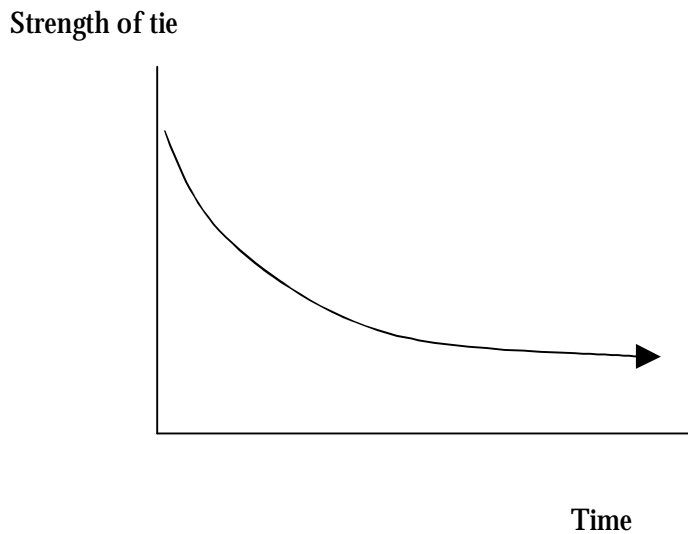
shared perspectives and mutually beneficial interests and values. There was also respect and admiration between them (*'We're from the same stock'* – Ronnie; *'Ronnie's a go-getter'* – Alan). This enabled them to roll with the challenges and disappointment that arose.

Social ties that became weaker over time: The example of Howard and Ronnie's ties with Martin and Keith

This example introduces a set of social ties that became weaker over the duration of the Broadley Vision partnership. It was assumed by Howard (Senior Manager of Communication Skills Programmes, UKTC) and Ronnie (Business Management Consultant and ex-Senior Manager of Total Quality Control, UKTC) that the social ties activated with Martin (Senior Manager of Digital Inclusion Programmes, UKTC) and Keith (Project Manager, Digital Inclusion Programmes, UKTC), in relation to the BV project, would be relatively strong, reciprocal and reliable, as they were already known to one another, being (or having been in Ronnie's case) employed by the same company. However, the strength of their social ties with Martin and Keith diminished over the duration of BV, thus becoming less reliable. This shift is illustrated in figure 5.7, below.

Howard and Ronnie assumed that Martin's involvement would bring legitimate UKTC resources to the BV project in terms of staff, funding and equipment, *'Well, it was a door for us to siphon in UKTC money, that was the major reason for us doing that. There's a huge amount of money that UKTC's siphoning into this kind of thing'* (Ronnie, interview 2). Ronnie and Howard felt that, *'He [Martin] is a key person in terms of this project moving on.'* (Ronnie, email correspondence, 1st December 2001).

Figure 5.7: Social ties that became weaker over time



Both seemed to think that because they had belonged to the same organisation as Martin and Keith that reciprocal social ties would follow, particularly as they felt they were performing a favour:

We got them [Martin, Keith and APO] in [to Broadley], it was us that did that, me and Howard, I mean without us they wouldn't even be there, and we had a deal with them that everything that was said about APO, all publicity would have 'part of the Broadley Vision' strapped across it, and Howard had had from Martin that all the adverts and press would have that on. And they didn't do it at all.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

Howard and Ronnie's hope for the activated social tie with Martin and Keith was rapidly weakened through activities such as the lack of consistent public statements about BV, as outlined in the extract above. Furthermore, Ronnie described a situation where his and Howard's expectations of reciprocal relations with Martin, Keith (and APO) were not met:

All the stuff that was in that room [BCC] was provided by us, everything And we looked after it for them [Martin, Keith and APO][...] What have they done for us? I mean we willingly did it, wanted to do it even, so it's our fault, a mistake that will never happen again. I mean, next time I'm asked, it'll be 'no'.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

Ronnie assumed that his and Howard's support of the I4A launch event (see Chapter Four) would be reciprocated in some way by Keith and Martin, but when

this did not happen, trust between them was eroded, which affected future interactions in relation to BV. What had been expected to be a relatively strong, facilitative, reciprocal social tie, ended up being experienced as a tie that was increasingly weak, unpredictable and unreliable:

You know, I wouldn't say that the partnership is right between what I want to bring to the party and what Martin Hewitts wants to bring to the party. I mean, for instance, he signed off that letter [I4A Launch letter], I've had a go at him about signing off that letter, and I'm saying to him, I actually said to him 'There's no mention of Broadley Vision in the letter', and he said 'Well that's not the letter I signed off then'. Well, I doubt that to be honest with you, I doubt that.

(Howard, interview)

My field notes reflect that Howard and Keith were increasingly reluctant to volunteer to bear costs for one another as time passed. For example, in meeting 8, there was discussion between Howard and Keith over whose UKTC budget would fund the installation of broadband cabling and the setting up of internet connections in the BCC and BCB, prior to the launch of the I4A project in Broadley. I noted, *'There was much 'Who will foot the bill?' talk'*, with neither Howard nor Keith wanting to be taken advantage of by the other.

At partnership meetings 9 and 12 (see Chapter Four), Howard communicated concern regarding the lack of co-ordination taking place between Martin/Keith/APO and BV (particularly he and Ronnie). Howard was disappointed that informally 'agreed' actions between he and Martin had not been carried out. Howard felt that the social tie was not sufficiently reciprocal, with resources and support flowing only *from* him and Ronnie *to* Martin and Keith, which he did not believe was sustainable:

I think there's got to be some element of equality, and people can feel that, if you feel that one party is putting in more or taking more than another, then the thing will kind of fall over.
(Howard, interview)

There were data to suggest that Ronnie and Howard did not appreciate or understand Martin and Keith's UKTC-based relationship with APO.

I'm annoyed at part of UKTC, yes. They haven't got the guts to carry out what they should do. I mean All People Online are responsible to UKTC and UKTC [Martin and Keith] should be

cracking the whip, I mean these people [APO] are paying themselves good amounts of money and I'm actually delivering what they should be delivering
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Howard and Ronnie thought they would be able to influence and manipulate the link with APO for BV's purposes, via their social ties with Martin and Keith. However, informal co-ordination via indirect social ties with APO, did not prove possible, and was even pre-empted by Julian Fox (Chief Executive, All People Online) at meetings 6 and 7 (see Chapter Four), where he explicitly communicated that the I4A project officer was not to become a development worker for BV. This threatened to thwart Howard and Ronnie's original hopes, but they were determined to access what they saw as UKTC resources for the development of BV:

In effect Howard is paying er, UKTC is paying Susie's pay for the year.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

By now, the assumed-to-be strong social ties between Howard and Ronnie, and Martin and Keith had weakened markedly. With this now seeming to have little direct instrumental value for the ill-defined BV project, a change of approach was called for. It seemed that if they could not access the resources they wanted via their social ties with Martin and Keith, then they would attempt to influence decisions over resources via the chains of command that existed within the UKTC hierarchy:

I'm annoyed at UKTC, there are a couple of managers, Martin and Keith, Martin's OK but he's not hands on enough to get a grip of it, but Keith is just paddling his own canoe, he's running his own agenda and he really did annoy me, so I gave some really serious feedback to his line at the top.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Both Howard and Ronnie thought they could affect access to resources by 'pulling rank' within UKTC, although this seemed to be minimally effective in practice. Mainly because there were not the hierarchical social ties in place for Ronnie and Howard's criticism to be acted on, thus rendering their protestations impotent. For example, Ronnie intimates that Howard should have had Keith removed from the project:

RS: I want it [the BCB] switched online permanently and that's another thing I'm annoyed with Keith Winters about.

KV: Why, what happened?

RS: He got the internet line to the BCB disconnected. I just couldn't believe that anyone could be such a plonker. He'd been really clearly told, I know he'd been really clearly told to leave it. I'm staggered with Howard's patience, I really am. When Howard worked with me at UKTC, I mean maybe it's the community stuff he's got into, but when he worked with me he wouldn't hesitate, the bloke [Keith] would have been out on his ear.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

However, this could never have been more than an empty threat, as Keith did not work for Howard; he worked for Martin, so Howard was not in a position to be able to formally direct Keith. Although the social tie between Howard/Ronnie and Martin/Keith was not new - it had a history prior to the BV project – and was assumed to be a positive connection for BV, they were unable to develop a strong, reciprocal, durable social tie in the context of BV, due to competing interests stemming from different departments in UKTC.

Social tie that remained strong over time: The example of Ronnie and Howard's tie

Ronnie and Howard had a longstanding, pre-existing social tie prior to the BV partnership. They had been colleagues and friends since working together at UKTC in the 1980s. Their social tie had been sustained following Ronnie's retirement from UKTC, and they continued to be involved in each other's work projects (with Ronnie running his own Management Consultancy business), as well as spending time together outside of work – they were friends. As a result, their social tie, at the beginning of the BV partnership, could be described as multiplex, frequent and durable, and remained so after the BV partnership had come to a premature demise (see 'What happened next?', Chapter Four). Their social tie was one that was strong over time (figure 5.8, below). They evidenced spending time together across multiple social contexts. For example, Howard mentioned in his interview, *'We've always met up for a drink or something to eat when I'm passing through Newsby or if he's down my way, we do this regularly, in fact, I'm going over to his [house] later this afternoon'*, and Ronnie demonstrated that he had links with Howard's family too,

'I've known Howard and his family for years, they're a great bunch' (Ronnie, interview 1). I also had the opportunity to twice observe interactions between Ronnie and Howard and their wives, once on 25th October 2002 and again on 6th November 2002, which suggested they had friendships outside of the partnership context:

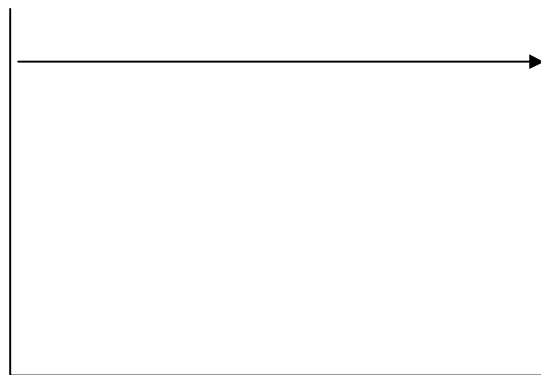
When I arrived at the BCB for redecoration duty, Ronnie and his wife and Howard and his wife were already there. Ronnie was on a step-ladder taking down curtains and Howard was bringing in buckets of soapy water in preparation for washing down the walls. They were talking about motorbikes – Howard was considering buying a new one. Their wives were in a small kitchen area at the back of the building making cups of tea. They were laughing and joking about who should get which of the mismatched mugs they had found. They seemed very relaxed in each other's company.

(Field notes, 25th October 2002)

Howard's involvement in BV occurred through one of his informal conversations with Ronnie, *'Ronnie was just telling me about it [idea for BV]. And then I said 'Well, why don't we talk to Alan, we might be able to start to do something about it''* (Howard, interview).

Figure 5.8: Social tie which remained strong over time

Strength of tie



Time

There was also a strong sense of mutuality in Ronnie and Howard's relationship, and they both illustrated that they knew and supported each other's interests in relation to BV. For example, in the following extract, Howard shows that he knows Ronnie well enough to be able to predict his behaviour, and is able to influence his actions through their strong social tie.

I know what would have happened if Ronnie had taken it on [project management of BV], he'd have ended up getting frustrated and then he'd have chucked the whole thing in [...] and I can influence Ronnie and he needs to do more about bringing Alan back into the fold, that kind of stuff, and Ronnie will stay with it as long as we're [Howard and Alan] there.
(Howard, interview)

They understood each other; they knew what made each other tick. They also had experience of being able to trust and rely on one another, because of their strong, pre-existing social tie.

Howard and I [...] always deliver what we've committed to do. (Ronnie, interview 1)

Ronnie gets frustrated because he doesn't see any form of commitment from anybody else. He sees the two of us having gone into local groups and tried to do stuff [...] and yet it doesn't feel like it's reciprocated.
(Howard, interview)

Ronnie also demonstrated that he felt a sense of obligation to Howard in relation to BV. After his second interview, he suggested to me that he remained involved out of loyalty to Howard, as he felt Howard became involved through him and now UKTC time and resources had been committed as a result (fieldnotes, 29th November 2002). Howard also illustrated awareness of an obligatory aspect of his social tie with Ronnie in relation to BV:

You're probably not surprised by the fact that you don't often see Ronnie Smith here [at partnership meetings] because he gets so frustrated by the fact that nothing happens. And his view is, I mean I'm trying hard to keep him involved in it, and he will keep involved with it as long as I'm involved in it, so that's why it's important that I come.
(Howard, interview)

Not only did they acknowledge the influence they had over each other, but they also suggested they spoke for one another in the partnership context.

