

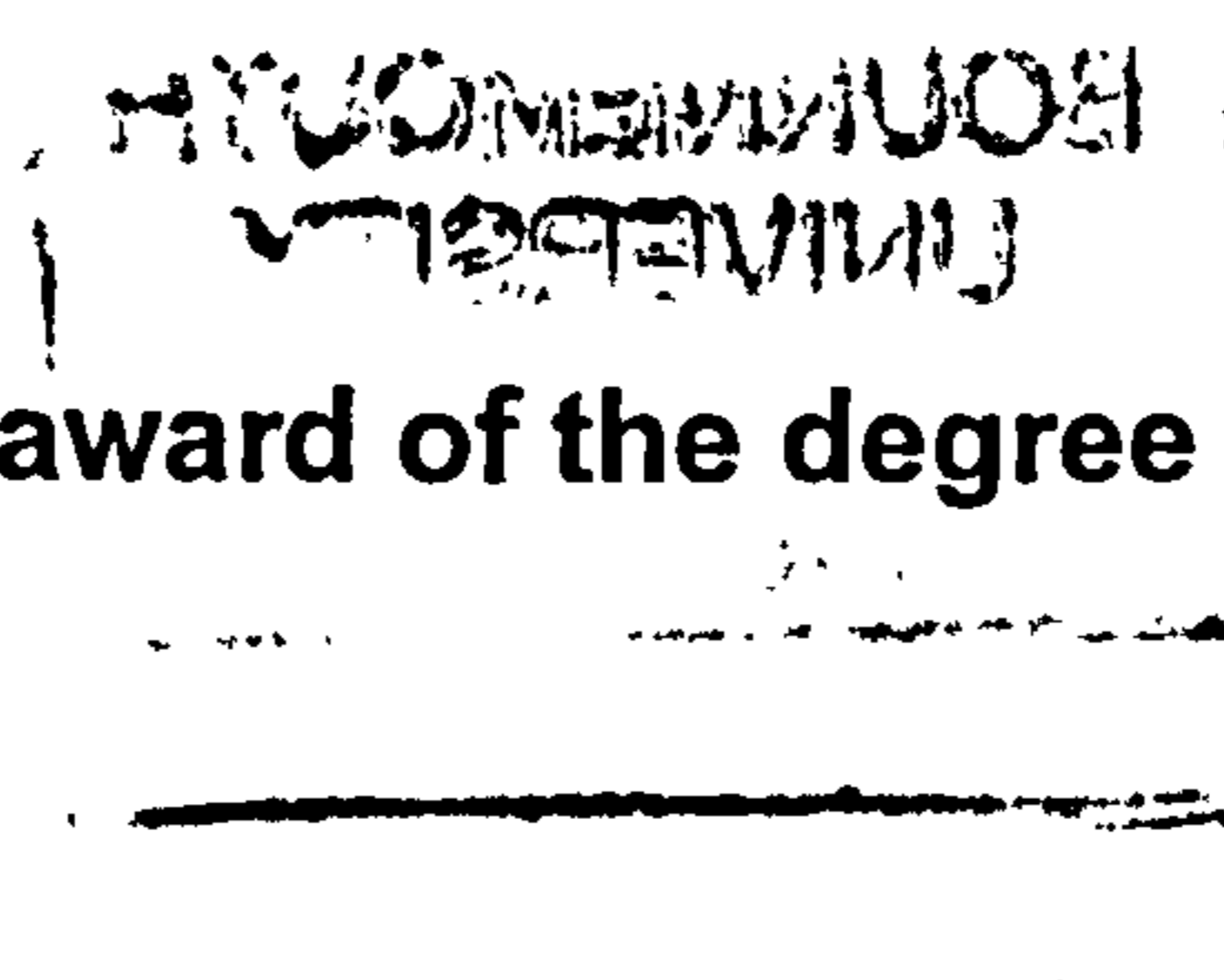
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Transformation and Power in a Multiorganizational Partnership: A Case Study

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Abstract

Transformation and power in a multiorganizational partnership: A case study

One of the challenges for multiorganizational partnerships is the inability of agencies involved to address or even be prepared to address issues of power. Power relations in partnerships are a neglected area in the literature (e.g. Hastings, 1999; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Marsh and Murie, 1997; Martin, 1999). This case study contributes to this debate through an insider's perspective in the context of the author's experience working as a partnership manager and researcher. This was neither a neutral nor an objective engagement as I played an active part in the unfolding story as a powerful, reflexive actor.