Howard and I [...] agreed that I would only turn up if he couldn't, because I can't be doing with that [the partnership meetings] so I don't do that bit now.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Ronnie and Howard both intimated that they interacted together regularly outside of the partnership meetings – whether it be face-to-face, via telephone or email – and it was clear they used this frequent contact to discuss the partnership and to

make decisions between themselves (and sometimes with Alan) that would affect the partnership in one way or another:

I mean I did, I suppose, if I'm honest about it, talk with Howard about us literally taking over.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

Howard and Ronnie decided between themselves that Howard would attend the meetings on both their behalves (a detail that was not communicated to the other partners). Howard was happy to attend and provide feedback to Ronnie in his absence, so that Ronnie did not have to 'deal with' the frustrations of the partnership meetings. Ronnie was content with this arrangement, mainly because he trusted Howard, and felt that Howard would continue to represent his interests at the meetings, '*Howard's the only one I can totally rely on*' (Ronnie, interview 2). They came across very much as a social unit in the BV context; Ronnie talked about whether he perceived partners to be on '*our side*' (Ronnie, interview 2), meaning his and Howard's. In fact, there were numerous examples of Ronnie and Howard thinking and operating as one:

Howard and I had a conversation with Alan when we were driving the other day.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

I'm really naffed off with 'People Online', or whatever they call themselves, and so is Howard. I mean, we've given really heavy feedback about that organization. My view is that UKTC ought to withdraw support for it.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

[...] we got them in; it was us that did that, me and Howard.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

It's not just my way. It's my way and Howard's way. Howard's just less vocal about it.
(Ronnie, interview 2)

When Ronnie ceased attending partnership meetings, he continued to work closely with Howard (and Alan) behind the scenes, '*Howard will keep the partnership sweet [by attending meetings] and we'll carry on what we're doing outside of it.*' (Ronnie, interview 2). In this sense, Howard became Ronnie's main source of information regarding the

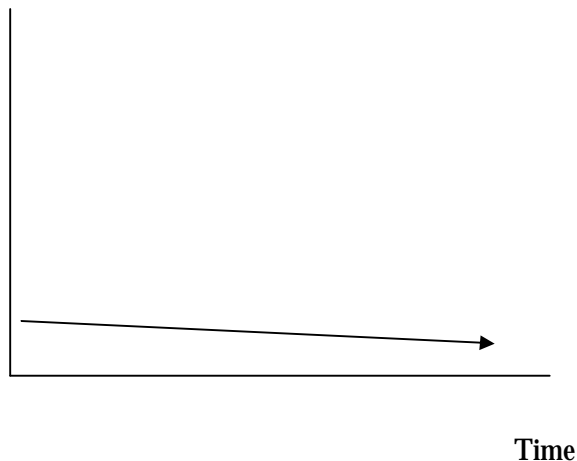
partnership. This became especially important when Ann removed Ronnie from the BV circulation list in November 2002 (reported to me after Ann's second interview), thus stopping him from directly receiving formal agendas and meeting minutes. As an action in itself, this was a rather stinging indictment of how partners had negotiated their contrasting approaches to the development of BV.

Social ties that remained weak over time: The example of Ann's ties with Howard and Ronnie

Prior to BV, Ann had no pre-existing social ties with Howard or Ronnie. Thus, the social ties they developed were not based on previously founded trust and reciprocity. As discussed above, in relation to Alan and Ronnie, it is possible for partners to establish a trusting and amicable working relationship even if they do not have a history of working together. At the beginning of the partnership, Ann, and Howard and Ronnie, saw their new social ties as promising to develop in positive ways. For example, Ronnie suggested that Ann could be trusted to carry out partnership tasks, '*I know, generally speaking that Ann will deliver on what she has agreed to do.*' (Ronnie, interview 1). However, their social ties remained weak – becoming weaker, if shifting at all (Figure 5.9, below).

Figure 5.9: Social tie which remain weak over time

Strength of tie



Data suggest that they perceived one another as having high levels of individual social and human capital, which would allow each to access resources and assets to bring to the partnership (networks, technological knowledge, resources, achieving funding, engaging community groups, etc.); but they did not appear to be concerned with developing stronger social ties with one another. They seemed uninterested in developing high levels of social capital – such as through the establishment of trust, reciprocity, shared norms, rewards and sanctions, and open information channels - which suggest the social ties of Ann to Howard and Ronnie, were assumed to be purely functional:

The offer [to the Broadley community] will be around things like UKTC's 'Communication Matters' training now we can do that. We know we can do Ann's community training event. We can offer those events and we can put them on free. We could probably offer getting on to the Internet free. All those sorts of things we could offer fairly quickly and fairly easily.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

Based on Alan's recommendation, Ronnie initially perceived Ann as an individual who possessed knowledge and expertise – in the form of community training events, as well as funding experience – which could be directly transferred to the practical development of the BV project. However, there came disappointment for both sides. For example, Ann did not take responsibility for the BV website after she had agreed to, and Ronnie and Howard were perceived to be unreliable when it came to honouring agreed tasks and deadlines (see Chapter Four, meetings 11 and 12):

And also the website, I asked Ann if she and Molly [Ann's Administration Assistant] were interested, Ann said Molly was very interested. But to be fair I haven't heard a thing about it and it certainly hasn't been done. That was two months ago. So I have some questions about that.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

Somehow or somewhere along the line, things have gone wrong and decisions aren't followed and aren't adhered to, that have been talked about and discussed at partnership meetings, because certain individuals go off and do their own thing and OK, the two individuals are Ronnie Smith and Howard Barber.
(Ann, interview 2)

The narrative in Chapter Four illustrates the cumulative breakdown of the social ties between Ann, and Ronnie and Howard, via misunderstandings, perceived broken promises and a lack of shared norms and values. They did not develop

trust or reciprocal relations as time went on. It was also observed that they did not take many opportunities to spend time together outside of partnership meetings – they did not seem to communicate about anything beyond the business of the BV partnership; thus, reducing chances to get to know one another and to form social bonds that may have helped facilitate co-ordination and co-operation between them. This was exemplified in Ronnie's discussion of a 'special meeting' that had been promised by Ann but was not carried out:

I was kind of hoping that we would have a special meeting that Ann would have organised, because she said she wanted us to have one where we had lunch together; a more relaxed, informal meeting. Well, that's a good idea. I think we should do that, and she's got the budget for it, but I haven't heard from her.
(Ronnie, interview 1)

This implies a belief that 'a special meeting' was the sort of activity that could have benefited the partnership and the relationships within it. Over the lifespan of the partnership, there was an absence of these sorts of activity, where partners came together outside of partnership meetings. For example, Ann did not get involved in delivering invitations with Ronnie and Alan in September 2001 or the BCB re-decoration activity in October 2002. Such activities appeared to provide positive associational opportunities for individuals as well as performing a functional role. For example, from my field notes after the decoration activity:

Today was hard work, but it was fun as well. [...] We were all together in the BCB room [me, Susie, Howard and his wife, and Ronnie and his wife]. There was something disarming about seeing people in a different context and in their overalls and old clothes, and with their families. The atmosphere was relaxed and happy. Everyone was mucking in – washing walls, painting, cleaning brushes, making cups of tea. [...] There was a lot of laughter, telling stories and sharing anecdotes.
(Field notes, 25th October 2002)

Such activities helped to build stronger social ties and understandings between some partners, but data shows that Ann was not involved in any of these, which may have contributed to the unconstructive and weak social ties that emerged.

Another feature of the relationship between Ann and Howard/Ronnie, which suggested a rapidly weakening social tie, was the problem reported around communication between partnership meetings:

I haven't heard from her [...] I rely on email because it's so much easier. [...] I know it doesn't suit other people, but I can only afford to give my time on that basis. (Ronnie, interview 1)

Howard's communication with me [...] started to dwindle off, and since Christmas I haven't heard from him. And even though I have sent him numerous emails, asking him for updates, for feedback into the partnership meetings in his absence, asked for numerous sorts of information, he hasn't got back to me at all.
(Ann, interview 2)

I think I can cope with most things but I can't actually cope with being totally ignored.
(Ann, interview 2)

As communication channels between Ann, and Howard and Ronnie, became limited, this would not have raised their capacity to resolve growing tensions. Weak social ties reflected a lack of mutual understanding and empathy, which contributed to a series of misunderstandings. This was particularly evident around the issue of funding:

I suspect that Ann's got quite a lot of money [...] but that's not on the table as far as I'm concerned [...] and I know she's got a handful of money because she simply says, 'Well, five grand, that isn't a problem', so I think, 'Well, there's quite a bit of money there', and I haven't got any more money, I've kind of done my bit already.
(Howard, interview)

KV: The whole funding side of things seems a bit hushed-up to me. No-one ever seems to say, 'I've got this much money that we can work with', it seems more like, 'Who's going to fund this then?' And then someone usually says, 'I can give this'. What are your thoughts on this?

AH: I have said within partnership meetings that I will pay for certain things and I'm very firm about what I will do and what I can do. But I suppose I never explain where it's coming from, and maybe now it is time to say to the others, 'Look, this is money that I am generating' [...] I think that is one hell of a commitment to make, to actually pour my income generation money into another project [BV]. I have been prepared to do that, but I don't honestly believe it's being valued.
(Ann, interview 2)

The extracts above demonstrate a lack of transparency between Ann, and Howard and Ronnie, which led to misunderstandings between them. Reciprocity did not come easily between them and there was a lack of mutual flows of information. There appeared to be a shared lack of awareness around how they were feeling and seeing things – in part, created and exacerbated by weak social ties. Ann suggested, above, that she needed to disclose more information regarding her funding

situation. However, their social ties had, by this point, deteriorated to such an extent that resolving the misunderstandings had become a large task (despite involving Alan, see Chapter Four, meeting 15). The lack of incremental trust-building and shared understandings between Ann and Howard/Ronnie meant that their relationship floundered around negative mutual stereotyping:

The big problem I see with charities [referring to Ann] is that [...] they're just totally focused on getting enough funding to pay their wages in three years time, and that's all they seem to be bothered about.

(Ronnie, interview 2)

Their weak social tie – exacerbated by infrequent, indirect and unpredictable interactions – meant they were ill-disposed to resolve grievances in a positive manner:

If you can't get together and sort this out, you know, to hand out a paper that was basically a complete and utter slating about what happened at the launch [I4A project launch] and then not to be present, I find it abhorrent.

(Ann, interview 2)

Ann intimates that they needed to 'get together' in order to reach a resolution, but this was not possible in practice (see outcome of meeting 15, Chapter Four). They may have managed to physically 'get together' at meeting 15 – the first time they had all been together since meeting 7 – but they did not have the strength of social tie – they lacked empathetic understandings and mutual support – to facilitate the solving of their tensions and the creation of co-operation. This was further complicated by other partners being present at meeting 15 too.

Ronnie reiterated that he did not feel he 'needed' to develop a strong social tie with Ann:

KV: So what is it that stops you ringing Ann and saying 'What's going on'?

RS: She's uncommunicative, as far as I'm concerned, and besides which, I don't need to. I don't need to have that special bond. I mean I have no power as far as she's concerned, so I just ignore it [the partnership] completely. I mean I would just take it out all together, I would just move it to one side, and that's what's going to happen, they will increasingly become marginalized. I mean, if Howard wasn't so honourable, we'd have done it a while ago. Howard is less hard than me about things like that.

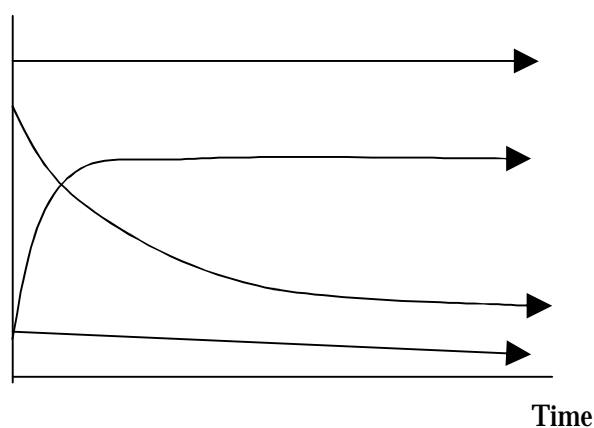
(Ronnie, interview 2)

To summarise, data suggest that Ann, and Howard and Ronnie did not find ways to co-operate. Ronnie and Ann's ways of coping with their destructive and dysfunctional relationship was to try to cut each other out of the loop, rather than make efforts to strengthen it. Ann's way of doing this was to remove Ronnie from the partnership mailing list, though this seemed to have little 'real' impact given Ronnie's close relationship with Howard, who remained on the partnership. Meanwhile, Ronnie's approach was to work towards the BV project outside of the partnership group.

The sections, above, have demonstrated that the Broadley Vision partnership was a site of dynamic social ties, with a range of social ties between partners that variously remained static or shifted over the partnership's duration. It has shown that different types of social ties existed simultaneously within BV (see figure 5.10). There was variation in the strength, frequency of communication, 'reachability', durability, and context-specificity of social ties, across the partnership, in terms of both the original members' ties to one another, and on terms of the ties in the extended partnership network.

Figure 5.10: Different strengths of social ties within the BV partnership

Strength of ties



This raises the question of, does it matter if a partnership contains a dynamic mix of social ties between partners, and if so, what are the consequences for the co-ordination of the partnership. Here, I return to the matter of partnership working calling for partners to negotiate overlaps in their community memberships –

partnerships as the meeting point of partners' backgrounds, experiences, interests, values, attitudes and approaches to achieving progress.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated isolated moments of partners' overlapping communities, and social ties, as facilitators and barriers of social co-ordination in the BV partnership. In focusing on such isolated instances, I risked reducing the complexity of what actually took place in BV - and would take place in any voluntary, network-like partnership. This was necessary in order to begin to spell out the various, contrasting implications of a range of overlapping communities and differently characterised social ties. However, as I came to discuss certain extracts, it was clear that the concepts were closely inter-related. At this stage in my development of these concepts - as a means of generating knowledge and understanding around conflict and consensus within partnership working - it has been necessary to discretely introduce contrasting instances of overlapping communities and social ties. This has been in order to make clear the various contexts and qualities that are relevant to these concepts, prior to their more complex integration being discussed. Here, these concepts are in their infancy as they help the reconfiguration of how the process of developing conflict and consensus within this kind of partnership working can be understood. In Chapter Six, I will integrate discussion of these conceptual layers to partnership working as I discuss Broadley Vision as a community in its own right, the 'problem' of overlapping communities, and the role of social ties.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter draws together some of the themes from Chapters Four and Five and discusses them in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. I address three main questions in the light of the academic literature and the data analysis set out in earlier chapters. These questions are:

1. Are instances of overlapping communities inherently problematic for partnerships?
2. Are strong social ties between partners important for the co-ordination of non-mandatory, network-like, cross-sectoral partnerships?
3. Is there value in understanding partnership as the formation of a new community?

In the process of addressing these questions, I consider them at the level of the Broadley Vision partnership, as well as extending the discussion to consider wider implications for partnership working more generally.

Are instances of overlapping communities inherently problematic for partnerships?

As introduced in Chapter Five, I define an instance of overlapping communities as occurring when individual partners' personal and professional norms, attitudes, values and interests are juxtaposed with other partners' norms, attitudes, values and interests. There then comes the challenge of identifying these norms and interests as being connected to partners' memberships of particular communities (past and present). Thus, I read them as conveying partners' community memberships as they are brought – explicitly or implicitly - by the individual, to the partnership

setting. Instances of overlaps between partners' community memberships were illustrated as harmonious, conflicting and multiple. I also asserted that individuals can themselves be sites of overlapping community memberships.

Having reflected on the data introduced and interpreted through Chapters Four and Five, and the definitions of community discussed in Chapter Two, I think it is reasonable to suggest that instances of overlapping communities could be expected in most iterations of partnership. At the level of individuals in the modern world, most will belong to multiple and overlapping communities (Ball and Stobart, 1997; Hughes and Mooney, 1998; Amit, 2002; Delanty, 2003). Thus, in a partnership context, partners may bring with them aspects of their memberships from a range of communities – both personal and professional. The partnership literature acknowledges aspects of professional community membership, suggesting partners are likely to bring their organisations' cultures and values with them (Alcock and Scott, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Huxham and Vangen (2005) go further by recognising that it is not uncommon for partners to wear multiple organisational hats. They give the example of a partner that officially represented his employing organisation (a school) but was also seen to be unofficially representing the interests of a charitable organisation that he volunteered for.

However, the partnership literature tends to overlook aspects of partners' personal community memberships that can be brought to partnership settings. This was highlighted in BV by Ronnie Smith, whose enthusiasm for the project stemmed from his personal working-class, 'boy done good' biography, as much as his membership of a private sector organisation and of professional business networks (see Chapter Five). Aspects of each of these personal and professional community memberships (past and present) went some way to producing Ronnie's initial zeal and energy. His professional community memberships allowed him to assume that he had relevant and useful knowledge, expertise and networks to contribute to the development of the project, and his past membership of a 'deprived' working class community seemed to give his involvement personal meaning. Thus, in any partnership setting, individual partners could be considered as sites of overlapping communities. Whether partners bring or make explicit, aspects of their overlapping personal and professional communities to the partnership will depend on the focus

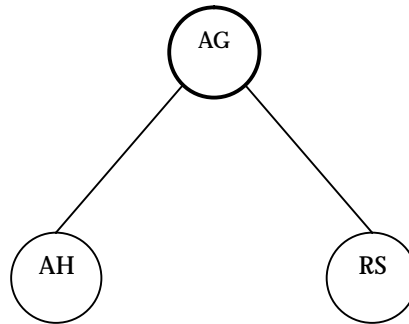
of the collaboration and its relation to their range of memberships. Furthermore, the degree to which individuals are aware of their representing aspects of multiple community memberships may not be clear to themselves nor to other partners.

Even if partners are only considered to bring aspects of their membership of a professional organisation with them – usually from their employing organisation – most partnerships could still be described as instances of overlapping communities. This is in the sense that each partner will represent (or be seen to represent) a professional community that would inevitably see them bring aspects of their organisation's practice and culture with them to the partnership (Huxham, 1996a; Ambrose, 2001; Charnley, 2001). Thus, when a range of values, attitudes, interests and norms are brought together, this can be considered as an instance of overlap between communities. Consequently, instances of overlapping communities are likely to occur in most partnerships.

However, not all partnerships fail or experience difficulties (James, 2001; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Dhillon, 2005, 2007, 2009), so if overlapping communities are to some extent implicated in all partnerships, this could suggest that instances of overlapping communities are not inherently problematic for all partnerships. This suggests that success or failure may, to some extent, rest on the nature of overlaps. Instances of overlapping communities can be seen to seed a partnership. This is implicitly recognised in the partnership literature as partnerships are often premised on the bringing together of different partners (from different communities, professional or otherwise) so as to achieve more – through the fusing of skills, knowledge, resources, expertise – than could be achieved by working individually (Dhillon, 2005; Cardini, 2006). This could be seen in the BV partnership. Its development was partially due to the assumed benefits that would arise from overlapping communities. These assumptions were enough to get Alan, Ronnie, Ann and Howard together at the same table. Figure 6.1, below, shows that Alan (AG) played a key role in communicating the potential beneficial overlaps to Ann (AH) and Ronnie (RS). Acting as a broker, Alan introduced Ronnie and Ann. He perceived that Ronnie could bring his project vision and Ann could bring her community training skills to the Broadley enterprise. For Alan, this initial triad

presented instances of overlapping communities, from which he assumed value could be drawn in order to realise the community learning centre in Broadley.

Figure 6.1: Initial introductions and assumptions in BV



Those initially involved thought the values and interests being brought to the partnership - from different community memberships - produced an identifiable, harmonious overlap. Indeed, a shared interest was reflected in the broad goal of the partnership (as was communicated by Alan, Ronnie and Ann) - to set up a communications and learning centre in Broadley. This stemmed from *superficial* harmonious overlaps.

Where homogeneous overlaps are established - whether they take the form of shared historical roots or identifications, interests, values or professional approaches and practices – they may create continuities for members of a group (Wenger, 1998). This was seen in relation to Alan and Ronnie in BV, who quickly established that their respective memberships of the Labour Party, working class communities and Newsby Borough overlapped. This fostered a sense of their feeling that they had made appreciable inroads into understanding where each other was coming from – certainly at the level of interests and desires.

However, the double-bind of overlapping communities in partnership contexts, is that, even if there is a level of harmony across values and interests, it is likely that bringing together individuals from different communities will also see the joining of different traditions and cultures that are anchored in different community or

organisational logics (Seddon et al, 2005). Partnership thus becomes a site where different aspects of community membership confront one another. Getting people to work together who have potentially conflicting overlaps can be fraught with difficulties and tensions. Gilchrist (2004:82) suggests that informal social ties can be used to manage plurality in positive ways by 'building personal links and mediating between factions to overcome dogma' (see next section for discussion of the role of social ties). Thus, instances of conflicting overlaps can produce a problem for social co-ordination, particularly if 'personal links' are not in place to help negotiate and manage these overlaps. Here, I would argue that there is value in identifying conflict in a partnership as stemming from overlapping communities, and it is these that can produce potential tensions and difference that would need to be managed. If conflicting overlaps are not negotiated and managed, this may lead to collaborative inertia. So did BV fail due to instances of conflicting overlaps between partners' community memberships? The data suggests that this did play a large part in BV's demise.

A question that emerged from the data analysis is why, when mutual understandings were being tested and conflicts unresolved, did some partners not withdraw? Partners did recognise that they were experiencing tensions and that these needed to be 'sorted out', but they did not possess the collective insight and capacity to raise and respond to that conflict. For some partners, the commitment to certain other partners and a narrow focus on the project aim overrode the need to 'fix' their problematic heterogeneous overlaps. Here, I am suggesting that without the concept of conflicting overlapping *communities*, there may have been an unspoken pressure to avoid acknowledging conflict for fear of risking or threatening the good will and relations of partners with whom new, positive ties were being formed. Thus, it could be argued that although it was the promise of mutually beneficial overlapping communities that brought BV together, these superficial harmonious overlaps were not enough to sustain the partnership. For BV, the conflicting overlaps which were combined with an absence of strong social ties caused problems for the constructive co-ordination of the group.

Explicit consideration of community memberships and overlapping communities could raise questions and progressive insights for other partnerships. For example,

we may simply ask, 'What do partners bring with them from their various community memberships?' Such questioning may help to locate where interests and values stem from, and how these might have impacts in the partnership setting. This, however, could be a tricky and imprecise exercise – but a valuable one, all the same. The partnership literature suggests that different interests should be declared at the start of a partnership to ensure that they are compatible (Evans and Killoran, 2000; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Powell and Exworthy, 2002), but, as was observed in BV, this is easier said than done. To be able to frame this reflection in terms of community memberships may appear to be a subtle difference, however, that would be to underestimate the potentially far-reaching value of this theoretical and practical development. The concept of overlapping *communities* offers a valuable means of looking beyond (and behind) the individual, in recognising that individuals, partnerships and partnership-based interactions can be more complex than the sum of their superficial parts. From this, it is worth asking: in order to achieve deep intra-partnership compatibility, would there be value in seeking to identify whether partnership – understood as instances of overlapping communities – can be usefully understood as a new community in its own right? Furthermore, we may seek to identify further concepts and conditions to support such an exercise.

Are strong social ties between partners important for the co-ordination of non-mandatory, network-like, cross-sectoral partnerships?

As outlined in Chapters Two and Five, I define a 'social tie' as a relationship between individuals. The community literature defines a social tie as a bond that exists or develops between people, allowing interaction to take place (Taylor, 2003; Delanty, 2003; Jewson, 2007; Jenkins, 2008). Moreover, the social network analysis literature asserts that social ties have different attributes (Wellman, 1999; Scott, 2000). For example, a social tie between two people can be vertical or lateral, and can vary in strength, directionality and durability (Gilchrist, 2004). However, they can also be dynamic, as demonstrated by the data analysis in Chapter Five, with tie attributes shifting over time.

Drawing on the literature that discusses networks as a mode of social co-ordination, it can be surmised that social ties are likely to be highly relevant to the co-ordination of network-like partnerships, as informal practices of social co-ordination rely on direct personal contact (Frances et al, 1991; Tomkins, 2001; Thompson, 2003) or 'social ties'. Moreover, as noted in Chapter Two, the most significant feature for the operation of network-like partnerships is thought to be the formation and maintenance of trust between members (Frances et al, 1991; Hannah et al, 2006). This is because trust is seen as a mechanism that can reduce uncertainty between participants who will be interacting, co-ordinating and co-operating outside of legal, bureaucratic, hierarchical or market structures (Hage and Alter, 1997; Busco et al, 2006). In other words, in network-like partnerships, partners need to have faith in others' motivations and ability to contribute to achieving a joint goal (Gulatti, 1995; Lane and Bachmann, 1998), as there is no formal contract to enforce roles, responsibilities and sanctions (if expectations are not met). Where trust does not already exist, the literature asserts that partners cannot feel overly assured that others will not act opportunistically, rather than in the common interest (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Rummery, 2002; Barnes and Sullivan, 2002; Dowling et al, 2004). It is in this context that the strength of social ties between partners can be understood as, and be seen as, significant.