My inquiry addresses the issue of power in relation to transformation processes. Specifically set within an action inquiry strategy, the research focuses on the emergent nature of partnership transformation and the ways in which power manifested itself and influenced the Partnership's development. Partnerships open up opportunities for political activity through a reframing of activity in a domain, and whilst this can be positive in forging new relationships and generating new ideas, it can also have potentially negative effects for partnership transformation.

The thesis offers a syntactical approach using first-, second-, and third-person voices in order to explicate a real partnership's transformation processes and power issues and to enhance validity through triangulation and integration of these perspectives. In the first-person the thesis concludes that greater recognition should be given to the critical role, competences and development needs of partnership professionals and particularly partnership managers as boundary spanners. In the second-person the inquiry claims that more attention could usefully be focused on intra-partnership conflict as a means of improving partnership effectiveness. In the third-person voice the study concludes that remedial action may be necessary to resolve shadows of the past that may continue to blight partnership transformation and that the under-resourcing of partnerships is a critical issue for partnerships.

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Thanks and love most of all to my wife, Yvonne, and my family for their understanding and support whilst I was undertaking and writing up the research.

"Instead of a period at the end of a sentence there ought to be a clock, to tell you how long you have taken to write it"

Laurie Anderson, *The End of the Moon*, 2005.

Author's Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work.

Previously published or submitted material emanating from my research in whole or in part are included as Appendices to this thesis, some of which are co-authored.

Chapter 1

Aims, Context and Style of Research

Introduction

Partnership has become the watchword of UK Government Policy over the past 10-15 years. It is perceived as a politically expedient solution to a wide range of social, economic and health issues and this fascination shows little sign of abating. Although the phenomenon is well described in the literature from an external observer viewpoint, there has been relatively little examination of what it means to be working in a partnership from the inside. Based on personal experience as a partnership professional working within a public, private and voluntary sector multi-organizational economic partnership in Britain (the Partnership¹ or LEP), this chapter sets out why I undertook this research, its theoretical inspiration, my personal values and style and the context in which I worked. Based on real situations that arose in the course of my research this thesis provides a frank, reflective account of the complex dynamics involved in working in and trying to influence, a particular multiorganizational and multisectoral Partnership. As the research progressed, informed by my review of the partnership literature, the focus of my interest was drawn to the ways in which aspects of power were played out through the process of transformation. The thesis attempts to expose the main learning points to emerge from my research, testing them against key themes in the literature, for the purpose of contributing both to theory and practice.

In many ways partnership is the ultimate post-modern organization, characterized by fluidity, uncertainty, ambiguity and discontinuity (Buchanan and Badham, 1999). Partnership has become a catch-all panacea for society's ills (Hutchinson, 1995) and a symbol of Government's difficulty in joining up spatial and functional policy initiatives (Friedmann and Weaver, 1979). Epithets such as '*partnership mania*'

¹ The word 'partnership' is written with a small 'p' when used generically, but when referring to the local economic partnership a capital is used.

(Bryant, 2003, page 56) and *'partnershipitis'* (Huxham, 2003b, page 411) are common in the literature. Yet, as Hastings (1999, page 91) has pointed out, *'studies of partnership relationships have largely ignored issues of power, influence and resistance'*, and (Mayo, 1997) suggests that although the word *'partnership'* implies a measure of equality, or some degree of balance and reciprocity, in practice the partners are anything but equal. The challenge of partnership is seen as the inability of agencies involved in partnerships to address, or even be prepared to address, issues of power.

"If a partnership does not address issues of power it will remain symbolic rather than real...an apparent consensus may simply mean that the opinions of more powerful partners are dominating agendas and processes" (Balloch and Taylor, 2001b, page 284).

In many ways issues of power that challenge fundamental values, attitudes and beliefs can become *'undiscussable'* (Argyris, 1990) and this was largely the case in my research. However, there was always a strong political undercurrent running through all the Partnership's processes and interactions. I became very aware of the duality of public image and performance underscored by political infighting based on internal alliances. I also had a public role to play whilst also *'backstaging'* behind the scenes, intervening informally with partners at different levels to influence and mollify, maintain support, block or obviate resistance, and to enthuse and limit any possible damage (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). This in turn led me to reflect on my own relationship with others within this complex multi-organizational Partnership, and my attempts to promote transformation through *'power of balance'* and resisting behaviours that sought to retain *'balance of power'* (Torbert, 1991) within the Partnership in favour of vested interests.