Strong social ties are often characterised by intimacy, multiplexity and frequency of contact between people (Granovetter, 1973; Wellman, 1999; Scott, 2000). People connected by a strong social tie are likely to know and interact with each other in a variety of contexts. Strong social ties are thought to connect people who share a set of values and interests (Barton, 2000; Forrest, 2004); because the multi-stranded nature of strong ties means people are more likely to develop shared norms. Strong ties are recognised as useful as they are believed to provide a range of support and resources (e.g. emotional, financial and practical) that can be expected to be reciprocated (Granovetter, 1973, 1982; Scott, 2000). They are thought to foster empathetic understandings (Marsden, 1988). Social ties are also related to the concept of social capital, as social capital theorists, such as Coleman (1988), Burt (2005a, 2005b) and Lin (2005), conceive that social ties – relationships between people - can produce valuable resources for individuals and groups. In the BV partnership, Howard assumed that his professionally-based, UKTC-specific social

ties with Martin and Keith would transfer effectively into the BV context, bringing positive and far-reaching reciprocation of goodwill and support, as associated with strong social ties. However, data suggest that Howard over-estimated the strength of these ties (see Chapters Four and Five).

Strong social ties are connected to instances of bonding social capital – social ties *within* communities, which bring together people who are similar in ‘outlook, interests and education’ (Taylor, 2002:47). High levels of bonding social capital are beginning to be identified as important for sustained partnership working (Billet et al, 2007; Dhillon, 2009). This concurs with there being a mutual sense of reciprocity and obligation between people – which strong ties are thought to produce - thus creating a bias towards effective co-operation (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Bonding social capital is also associated with high levels of trust between people, which provides an expectation of mutual commitment and a degree of predictability about the behaviour of others (with whom a strong tie exists). As noted above, expectations, trust and predictability are likely to be important in instances of network-like partnerships. Thus, it could be inferred that strong social ties between partners will contribute to a network-like partnership’s ability to sustain itself. In practice, however, it is not likely that *all* partners in *all* network-like partnerships will be equally strongly tied to one another. From this, the question then becomes, if strong ties are likely to be important in the co-ordination of a network-like partnership, what are the implications of such a partnership being composed of sets of social ties that vary in strength?

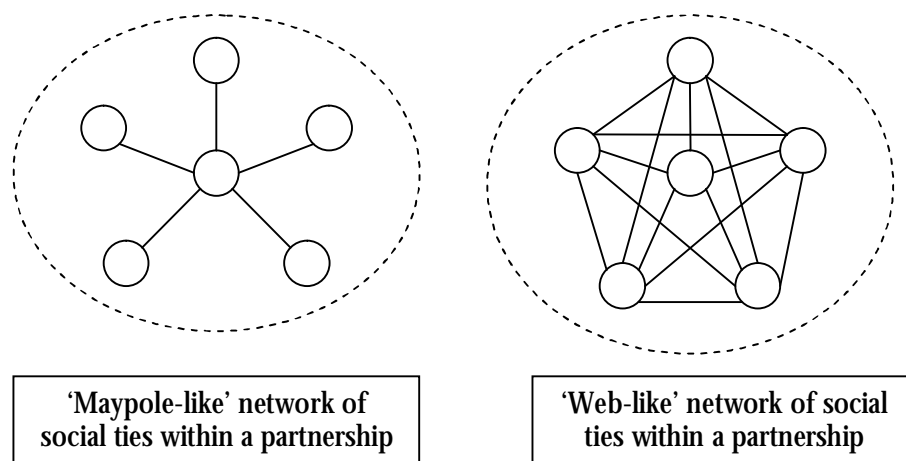
Lewicki et al (1998) recognise that multiple types of relationship are likely to co-exist in many social groups. This suggests that the foundations for trust may vary amongst members of a partnership. Existing literature asserts that trust-building exercises are important where there is a lack of trust between partners (Cropper, 1996; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005), acknowledging that the absence of trust will often see the partnership fail to sustain itself or deliver on its objectives (Daly and Davies, 2002). However, the partnership literature does not explain variations in initial trust between partners, and does not address the implications that may result when trust pre-exists or develops between some partners and not others.

Analysis of the data suggested that both the strength *and* mesh of tie types were significant in the partnership's development and collapse. With an imbalanced set of pre-existing and newly-developing social ties, the generation and maintenance of trusting relationships was hindered. This highlights the issue of the structure of the web of social ties, and proposes that the overall quality, density and balance of social ties within the partnership had implications for the co-ordination of BV as a network-like partnership.

Prior to discussing how social ties led to the formation of the partnership, and how the strength, density and balance of social ties within BV can be interpreted as having affected its operation and trajectory, I must refer to the community studies and social network analysis literatures on the 'connectedness' or 'density' of ties in a social structure. The configuration of 'present' and 'absent' ties between individuals in a community or network is said to reveal a specific structure of social ties (Barnes, 1954; Bott, 1955, 1956, 1957; Mitchell, 1969; Jewson, 2007). These structures vary in form from an 'isolated' or 'low-density' structure (in which individuals are not directly connected to many others in the group) to 'saturated' or 'high-density' structures (in which members are directly linked to every other member). However, more typical of real social groups are various intermediate structures in which some members are more extensively connected than are others (Knoke and Kuklinski, 1982; Gilchrist, 2004). As in *gemeinschaft*-type communities (see Chapter Two), high-density networks are often depicted as being based on trusting relationships between people who share values and interests, although they are also characterised as being inward-looking, defensive and resistant to change. Some writers posit that in an isolated social structure (see, for example, figure 6.2's 'may pole-like' model) – which may have more in common with a *gesellschaft*-type community – variation in interests and values between members might be expected (Bauman, 2001; Halpern, 2005). Taking this further, Jewson (2007) asserts that the heterogeneity produced from low-density networks of weak social ties may create new ideas and innovation from the intermingling of individuals that belong to multiple communities beyond the low-density social group.

Putnam (1993) distinguishes between ‘web-like’ (high-density) and ‘maypole-like’ (low-density) networks of social ties (see figure 6.2), and asserts that ‘web-like networks’ tend to be more effective in enabling the achievement of mutual goals, which echoes Knoke and Kuklinski’s (1982), Wellman’s (1999) and Gilchrist’s (2004) emphasis on the spread and connectivity of a group of social ties. In relation to a partnership, this would suggest that where partners are directly tied to one another, there is a greater chance of the partnership being sustained. Of course, the structure of the ties is not the only factor that will influence whether a partnership sustains itself. The qualities of the social ties imbued in the structure will make a difference, as will issues of power and leadership (Eden, 1996; Himmelman, 1996; Luke, 1997; Murrell, 1997; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Crosby and Bryson, 2004; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). External factors too will impact on the partnership’s development. For example, in relation to BV these included the ‘*make-up of a Borough Council*’, ‘*national funding strategies*’, and ‘*the range of similar services provided locally*’ (field notes).

Figure 6.2: ‘Maypole-like’ and ‘Web-like’ networks of social ties within a partnership (developed from Putnam, 1993)



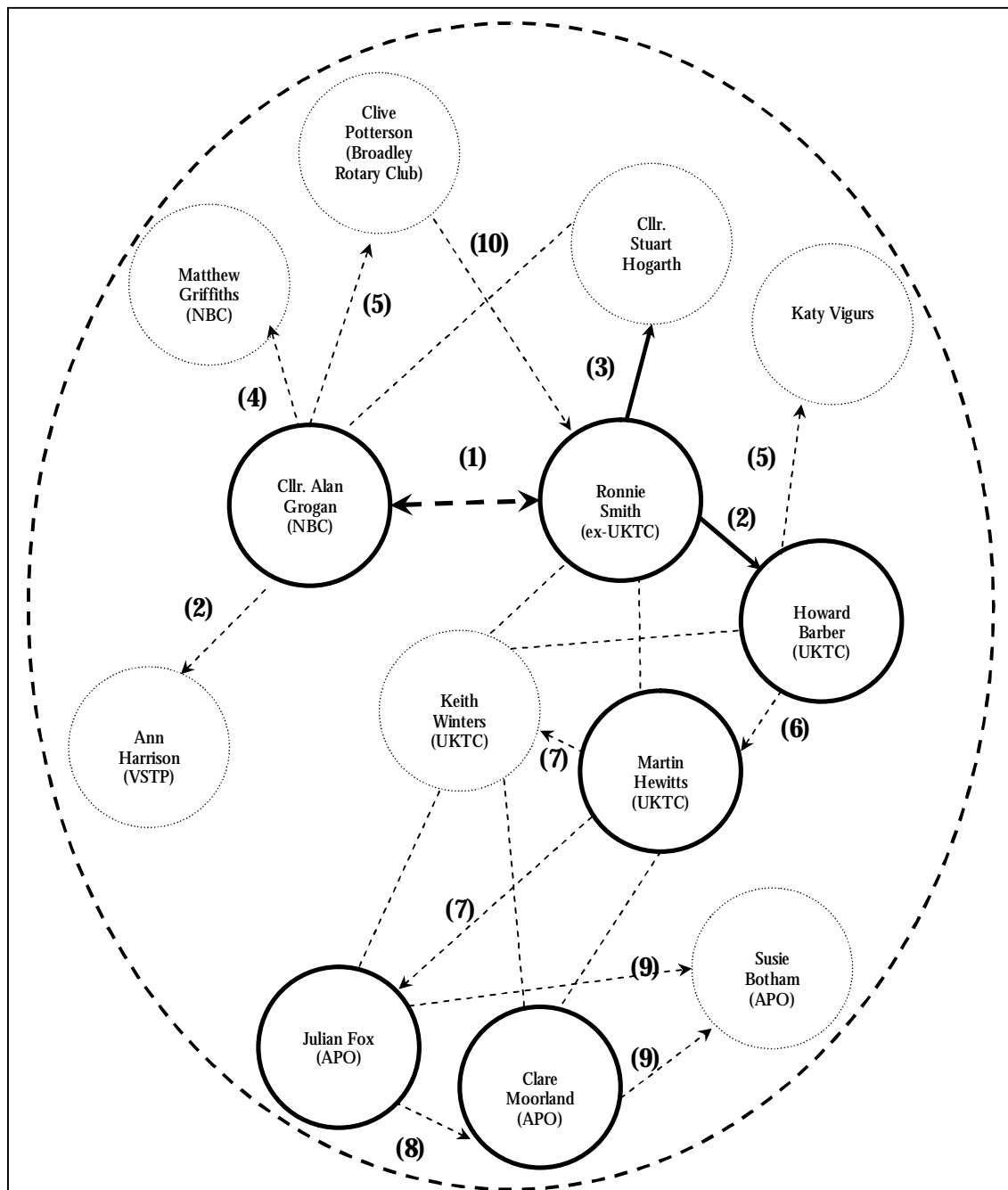
The set of social ties in the Broadley Vision partnership reflected an intermediate structure, containing elements of both models (see figure 6.2), although the structure of the partnership’s web of social ties was observed to change over time, as demonstrated in Chapter Five. In figure 6.3, below, I represent *how* individuals became involved in the Broadley Vision partnership, through the activation of a

range of social ties. This also shows the social ties that pre-existed prior to the development of Broadley Vision and whether these were strong or weak ties (with implications for variations in trust between partners). This illustration shows the *process* of social tie activation (and the partnership's formation) over time, rather than a static snapshot of the partnership's social tie structure. As noted in Chapter One (see figures 1.2 and 1.3 – and appendix 2), the social structure of the partnership was dynamic. Below, I discuss some of the notable characteristics of this network of social ties between partners, how they developed over time and with what implications for the negotiation of overlapping communities, and the co-ordination of the partnership.

With the BV partnership ostensibly a network-like partnership, the relationships, roles and responsibilities were not co-ordinated through legal contracts or hierarchical chains of command. Where sets of social ties within the partnership *were* mediated by a formal contract, these did not centrally concern BV. For example, Martin and Keith's working relationship with Julian, Clare and Susie was framed by a formal contract between UKTC and APO (that referred to the I4A project). Also, despite the oblique status of BV, some hierarchical relations were evident - Alan used his position in NBC to involve Matthew as council officer; Keith was line managed by Martin; Susie was line managed by Clare. It is noticeable that, in the beginning, the relationship between the four key players in BV (Alan, Ronnie, Ann and Howard) was formed from a 'string' of social ties.

Before the idea for BV had surfaced, Alan had recently developed a professional (political), context-specific social tie with Ann – a weak tie - and Ronnie had a longstanding, personal-professional friendship with Howard – a strong tie. When the accidental meeting occurred between Ronnie and Alan at a conference in 2000, this formed another new social tie, which ultimately led to Alan introducing Ann to Ronnie and Ronnie introducing Howard to Alan, as narrated in Chapter Four. Thus, a string-like network of social ties was born (see figure 6.4), which ultimately developed into a weak, imbalanced web of ties.

Figure 6.3: The formation of the BV partnership through social tie activation



Key to Figure 6.3:

----- Weak tie

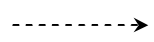
———— Strong tie



Individual to activate social tie/s in relation to BV



Individual brought into BV by another and did not activate any social ties in relation to BV



Direction of social tie activation in relation

(1) Order in which social ties were activated in the formation of BV

Figure 6.4: String-like network of social ties between Ann, Alan, Ronnie and Howard

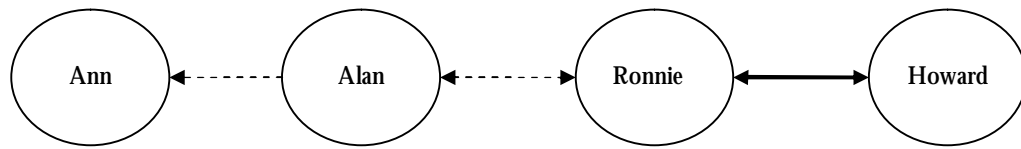


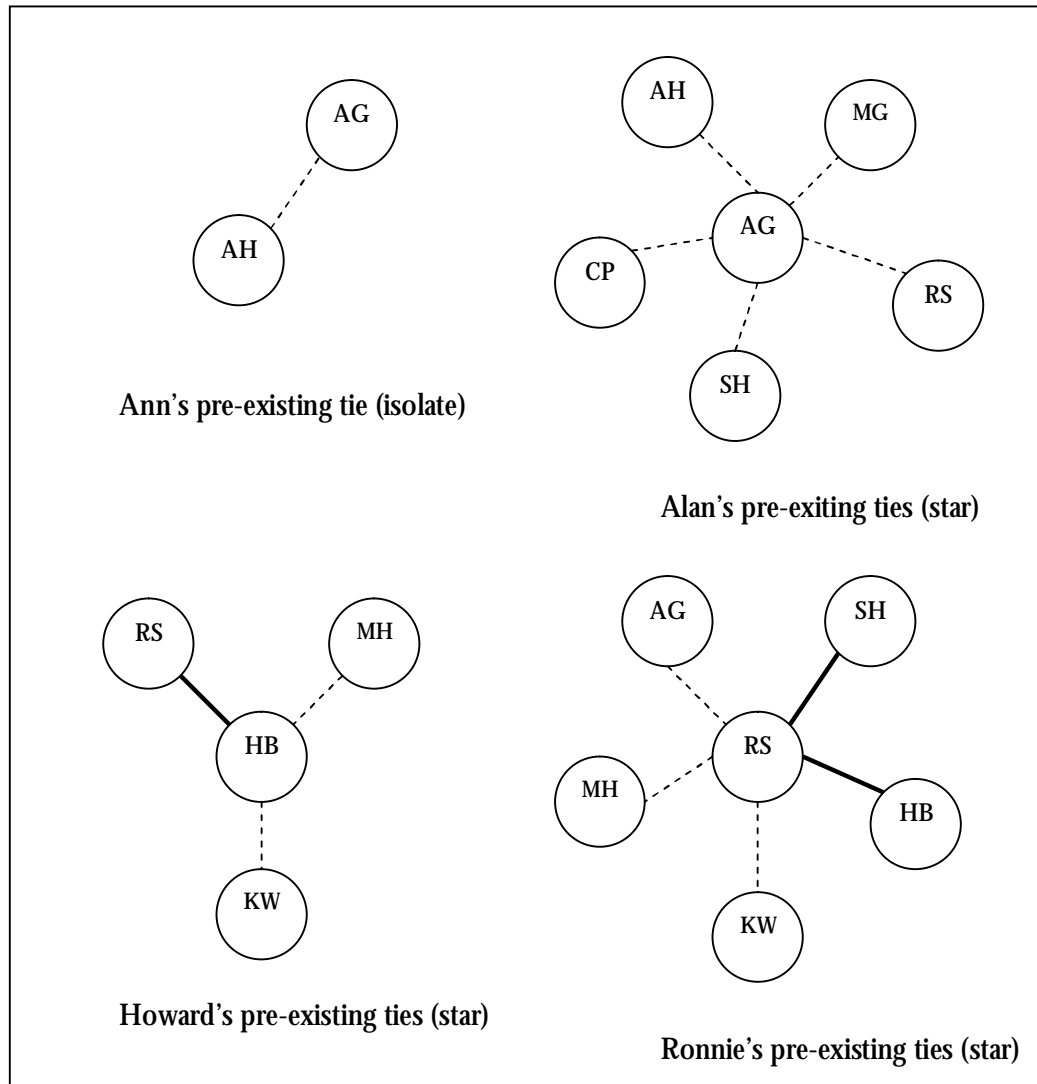
Figure 6.4 shows that at the start of the partnership's formation the set of ties was neither 'maypole-like' - with one individual knowing everyone else – nor 'web-like'. A linear set of social connections had come about, with the strength of ties that made up this string-like network varying. Analyses through Chapters Four and Five, backed up by existing literature, suggest that partners did and could assume that this variation in tie strength would not necessarily be a problem, were they able to cohere around a set of shared values and interests, which the original BV members thought they had done. However, as explained in Chapter Five, these shared interests were superficial. This meant the strength of social ties between partners became more crucial for the co-ordination of the partnership, as it would be partners' capacity to communicate and to negotiate that would add workable detail to 'the vision', whilst tackling differences that would be raised. In practice, however, the poor, unreflective handling of conflicting overlaps between some partners' community memberships meant that it had become more difficult to simultaneously develop stronger ties.

Looking back at figure 6.3, it can be seen that partners occupied contrasting positions within the partnership's web of social ties. For example, at the start, Ann could be described as an 'isolate' within the structure, as she was only directly tied to Alan and this was a new and relatively weak bond (see figure 6.5). Ann did not remain an 'isolate' over the lifespan of BV. As demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, Ann did go on to develop social ties with others in the partnership. She developed relatively positive and constructive ties with Matthew, and with Clare and Susie, although these did little to sustain the partnership. One of the products (see appendix three) of Ann's overlapping communities and social tie with Matthew caused visible conflict with Ronnie and Howard. Ann also developed weak social ties with Ronnie and Howard, but these did not strengthen; they

became corrosive over time, and seemed to strongly contribute to the collapse of BV. To counter this, it could be argued that when Ann assumed the role of informal partnership co-ordinator she had access to all involved in the partnership, as it was Ann who distributed meeting agendas and minutes across the group. However, I would suggest that although she had lines of communication with others, these – at best - did not develop into anything beyond very weak social ties.

Alan, Ronnie and Howard could all be viewed as structural ‘stars’ within BV (Wellman, 1999; Scott, 2000; Jewson, 2007), as they were members who had many links with others in the partnership. Figure 6.5 represents this, along with the different strengths of ties within each ‘star’. Thus, Alan could be described as being at the centre of a star comprising pre-existing weak social ties, whereas both Ronnie and Howard had at least one strong social tie within their pre-existing social ties. ‘Stars’ are believed to often occupy positions of power and leadership derived from their location in the social structure (Jewson, 2007). However, this does not address variation in the strength of social ties, or individual’s power and influence, or their social standing outside of a partnership that could prove to be useful. In Alan’s case, his ties with Ronnie, Matthew and Ann, together with his personal and professional positions of Leader of NBC, Labour councillor in Broadley and Broadley resident, were most significant for the formation and development of BV. In Ronnie’s case, it was his pre-existing strong tie with Howard and his rapidly strengthening new tie with Alan (see Chapter Five), together with his personal sense of mission, that were significant. In Howard’s case, it was his strong, personal and professional pre-existing tie with Ronnie and his pre-existing UKTC-based ties with Martin and Keith, along with his senior position in UKTC, that were significant for the development and trajectory of BV. This, however, was not always in ways that moved BV closer to achieving its intended outcome (see Chapter Five). Variation in pre-existing social ties were significant because where they existed this meant that some partners had more knowledge about areas of overlap than did others.

Figure 6.5: Ann, Alan, Howard and Ronnie's pre-existing social ties to other partners *prior* to the formation of BV

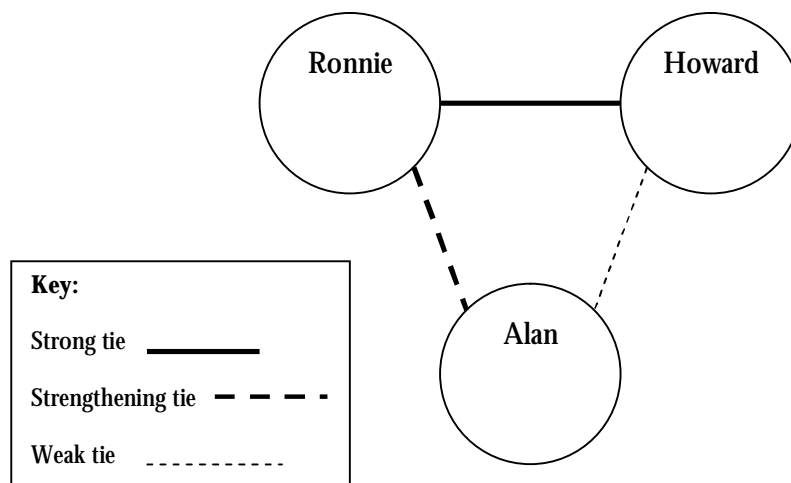


The social ties represented in figure 6.3, together with interpretation and analysis of relationships through Chapters Four and Five, assert that BV was not well-connected as a social whole. Although the partnership's structure was dynamic over time (new members joined, others left - see figure 1.3 in Chapter One - the ways in which members were directly and indirectly connected changed, and the strength of social ties shifted - see Chapter Five), 'connectivity and cleavage' between sets of social ties were observed within BV as a social system (Wellman, 1999:18). This, I believe, contributed to the partnership's inability to co-ordinate itself, as a whole. This variation in connectivity between partners - in part stimulated by overlapping communities and the work of dynamic social ties - saw

the formation of densely-knit cliques within the partnership. These saw high interaction take place, whilst also emphasising 'structural holes' marked by areas of relative social isolation (Burt, 2005a, 2005b). Thus, BV was characterised by networks within a bounded network, or instances of micro-community, within the embryonic BV community.

The most visible and significant clique that developed within the BV partnership was between Alan, Ronnie and Howard, which left Ann out on a limb (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6: The development of a clique of social ties within BV



This was distinct from a clique of ties as written about in the community studies and social networks literature (Crow and Allan, 1994; Wellman, 1999; Barton, 2000; Forrest, 2000; Burt, 2005a, 2005b), in which the connections between members of the clique or cluster are assumed to be the same. As figure 6.6 shows, different types of ties were observed between the three individuals. Nevertheless, an inward-looking clique was formed, and was experienced as such by others outside of it, particularly Ann (see Chapter Five). The data suggest that Ronnie and Alan's rapid establishment of multiple overlapping harmonious community memberships (see Chapter Five), contributed to their strengthening social tie. Ronnie and Howard's strong social tie mediated Howard's otherwise relatively weak relationship with Alan. Whilst an isolated tie, Howard and Alan were weakly tied, their strong, independent ties to Ronnie seemed to confer trust by association.

This saw Howard maintain a high regard for Alan as a useful asset for the partnership.

As the social capital literature (Field, 2003; Halpern, 2005) alerts us to, a downside of a strong clique or community of social ties characterised by bonding social capital (as seen between Alan, Ronnie and Howard in BV), is that it can veer towards parochialism, where cluster members may believe that they have more in common with one another than with 'outsiders'. Within this small clique in BV, activities took place – such as unofficial meetings and conference telephone calls - that enabled them to interact with one another informally, easily and regularly, thereby enhancing their shared values and interests, communication and co-operation (Trevillion, 1992; Gilchrist, 2004). However, as demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, such activities did not take place either openly or amongst the group as a whole. Although networks are believed to anticipate and defuse tensions between members before they become full conflicts, due to 'positive experiences of working together in the past make it more likely that solutions can be negotiated' (Gilchrist, 2004:54), the literature does not have much to say about what happens when opposition occurs *between* networks *within* a broader network. Thus, previous literature does not account for such tensions and blockages, within a broader network, as occurred, for example, between Ronnie, Howard and Alan (clique #1), and Ann and Matthew (clique #2), in BV.