The emergent nature of events and episodes within the Partnership, their ambiguity and uncertainty, challenged my technical, interpersonal, and political skills in undertaking the role of Partnership Manager whilst also driving transformation and change. My initial hopes were to help the Partnership to create a democratic structure as a vehicle for a meaningful sub-regional discourse on economic futures.

This was with the purpose of capitalizing on the economic potential of the area and to do this by helping to resolve historical political impasses as a first step towards reconciliation and consensus. This inquiry into a live Partnership is a case study of a particular episode in the Partnership's development, which illustrates the influence at micro scale of power relations, which are often omitted or at least go unrecognized in ex post facto, 'outsider' studies.

In respect of my experience as a 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983) my research is also about a partnership professional's perspective on the process of transformational change within a multi-organizational Partnership. I have tried to capture and preserve an insider's perspective on the emergent nature of partnership transformation with a focus on issues of power with a reflective account of the meaning and learning that can be drawn from my experience.

I would describe myself also as a change agent because it most accurately describes my purpose and style. I provide a fuller account of this particular aspect of my role in Pettigrew (2003). There is a gap in the literature about the role of internal change agents as opposed to external change agents (Hartley et al., 1997). In reality, the role of change agent was to varying degrees also the function of some of the more active partners for at least some of the time. Change agency rather than agent may be more accurate (Buchanan and Storey, 1977). However, as this is my account of the experience, and since I was in a privileged position to engage, facilitate and act within dramas in an almost full-time capacity, I have retained the term 'change agent' where appropriate.

The aim of the research was thus to understand the processes of emergent Partnership transformation with a particular focus on issues of power. I set out the key research questions later in this chapter. The style of research is action research presented as a case study, and I explain in the following chapter the methodological basis for my study. A secondary focus was to produce a reflexive account of the dynamics of partnership transformation from the viewpoint of an insider, with the aim of providing a unique insight into partnership development and issues from this perspective.

Theoretical Inspiration

The initial inspiration for my research was provided by the work of Engelstad and Gustavson (1993) and Levin's (1993) work using action research to support regional economic development in Norway and national work reform in Sweden respectively. Although seminal in using action research technologies in the context of networks, partnerships and regional development, their work was strongly critiqued by Bartunek (1993), Mangham (1993) and Reason (1993). The substance of their critique relates to the following issues:

- Articles too generalized, dense, and complex
- Sense of detachment and lack of engagement
- No sense of emergence, definition and re-definition of issues
- No sense of false starts and disappointments, of flesh and blood involvement
- An emphasis on scientific procedures over substance
- Little revealed about process and means
- Conceptual issues not carried through into an explicit presentation of their implementation

The essence of this critique goes to the heart of the methodological ambiguity in action research as a positivist research methodology or as a tool to aid interpretation (Brooks and Watkins, 1994). Levin and Engelstad and Gustavson reveal the features of action research that they consider important, such as the social construction of reality, but then fail to explore these issues by reverting to an *'orthodox scientific world view which, in direct contrast, is concerned with objectivity, reductionism and empiricism'* (Reason, 1993, page 1255).

This study is a response to these criticisms of action research in an economic development context. I do not claim that my research is a pure form of participatory research, but it was originally inspired by these papers which appeared in a special edition of *Human Relations* (Volume 46) in 1993. My study is participatory to the extent that the research has been conducted with the direct involvement of

colleagues and I have tried to validate my findings and test my understanding through a variety of methods which I explain in the following chapter. I would stop short, however, of any claim that it was motivated by or resulted in emancipatory effects.

Aspects of my approach also owe much to the influence of the work of Bill Torbert and 'developmental action inquiry theory' whose emphasis on personal, team and organizational transformations as different voices to be discerned, investigated and combined, seemed to resonate with my situation and purpose (Fisher and Torbert, 1995). This theory focuses on *'the integration of inquiry and action in the real time first-, second-, and third-person research/practices of our day to day lives'* (Hartwell and Torbert, 1999, page 192). I use first-person in this thesis to mean my own subjective reflections and practice. Second-person is the inter-subjective voice reflecting relationships found within the Partnership I was researching. Third-person refers to the Partnership as an entity. These categories are interrelated and not necessarily distinct or discrete as I explain later but I believe this formulation provides a guiding logic to my thinking and approach to researching and writing my thesis.