Figure 6.3 broadly represents two sides to the partnership: on the one hand connections that stem from Alan and on the other hand connections that stem from Ronnie. Therefore, structurally, Ronnie and Alan were the partnership's hinge, bracketing together a range of social ties and networks between the partners. This hinge may have been appropriate for the formation of the partnership, but without sufficiently strong ties developing between partners across this axis, the partnership was not able to establish enough trust, reciprocity or mutual understanding between all members to sustain itself.

The social network and social capital literatures suggest that where there are 'structural holes' between clusters of social ties in a social group that individuals who can 'bridge' the clusters of ties become important for the co-ordination of the

group (Burt, 2005a, 2005b; Jewson, 2007). The partnership literature also refers to the importance of partners who can 'span boundaries', although this tends to be in terms of spanning organisational boundaries (Sink, 1996; Huxham, 1996a; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Such individuals are referred to as 'reticulists' (Wenger, 1998) and are deemed to have highly prized skills in mediating between diverse groups, in generating partnerships (by introducing people), and by acting as diplomats, negotiators or go-betweens. The partnership literature tends to refer to such individuals as having a set of personal and social skills – such as being skilled communicators - that enable them to fulfil this brokering role within partnerships. The social network analysis literature, however, asserts that the ability of 'reticulists' to transmit and translate ideas between partners or cliques within the partnership rather reflects their position in the web of ties. Thus, they are deemed to be relational effects rather than simply 'personal psychological characteristics or normative values' (Jewson, 2007:73). The role of an effective reticulist may have assisted BV to defuse conflicts based on misunderstandings, by translating, co-ordinating and aligning different perspectives and approaches (Wenger, 1998:109). However, such a role was not effectively performed by any partner in relation to the most crucial and insidious conflict that developed between Ann, and Ronnie and Howard (see Chapters Four and Five).

Figure 6.3 suggests that structurally, Alan was the most obvious person to play the role of reticulist between Ann, and Ronnie and Howard, as he had ties with Ann and Ronnie. However, this is where the strength of ties and extent of overlapping communities was significant. Data interpretation through Chapters Four and Five contends that Alan did not have the strength of tie or harmonious community overlaps with Ann that would enable him to translate and align the conflicting perspectives and approaches of those who seemed to be working and communicating oppositionally. This supports my contention that if some partners have pre-existing or develop strong ties, and others do not, this is likely to cause an imbalance in the structure of the partnership that could prove divisive. In short, I suggest that the failure to develop positive, constructive ties between Ann, and Ronnie and Howard, paired with Ann's tie to Alan remaining relatively weak, shaped BV's operation and trajectory.

Previous partnership literature does not account for why such an unstable, fragile and imbalanced partnership would sustain itself for so long (three years). I think that an analysis of social ties offers some explanation as to why BV stayed together for so long, whilst also explaining how social ties contributed to its collapse. In some instances, partners appeared to be highly protective of their individual social ties with other BV members, which sustained their involvement in BV. Other partners seemed to feel obliged to remain involved in BV, because of their connections to others. These tie factors partially account for why conflict was not explicitly approached within BV until the end of the partnership's life. For example, Ronnie and Ann both had individual, separate social ties with Alan which they wanted to retain, although for different reasons. Ann was keen to retain a positive, professional tie with Alan in relation to the business and development of her core project outside of BV, which were the auspices under which she originally met him (see Chapter Four). Ronnie was also keen to protect and strengthen his tie with Alan, although his connection to Alan seemed to be about purely servicing *his* vision for the BV project, due to Alan's position within NBC and Broadley. For these reasons, they did not want to disturb, challenge or make excessive demands of Alan.

This section suggests that analysis of social ties can be useful for examining the micro-level interactions of a partnership's daily life and thinking about dynamics in a partnership. In relation to the ineffective co-ordination of BV, analysis puts forward that the connectivity (or density) and quality of social ties within the partnership were important in shaping the trajectory and eventual collapse of BV. Specifically, this research suggests that instances of harmonious community overlaps can lead to the establishment of a shared set of values and interests, which can play a key role in bonding individuals and sustaining a partnership. However, it also contends that the interplay between conflicting overlapping communities and an uneven web of social ties may contribute to a partnership's failure to sustain itself, as in Broadley Vision's case.

Is there value in understanding partnership as the formation of a new community?

Thus far, analyses and discussion have tended towards emphasising particular overlapping communities and social ties, yet partnership is typically understood and idealised as a functioning social system that is greater than the sum of its parts. At this stage, and in part to redress this imbalance, I believe there is value in supporting a view of partnership as a newly formed community in itself.

In Chapter Two, I introduced 'community' as being characterised as a bounded, albeit permeable, social group. With this, 'bounded' can refer to the geographic, identity, or interest-based limitations of the social group. In network-like partnerships, such as that studied here, the demand for social consistency would be met by the group establishing its own distinct set of norms and values. In BV, and perhaps in partnerships more generally, this was not (is not) recognised. Halpern (2005) suggests that these conditions are integral for the development of trust amongst members of a (new) community. Furthermore, in the absence of formal contracts co-ordinating partners' behaviours, it is out of the generation of mutual understanding that co-ordination would be achieved, with uncertainty being minimised (Jenkins, 2008). In BV, in the further absence of reflection on such matters, it was demonstrated that partners lacked the foundations for establishing predictability of, and sanctions towards, one another.

Whilst advocating the conceptualisation of new partnerships as new communities, I do not underestimate the potentially challenging task that this could present, in practice. Equally, however, such a task may at first be experienced with the naïve relish that saw BV members set out with what they imagined to be a shared vision. Here, the main function of introducing the language and concepts of community – into the arena of partnership practice – would be to subtly prime partners for the kind of personal and organisational reflection that would follow. In a situation such as BV, this would seek to lever the negotiation of overlaps between partners' pre-existing community memberships, and to lay the foundation for valuing the generation of new and stronger social ties. What this does not presuppose is that all attempts at partnership working should necessarily be sustained. At times, it

could be that the kinds of reflective exercise proposed here, would illustrate to parties that sufficient consistency would and could *not* be achieved so as to justify sustaining partnership relations. This is an insight that, for me, comes from the intensity and duration of my fieldwork – without disparaging some of the achievements that were realised by members of BV (see Chapter Seven).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that drawing on the community literature for this analysis has enhanced the conceptualisation of key issues that emerged from the fieldwork and that, to date, are only superficially addressed within the partnership literature. In particular, overlapping communities, as related to dynamic social ties, offers a relatively detailed picture of (the backgrounds to) social processes that can ultimately sustain or end partnerships. The next chapter will draw together arguments so as to formulate wider implications for the contribution of this research to existing knowledge and approaches to partnership policy, practice, research and theory.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION TO THE THESIS

Introduction

This chapter aims to draw this thesis to a close. It will bring together arguments and make wider implications for its contribution to existing theoretical approaches to partnership. It will also reflect on the research methods employed and suggest some implications for partnership policy and practice. Furthermore, it will suggest areas for future research. However, it is important to point out that, although this thesis is necessarily concluded, I am aware that any thesis is partial and contingent:

... although [a] thesis appears complete, its pages bound, its contents defined, it is as context-driven, partial and contingent as any other story. There is always more that can be said, new contexts from which to view issues, other conclusions to draw.

(Kara, 2006:153)

Therefore, the nature of this conclusion is not to definitively close down the issues raised. I do not seek to put an end to the debates and tensions in the partnership literature and research. Rather, I seek to open up new ways of understanding issues that can occur through the development and practice of partnership working. I see this conclusion as a space in which to raise further questions *generated* from the findings of this research.

In defence of Broadley Vision

Whilst the heavy emphasis of much of the previous chapters has been on the shortcomings of the BV partnership, it is important to acknowledge some of the positive social actions that I bore witness to. The extent to which these actions could be directly attributed to BV, however, is a moot point. As narrated through Chapter Four, All People Online fulfilled a contractual obligation to UKTC to

deliver the Internet4All project, in Broadley. This project went ahead and was anecdotally regarded as a success. Here, it is important to acknowledge the background and support that was given to both UKTC and APO. The chain of pre-existing social ties that were activated, which led to the establishment of the I4A project in Broadley, began with the fluke encounter between Alan Grogan and Ronnie Smith that seeded BV. From this, Howard Barber, Martin Hewitts, Julian Fox, Keith Winters, Clare Moorland and Susie Botham, were drawn into Broadley. Though the I4A project was ultimately defended as a discrete enterprise – clearly distinct from BV – it would not have come into being without the ambition that yielded BV. In retrospect, I can empathise with the frustration that was felt by Ronnie Smith, in particular, that BV did not receive any tangible benefits from I4A – despite the flawed basis for BV itself. Additionally, I4A was given practical support by Ronnie Smith. Voluntary support was provided as Ronnie employed his engineering and ICT knowledge in networking and creating Internet access for a bank of computers that had been donated by Howard Barber's UKTC programme. From my observations, these gestures seemed to pass without explicit appreciation, and were certainly not felt to be reciprocated – a matter ultimately cited as divisive to the broader BV network, as relations between Ronnie and Howard, and Martin and Keith, deteriorated (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). Here, the actions of Ronnie and Howard were consistent with the good will and intentions that all of the BV partnership set out with.

Contributing to partnership theory: advances and limitations

Through this thesis, I have sought to develop an account of conflict and consensus within a partnership as instances of overlapping communities, and the manifestation of dynamic social ties - these two concepts being inextricably linked. Equally, in inviting researchers, theorists and practitioners to understand partnership conflict and consensus in these terms, this does not necessitate or determine the success, or otherwise, of partnership working. In contributing to a cross-disciplinary field of research that seeks to shed light on understandings and the value of partnership, I have produced a data-led and sophisticated adaptation of community theory in support of this. Additionally, in narrating the story of

Broadley Vision, I have sought to bring the reader closer to a sense of the unrefined workings of the partnership – itself, a further development of partnership literature. As a contribution to knowledge, I believe that this provides the grounds for the better informed study and practice of partnership working.

A new community and its co-ordination depend on the handling of instances of overlapping communities, and the balance of social ties between members. This is a perspective that the BV partners may have benefited from, especially as they became aware of their harmonious overlaps being superficial and ill-defined. In practice, and prior to the development of ‘overlapping communities’ and ‘dynamic social ties’, the stuff of these concepts created a problem of co-ordination for the network-like partnership. In this context, an analysis of social ties and overlaps would have gone some way towards better founding and sustaining the partnership. Despite partners’ talk of ‘formalising the partnership’ being targeted at solving their co-ordination problems, my view is that these issues can be understood as having arisen through conflicting overlapping communities, and weak and imbalanced social ties, across the partnership. This offers a more refined reading of the partnership’s failing trajectory than the view of simple informality could illuminate. I am not, however, proposing that to engage in such readings would be a flawless exercise.

In introducing new concepts to the partnership arena, there remains the risk of their being handled with the superficiality and lack of reflection that can go with the notion of ‘shared vision’. As such, certain caveats ought to be made clear. At this stage, I see the primary value of overlapping communities and social ties as being facilitators of reflection concerning the location of values, attitudes and approaches beyond the individual, but also in relation to others. In the case of overlapping communities, these ‘others’ are likely to be located outside of a partnership, whilst in the case of social ties, these ‘others’ are individuals’ fellow partners. It is in this context of shifting reflection away from senses of individuality and core personal qualities that I see value in the concept of community. This perspective does, however, present challenges.

The challenge to identify one's own community memberships – as evidenced by the assumptions, values, and interests that one holds – could be experienced as an abstract or peculiarly subtle task. Furthermore, such an identification of community memberships could even prove to be contentious. Here, I am referring to the risks of crudely assigning community memberships and stereotypical qualities to those with whom only new and weak, partnership-based ties exist. There may also be good reason for partners being circumspect in revealing their fullest motivations, values and attitudes in setting about partnership working. For example, it could not be assumed that other partnerships would be characterised as the passionate enterprise that BV initially seemed to be. Indeed, some partners may at the outset harbour low expectations and even a sense of onerous forebodings. In order to generate constructive value out of the concepts that I have developed here, the demand for openness and a willingness to engage in reflection and self-criticism is demanded. Even in the case of BV, I could not assume that these conditions would ever have been embraced.

One further qualifier that ought to be raised here, is that where overlapping communities and dynamic social ties do provide conceptual resources for thoroughgoing reflection, these alone do not guarantee success or progress in partnership working. Rather, they are presented as offering firm foundations for the generation and negotiation of collective aims, trust and working practices – in short, the conditions for social co-ordination. It is in reflecting on one network-like partnership that such considerations have emerged. It would be for exploration with other forms of partnership to examine how far these concepts would have value (see 'Implications for research', below).

Reflections on the research methods

Overall, the ethnographic research design seemed to work well in relation to generating rich data concerning issues that underpinned the partnership's operation and trajectory. The genesis of a research scholarship specific to the enterprise of the BV partnership meant that I was privileged in being able to gain access to situations of conflict and tension in the field. This 'access all areas' position is rare

in the field of partnership research, and was essential for this study. Had I been asked *not* to attend some meetings (such as Ann's proposed 'clear the air' talks pre-meeting 15, Chapter Four), or to refrain from taking notes during moments of conflict, or if partners had censored themselves from talking about the problems of working in partnership during interviews, this would have inhibited the generation of sufficiently detailed data from which to develop new concepts. Other partnership researchers have not been so fortunate, being barred from interviewing certain members of partnerships, or having their requests to observe meetings declined (Anning et al, 2006; Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008; Carter, 2009). In Chapter Three, however, I explained that despite my explicit attachment to the BV partnership (which created access to its partners), this did not mean that partners trusted me immediately, or that I was able to strike up an equal sense of rapport with each partner. Also, my joining the partnership before some partners became involved (Martin, Keith, Julian, Clare, Susie, Clive), meant that the timing of the fieldwork was fundamentally important to the data that I would generate. Being involved at a relatively early stage of BV meant that I got to observe the partnership's membership growing and shifting over time.

The intensity and duration of the fieldwork process also shaped how I was seen by members of the partnership. Initially, I was seen as a non-participant observer of meetings and activities, and as someone who would be generating useful data with community groups that could be fed into the development of the partnership's project idea. However, over time I became treated more like a member of the partnership - a position that I tried to distance myself from, although this was not always easily achieved (see my involvement in delivering invitations and decorating, Chapters Four and Five). To a degree, the support that I gave with discrete practical activities was my implicitly 'paying back' partners for the access and openness that had been afforded to me. This meant that I found myself moving between the 'multiple selves' (Coffey, 1999) of researcher and partnership project worker at times. Chapter Four also demonstrates several instances where partners asked for my opinion on issues, and spoke to me, informally, before and after scheduled meetings or interviews. The duality of my role and my developing levels of trust with the partners enabled me to further negotiate access to partners outside of partnership meetings (via email) and to documentary data (the failed

funding bid), and about the initial stages of partnership development prior to my entering the field. Overall, my long-term presence, the fact that I carried out what was asked and expected of me - in relation to conducting research with community groups, and my always being careful to avoid being seen to 'take sides', facilitated a more open dialogue with partners in the interviews.

On the whole the method of data generation and interpretation was fit for purpose. Were I to repeat such an exercise, I would consider adopting a social tie analysis approach from the beginning, akin to those implemented in 'whole network studies' (Wellman, 1999), as such approaches have been found to systematically elicit useful data about the composition and role of social ties within a bounded network. A related challenge would then be to 'map' this onto salient instances of partners' overlapping community memberships. By way of contrast, through this research I did not explicitly and systematically interview partners with specific detailed reference to the background and dynamics of their social ties with their fellow BV partners. However, it was as a product of my methods for generating data - combined with my background reading - that produced material to support analyses of overlapping communities and dynamic social ties. Whilst this is evident in the data discussed through Chapters Four and Five, a more overt, network analysis approach could be adopted in future partnership research. To have studied more than one partnership, in this instance, would have diluted scope for conceptualising partnership in response to such particular social relations as were experienced.

In terms of research methods, though tempted, I chose to not attempt to introduce the use of participant research diaries. This was despite their potential for presenting further data covering partners' professional and personal reflections on the development of BV (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Rather, I was confident of my observations and interviews producing sufficient data - that reflected partners' feelings and experiences - from which I could theorise. More importantly, though, one of my original research design principles was that I would aim to not unduly create further disruption or work for partners - other than by being present and requesting interviews. At that time, I considered the request to complete a research diary to be an imposition too far.

I would have considered collaborating with partners on the data interpretation. This, however, would have undoubtedly raised its own set of issues – possibly creating new conflict in the sense that was being made of the partnership's operation and trajectory. Furthermore, due to the disbanding of BV, I could not return to communicate emerging theory and developing concepts so as to aid partners' reflection in the ongoing development of the partnership. Here, I should address what could be perceived as a conflict between the role that this research *did not* play in the field, and my assertion that the concepts overlapping communities and dynamic social ties represent a valuable contribution to partnership theory. In essence, this is a matter of timing.

I believe that there would have been value in (re)viewing research as an integral part of the partnership's formative development. However, even with the adoption of, say, an action research approach, with the researcher having a remit towards facilitating effective partnership through research, I would not, at that time, have been an appropriate candidate for the research. After all, I knew very little about partnership theory at the outset. As the research developed and initial theorising about BV's partnership working emerged, I did try to encourage the partnership to see my role as relevant to its development. I felt strongly about this, as I was witnessing the slow, incremental collapse of a partnership in real time and I felt a moral obligation to try to use the research findings in a way that might produce useful and constructive knowledge for the BV partnership. I twice volunteered to present my interim findings on the study of the partnership's operation and trajectory to the BV partners, but they declined these offers, appearing more interested in what I could share regarding the Broadley community. Thus, I cannot claim that my research findings made any difference to the BV partners. With a view towards conducting partnership research using an action research approach, I am now well disposed towards such a task. In contrast to my starting out with BV, I am now familiar with partnership theory, I have direct, in-depth experience of partnership research, and I have developed a conceptual framework for further understanding conflict and consensus within one case of partnership working.

Policy and practice implications

Although the BV partnership was not directly formed in response to government policy directives, it ~~was~~ an example of a partnership that stretched across the public, voluntary, community and private sectors, that sought to implement an educational and social intervention, located in a geographic community. Therefore, this study should be of interest to policy-makers, particularly those considering the expediency of partnership working in the fields of education, community learning, and community development. The way in which partnership conflict and consensus has been rendered and reframed in this thesis, and the implications for practice that this raises, is likely to come as a challenge to practitioners and policymakers who would conceive of partnership as a straightforward, common-sense approach to social policy implementation. For example, in partnership policy and practice, 'quick wins' are prized (see, for example, Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). In such a climate, this unreflective and uncritical approach to 'getting on' with working in partnership risks individuals and organisations falling foul of superficial instances of harmony, as was the case with the BV partners' 'shared vision'. Here, the question is, how do you encourage policy-makers and partnership practitioners to value and balance reflective practice against more immediately visible partnership activity that needs to show signs of 'delivering', or quick wins? A part-solution to this would be to view such reflection as part of the standard process of sustaining partnership activity.

The conceptual frameworks of partnerships as instances of overlapping communities, part-mediated by dynamic social ties, would be useful in unpacking 'messy' practice, which this research and previous literature acknowledge partnership working can be. Overlapping communities and dynamic social ties should be understood as theoretical instruments for aiding reflective practice, through providing a structure for sense-making - something that the BV partners were lacking, and actually resisted. As a new way of conceiving partnership working, I do not aim to provide clear-cut guidelines for partnership practitioners, as to do so would be to overlook the complexity and heterogeneity of different

partnership contexts. Instead, the concepts have instructive implications for partnership practice, as they describe relational concepts that could depersonalise conflict and support the development of shared and empathetic perspectives. As a new and valuable conceptual development in the realm of partnership theory; I do not regard the conceptualisation process as complete, and expect to see further refinements and developments of the concepts over time and through their application.

This research reminds us that where individuals have previously worked in partnerships that have functioned well, this does not presuppose that they necessarily understand the factors that contributed to successes or sustainability. As in the case of BV, it can come as a shock when individuals are brought together in a partnership arrangement that yields tensions and problems that are not easily identified or resolved. The development of critical partnership training programmes could support the reflective practice and professional development of partnership practitioners. One policy implication of the research is to advocate the development of partnership training programmes. These would support reflective practice concerning partnerships' formation, development and maintenance, in terms of practitioners' overlapping communities and dynamic social ties. This would encourage practitioners to identify the values, attitudes and approaches that they and others bring to the partnership – locating these in their membership of other communities. In providing a perspective on harmonious and potentially conflicting overlaps, this would then scaffold arguments for analysing how dynamic social ties might help to generate value out of, and sustain (or not), these overlaps.

Such partnership training programmes could be levelled at either a group of individuals who find themselves working in different partnerships (but not necessarily together) or at a group of people that constitute an actual partnership. Participation in the former might be useful for a range of individuals, for example, those who are new to partnership working; those who have become new members of an established partnership; or those who find themselves dealing with conflict in a partnership setting. Participation in the latter might be particularly useful for newly established partnerships, especially where some partners have worked

together before and others have not. One of the functions of such training would be to introduce the language and concepts of community and overlapping communities into the arena of partnership practice.

Firstly, explicit consideration of community memberships and overlapping communities could raise questions and insights for those working within partnerships. For example, they could simply be asked, 'What communities do you belong to?' and then 'What do you bring with you from your various community memberships?' Such questioning may help to locate where partners' own interests and values stem from. Additionally, consideration of how their community memberships might overlap with other partners in harmonious or conflicting ways may alert them to possible impacts (both positive and negative) on the partnership setting. To frame this reflection in terms of community memberships offers a means of looking beyond (and behind) the individual.

Secondly, training programmes could facilitate increased awareness and analysis of the strength and mesh of social ties between partners, which is important as this can have implications for the generation and maintenance of trusting relationships within a partnership. More generally, such training might ask participants to think about the establishment of a partnership as the setting up of a new community in its own right. Ideally, critical partnership training programmes developed along these lines would help to facilitate the active negotiation of overlaps between partners' pre-existing community memberships and to lay the foundation for valuing the generation of new and stronger social ties within a partnership.

It is not envisaged that such a programme would provide a fixed formula for managerial action, but it might produce clear implications for the development of practice, as the conceptualisations are likely to identify issues that need to be addressed. The concepts of overlapping communities and dynamic social ties could be used as handles for making sense of actual situations. Therefore their value may lie in offering a framework for sense-making and consideration of ways forward. The aim of any critical partnership training programme would be to translate the theoretical concepts developed here into tangible tools for aiding the reflective process of partnership practitioners.

Research implications

The complexities of partnership working raised in this thesis, extend and develop ways of analysing and representing partnership. My research suggests that overlapping communities and social ties would underpin other partnerships' practices, although further research is needed to explore these concepts beyond the BV setting.

In any future research, I would explicitly seek to analyse a partnership in terms of its management of partners' overlapping community memberships, and the subsequent shifting of partners' social ties. In addition, ongoing reflection could support the concept of partners' ties to the 'partnership project'. This would 'test' the idea and value of conceiving of a partnership as a community in its own right. With that, it would legitimate and seek to make explicit, the terms on which individuals became and remained members of the new community. Overlapping communities and dynamic social ties, as discussed above, should benefit from further in-depth ethnographic or action research study with a partnership. The main challenge for this would be to further interrogate the identification and management of the kinds of heterogeneity, conflict and naivety that undermined BV.

This research has demonstrated that it is appropriate to understand the conflict and consensus within the BV partnership in terms of instances of overlap between communities and the role of dynamic social ties. However, a question for future research is: what is the range of partnership types that these concepts can support? And related, could the value of these concepts supersede the notion of partnership 'type', and even partnership altogether? Generated out of a context marked by conflict and tensions, there may be insights here that could support theories around conflict resolution (a story for a different thesis).

Conclusion

My learning through the process of this research has been practical as well as theoretical. For example, I have learned the value of using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Nvivo in this research context) to facilitate the systematic management and analysis of a huge quantity of qualitative data. I have also learned the significance of employing coding frames, and of designing multiple coding frames, for the analysis of qualitative data. And I have reasoned that there is considerable value in theoretical approaches and previous research literature in support of progressive critical thinking, and reflection. My iterative engagement with previous theories and literatures, alongside the ongoing interpretation of the data generated through this research, was crucial in developing the concepts of partnership conflict and consensus as instances of overlap between communities and as the manifestation of sets of dynamic social ties.