So, I have tried to create and relate a 'lived' experience of an eclectic form of action research in my study that exposes rather than conceals the realities of partnership working from a variety of perspectives. Whilst trying to conduct my inquiry to conform to prevailing epistemologies of action research, my experience was that the reality of actually adopting this strategy was far messier than some of the literature suggests. It was not always easy to identify precisely an action research cycle a priori, let alone its constituent elements. It is sometimes tempting to try to make 'reality' fit the action research ideal, when in fact the research process is often unclear, ambiguous, subject to interpretation and revision, and often the subject of sabotaging activity (Eden, 1996) and other examples of indiscriminate application of non-partnership power plays – both from the inside and externally. Additionally, as initial reaction developed through various stages towards mature reflection, further cycles of revision and re-interpretation have occurred, and the process of writing up the research has tended to extend this process. I have, therefore, not tried to

present this thesis in a false way to fit any pre-conceived methodological straitjacket, but rather to reflect as honestly as possible the reality of playing a major part as researcher and practitioner in a partnership transformation process.

Partnerships and networks have thus become a prominent feature in the way governments of different political persuasions in the UK expect to see national policies implemented. Inter-organizational working is common across a range of agencies and policy areas, including regional economic development, health and social care, education and business. Despite this prominence there is little information, guidance or evidence on how partnerships and networks operate in practice and their effectiveness. There is even less assistance for network, alliance and partnership practitioners, managers, animators, facilitators and change agents who are involved in *'the complexity of and frustration in managing... relationships'* (Spekman et. al., 1996, page 346) and who need to address *'power differences, power games, power plays, power struggles'* (Huxham and Vangen, 2005, page 173) . I hope to add some practical and theoretical insights on these issues through my research.

Theoretical Positioning

As well as responding to the gap in the literature on power in partnerships described above, I have also tried to provide a first-hand insider's account of issues of relationships, power and influence in multiorganizational partnerships, a particular gap identified by Hastings (1999). Many of the studies in the literature are researched and written from an external viewpoint, even if the researchers were intimately involved with the partnership. They are usually evaluative and ex post facto studies that try to rationalize past events from a structural or process perspective. As Hastings (op. cit.) has suggested, there is a lack of emergent insider research on the nature of power and transformation in partnerships.

Partnership can be understood as *'transformation'* (Hastings, 1996; Mackintosh, 1992), the primary purpose of which is to change attitudes and practices - hearts and minds - of those involved in collaborating institutions. Transformation can

therefore be understood as an aspect of the micro-politics of power relations within partnership. However, transformation is not just a one-way process. Partners may exert transformational pressures on each other (Hastings, 1996). Uni-directional transformation is where *'one or more partners struggle to modify or change another partner in their own image'* (Hastings, 1996, page 263). Secondly, there is *'mutual transformation'* which describes: *'a less coercive, antagonistic or competitive set of interactions or relationships in which each partner might be willing to accept the need to change themselves, as well as aspire to change others'* (ibid.) . These different forms of transformation are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Types of Transformation (Hastings, 1996)

	Process	Result
Uni-directional	One or more partners struggle to modify or to change another partner in their own image. Partners do not accept the need to change themselves	One or more partners change their original culture or objectives to become more similar to those of another partner. The transforming partner retains its style or objectives.
Mutual	Reciprocal challenges made to the pre-existing culture and objectives of partners, who seek to learn as well as aspire to teach.	All partners involved in the process change to some extent. New sets of objectives and operational styles are developed. Differences between partners are reduced.

Thus, Hastings suggests that uni-directional transformation which is limited to resource economy or maximization, or merely working together to seek policy synergy without actually changing the other partners and being changed yourself, is a limited conception of transformation. There may be benefits of inclusion and democracy, new perspectives and innovation, in such forms of policy synergistic transformation, but it is still limited if the original cultural differences between the partners are maintained. Mutual transformation represents a step change from this more limited conception, in which partners seek to transform each other and in turn be themselves open to transformation.