At the outset of this research, my lack of personal experience of working in partnership settings, and my lack of knowledge of partnership theory, was in part a strength. It sustained my curiosity and interest in the variety of action, interaction and, at times, inaction that I was observing in the Broadley Vision partnership, prompting me to ask questions of what was unfolding. It is also important to acknowledge that other researchers in my position may have generated different data, and thus framed the research differently. It is possible that an individual already well-rehearsed in partnership theory may have become differently located within BV, which may have been constructive or even problematic. I could not assume that all partners would ever have been willing to be 'criticised' or directed – this, partly a product of BV seeming to be seeded as a passionate, personal quest. In short, it is safe to suggest that the outcome of the research could easily have been different.

This research has developed new ways of conceptualising conflict and consensus within partnership through the study of one cross-sectoral, network-like partnership. This re-conceptualisation suggests that partnership working may call for a high degree of reflexivity, especially in situations characterised by conflicting overlapping communities and variations in social ties across a partnership. This

research has set up a new research agenda focusing more specifically on issues of community overlaps and dynamic social ties.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview guide (1):

1. What does the partnership aim to achieve? 'Setting up' the Broadley Vision project has been mentioned – what is this?
2. How did the partnership come into being? Who initiated it?
3. Why was Broadley chosen as the intended location for the Broadley Vision project?
4. What made you want to participate in the partnership? (reasons for involvement / motivations)
5. What is the partnership's vision for the project? (what will it look like? Who will be involved? What type of 'learning' will take place?)
6. What is your role in the partnership?
7. How have roles and responsibilities been shared out?
8. Commitment of partners?
9. Effectiveness of partnership group?
10. Strengths of partnership group?
11. Limitations of partnership group?
12. How will other stakeholders be involved in the development of the Broadley Vision project?
13. What would you say have been the main successes so far?
14. What would you say have been the main difficulties so far?
15. What do you perceive to be the next steps for the partnership group?
16. What for you will be a marker of the partnership's success?

APPENDIX 2

Participants' attendance at partnership meetings between August 2001 – July 2003.

KEY TO TABLE:

Grey columns – partners' attendance at partnership meetings

White columns – partners' absence from partnership meetings (for example, due to illness, holiday, prior work commitments, etc.)

Black columns – partners' participation in the partnership had not yet begun or had ended.

Striped column - Ronnie Smith chose not to attend meetings 8-14 because he did not want to work directly with the partnership. However, during this time he continued to work with Howard Barber and Alan Grogan, outside of the formal partnership meetings, in order to further *his* vision of a community learning centre in Broadley.

Table: Participants' attendance at partnership meetings 2001-2003

		Participants' attendance at formal partnership meetings												
		AG	AH	RS	HB	SH	MG	KV	MH	JF	KW	CM	SB	CP
Number of formal partnership meetings Between 2001 -2003	1													
	2													
	3													
	4													
	5													
	6													
	7													
	8													
	9													
	10													
	11													
	12													
	13													
	14													
	15													
	16													
	17													
	18													
No. of meetings attended		7	14	8	10	1	12	17	3	2	7	4	8	5

APPENDIX 3

Broadley Vision – A Way Forward? **Discussion Note for Partnership Meeting 11th January 2002**

Introduction

This discussion note has been prepared following recent meetings of the BV partnership which have struggled to identify a way forward to realise the 'Vision'. The intention is to stimulate debate about how best to fulfil the Vision now that Ann Harrison has been agreed to lead and drive forward the vision as part of her Voluntary Sector Training Project.

Funding Issues

Revenue Funding – Obtaining revenue funding will not be difficult to progress the project. There are numerous sources for this strand of funding, including the DfES' Adult and Community Learning Fund, ESF co-financing, etc.

Capital Funding – Obtaining the required £250,000 plus capital funding will be more difficult. Though in an Objective 2 area, the Broadley location is outside the Priority 3 EDs – meaning the area where specific 'regenerating communities' activities can be undertaken. In the Borough, such EDs are concentrated in parts of Croxby and Chattersley wards. Broadley is also not deprived enough for some funding streams, as we discovered through the recent funding submission, and it is not rural enough for other possible funders.

A Way Forward in the Broadley Area

To continue the 'Vision' in Broadley would require the following:

- A more detailed survey and estimate of the costs involved in renovating the building, taking particular interest in safety and accessibility issues.
- If this figure were considered to be too high, then consideration would have to be made to renovating the building on a room by room basis, rather than as an entirety.
- On the other hand, the ideals of the 'Vision' could be put into practice first in partnership with the Broadley Croft Hall Community Association (BCHCA). This would require new IT equipment for the centre in Croft Hall, possibly using second-hand equipment from UKTC, and internet connection.
- The starting point of Croft Hall could be used as the hub before the development of spokes elsewhere in the Broadley Parish area.

Other Options for a Way Forward

Other options for realising the 'Vision' elsewhere in the Borough could be a credible way forward:

1. Government funding
 - The identified government funding opportunity could be realised with a £50,000 grant for capital spends in the 4 most deprived wards of the Borough (Broadley is NOT one of these). In these terms, the money could be used for computer hardware, software, furniture and other fixtures and fittings.

- The £50,000 grant will have to be spent by March 2002 and a small partnership of Ann Harrison and some of her contacts are considering the proposal.
 - Possible facilities have been identified in the four most deprived wards.
 - A further £5,000 to £10,000 will be available to spend on marketing 'Centres of Learning and Opportunity' by March 2002.
 - £15,000 per annum will be available to spend on revenue costs from 2002 to 2005.
2. Community Information and Resource Centre
- Proposals are being developed for a Community Resource Centre in the Borough that could offer a home for voluntary sector organisations, meeting/conference facilities, a home for area-based regeneration initiatives, a base for post-SRB community development workers, and learning facilities.
 - Such a centre could access ERDF, Regeneration Zone, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, NMI or Sure Start funding. To meet all of these funding strands, it would have to be located in the Croxby/Chattersley area (NOT Broadley).
 - The learning facilities component of this centre would then be rolled out across the Borough.

Matthew Griffiths / Ann Harrison – December 2001

APPENDIX 4: Ann Harrison's Action Plan for BV – tabled at meeting 9

Broadley Vision Action Plan

VISION: To create a community learning and resource facility for Broadley. This will provide flexible, innovative and creative learning opportunities that will generate enthusiasm for learning, developing a population of willing learners with skills appropriate to the employment market.

“To achieve stable and sustainable growth, we will need a well educated, well equipped and adaptable labour force. To cope with rapid change and the challenge of the information and communication age, we must ensure people can return to learning throughout their lives.” David Blunkett: Secretary of State for Education – The Learning Age.

WHAT	WHERE NEXT	TIME SCALE	HOW	TIME SCALE
Ronnie Smith to do an assessment of BCB rooms and Howard Barber to liaise with Alan to get started.				
	Community Training Event (AH)			
To continue current work in schools	Extension of work in schools (HB)			
PhD research (KV)				
All People Online Project Officer appointment	To establish a base in Broadley. Identification of contacts and people's needs in Broadley. To liaise with BV partnership group.			
Broadley Croft Hall	Internet connection. All People Online post.			

APPENDIX 5: Howard Barber's Action Plan for BV – tabled at meeting 11

Broadley Vision – Project Plan

The following document attempts to outline the Broadley Vision project into workpackages which have individual targets and timescales. The overall plan relates to the original Vision Document.

Project Details

Philosophy:

- Minimal dependency on the project team and maximum involvement of the community.
- The community drives the project beyond the initial scope we have provided.
- Integration with existing activities is paramount.
- Leadership of the project will be transferred to Broadley as soon as practical.
- Recognise the boundaries of Company and personal involvement of project team.

Overall Plan:

- Develop a Vision, test it and communicate with the community
- Develop a baseline from which to measure progress
- Involve existing community groups in development
- Launch the project within the community
- Acquire the BCB building and redevelop for the community
- Work with schools, parents and the community to raise communication skills.
- Move towards self-management and organic development of the project

Phase 1 – Develop a vision and test it with the community

- Involve relevant stakeholders and test the concept
- Communicate the vision and reinforce progress
- Seek to involved an increasing number of the local community
- Get stakeholder buy-in
- Launch the project

Phase 2 – Make it happen – September 2002

- Develop a clear plan of action and publicise it
- Allocate owners for the various actions
- Produce a communications plan
- Seek integration opportunities
- Research funding possibilities

Phase 3 – Implement the plan and communicate progress – October 2002

- Workpackage owners develop plans
- Timescales and milestones
- Regular reporting / updates

- Communications channels within project and community

Phase 4 – Transfer to local community – Review October 2003

- Ongoing process to bring people on board

Workpackage example: BCB Building

- Secure lease and terms
- Negotiate with existing tenants
- Audit building structure and facilities
- Plan building facilities upgrade including costings:
 - Fabric
 - Toilets
 - Access
 - Electrical
 - Decoration
 - Lighting
 - Furnishing
- Disaster plan including security and insurance
- Maintenance budget
- Computing equipment and lines
- Training/meeting facilities

The following workpackages need to be designed and attributed to a named partner:

1. BCB building
2. Community
3. All People Online
4. Centre launch
5. Schools
6. Partnership and Project Management

Howard Barber - 2002

APPENDIX 6

Feedback from the Internet4all Launch Event

Overall: The event was a success from the All People Online perspective as it attracted 160 people and provided the necessary introduction to the Internet4all project for them. They were able to get a number of potential partners to how their wares and had a clear opportunity to explain what they are about. We supplied the equipment they wanted including video phones and an e-mail phone in addition to number of volunteers who supported the users of the equipment.

It would be useful to get a report from Keith Winters as some things were clearly not a total success (e.g. the number of sandwiches being binned at the end).

Broadley Vision perspective: The event did not come across as being part of the Broadley Vision and the response was very disappointing for the following reasons:

1. The launch event was not positioned as part of the Broadley Vision by the Internet4all team. There was no mention of Broadley Vision in the invitation letter and the press release mentions were minimal (tacked on the end). It was mentioned in the event speeches, but only in name.
2. The profile of Broadley Vision at the event was totally inadequate in comparison with the other organisations at the event. The Broadley Vision development material had to be split because of problems with the stand, the messages were about 'learning' and did not focus on the main points of the vision, the location of the stand in the community centre was inappropriate being on the table in front of the tea hatch.
3. There was no material to give to people about Broadley Vision. Individuals' business cards were handed out by individuals, but there were no formal contact arrangements.

Learning: There are a number of stark messages from my perspective:

- We must take marketing and communication seriously or our efforts will be wasted. We need leaflets, a contact strategy and mechanism and, most importantly, a coherent story of what we are about. We lost an opportunity with the recent launch event. Broadley Vision should have been centre stage at the front with UKTC and the All People Online profiles.
- We must seize the opportunity of Internet4all, but be wary about the dangers of it overwhelming our activity. This requires formal management of the relationship, particularly as the Internet4all project has a full-time project officer.
- Broadley Vision must raise its profile and start talking about the things it is doing (this means we must get some successes and be clear about what we are actually going to achieve). We must get smarter at moving Broadley Vision into exciting areas and this requires leadership and drive within the partnership team.
- The partnership team needs to be clear about what it is doing and how it leverages the resources available to it. This includes people, Voluntary Sector Training Project resources, Internet4all, input from Newsby Borough Council, etc. We are doing this for the people of Broadley.

Howard Barber, November 2002.

APPENDIX 7

To All Broadley Vision Partnership Members

22nd May 2003

For some time now I have been deliberating my involvement with Broadley Vision.

I have been involved with Broadley Vision for the past 3 years and I now feel that I have achieved all I can and am prepared to do with my current involvement. I therefore with immediate effect remove myself from the Broadley partnership group. I base this decision on predominantly two reasons:

1. The development of my project [the Voluntary Sector Training Project] from 1998 to its current state has been immense. The success that it has and is still having have got it to a point of major expansion. I therefore feel that my energies and time have to be devoted solely to this expansion and the Voluntary Sector Training Project's development over the next 6 years.
2. Over the 3 years the Broadley Vision partnership group has achieved much but obviously we have not achieved the Vision. I think that it has now reached a stage where much greater concentration and effort is required by an individual or individuals to move it on further. The uncertainty of the premises [Broadley Council Building, Health Centre or Community Centre, or wherever] is a major issue as is the formalising [in a legal / governance sense] the management of the Broadley Vision partnership group. I know that I haven't the time to commit to this development for the above reason.

The consequences of this are that I withdraw myself and resource commitment from Broadley Vision. I will not be present at the partnership meeting scheduled to take place on Wednesday 28th May 2003 at 10.00am in the Broadley Council Building. I feel that it is now up to the partnership group to discuss and determine who, what, where and how Broadley Vision needs to continue.

I trust that whatever is decided the good work of what has been achieved to date is maintained, developed and sustained.

Regards.

Ann Harrison
Training Facilitator
Voluntary Sector Training Project