Hastings concluded there was a need to develop conceptual and methodological frameworks and empirical tools to measure whether transformation actually does take place during the progress of partnerships. Crucially, it suggested that there was a need to get beyond simply charting how partners perceived of their relationships, and to examine what processes actually take place. This thesis also partly responds to this challenge, although it stops short of suggesting 'measurements' in favour of 'perceptions' of progress. It agrees with Hastings' (1999) assertion that transformative relationships are an important expression of the exercise of power within partnerships and explores one episode of transformation within a partnership trajectory, the elements of which I describe later in this chapter.

In the final chapter (Figure 10) I posit two further theoretical levels of transformation in which partners not only seek to transform each other and be transformed bi- and multi- laterally, but attempt to build a wider supra-organizational vision to change the partnership as a whole; and that this new conception of partnership influences others on a wider scale. These aspirations were not realized in my study but are theoretical possibilities and were motivating, if naïve, principles that drove me in my early engagement with the Partnership.

Personal Values and Style

Research in the form I have conducted and presented it is largely a personal process (Reason and Marshall, 1987). As I have used myself as the main instrument of the research, it is important that readers understand my values and beliefs as these are largely reflected in the style, method and conclusions from the research. My values are based on honesty, integrity, democracy, compassion and fairness and I am aware that these underpin my approach and understanding of the world. Based on a recent Insights Discovery profile of me (see <http://www.insightsworld.com>), which is a framework for self-understanding and development based on Jungian psychology, I extract the overview section below, which I and work colleagues consider a fair reflection of my style and approach:

'Paul believes in doing everything the right way and his preoccupation with perfection makes him sensitive to errors or unfairness. Because he is a realist, he capitalizes well on available resources, making him practical with a good sense of timing. He can be a great 'designer' of systems, which he prefers to leave to others to build. Under moderate pressure, he is still able to reflect and become more efficient and effective. His knack for identifying and attending to key issues positions him well in dealing with an emergency. Perhaps exhibiting the traits of the most independent of all the Insights types, he prefers to do things his way.

Paul's logical, analytical approach combined with his intuitive gifts allows him to maintain his focus on tasks and ideas rather than the personal. Although disinterested in purely scholastic pursuits, knowledge is important for its immediate usefulness to him. Paul is the conceptual problem solver, intensely intellectual and logical, exhibiting flashes of creative brilliance. He tends to appreciate tradition and is interested in maintaining established rules and procedures. Unless someone can put his ideas into practice they may be lost.

He is responsible and faithful to his commitments and obligations. He is persevering, with a singleness of purpose that he devotes to long term achievement of the mind. He is an ideal academic who continually seeks knowledge for its own sake. Paul is a curious and keen student of all that is going on around him. He typically does not take constructive criticism and disagreement personally. He welcomes tough, accurate, unrelenting critiques as helpful in achieving the highest levels of performance and objectivity. He tends to trust his intuitive insights into the meanings and inter-relationships of things.

A capacity for cool emotional detachment makes Paul a good decision maker, because he thinks clearly under pressure. Enjoying theoretical,

complex and global concepts, Paul is a strategic thinker who can clearly see the benefits and flaws of most situations. He is not impressed with authority as such but can conform to rules if he sees them as useful to his greater purpose. Because he lives by principles and rules, Paul is very consistent and dependable. He likes to make rules based on his own standards and to apply those rules to everyday life.

Material wealth may interest him only for the independence it buys and for the additional opportunity it provides for his own private study. As he values his integrity, he can be determined to the point of being stubborn about issues that are important to him. His quest for knowledge can become very theoretical. He tries to use logical principles to make sense of the ideas that constantly arise in his mind. Paul is analytical, impersonal and interested in underlying principles.

Possessing determination and perseverance, Paul has a high regard for his own competence and values others with similar high standards. He should try to establish whether his ideas are relevant and not ignore the feedback he might receive. He is not a 'party animal' and often prefers his own company. He is impatient with people who read between the lines and who focus on the unseen and the unverified. He is not particularly discouraged by indifference or criticism.

He will make a lifelong friend if the conditions of the friendship allow him complete independence and the freedom to withdraw as and when necessary. He does not take criticism personally, and is often surprised to discover that others may be hurt or offended by the constructive criticism he can offer. He has a tight group of close companions to whom he enjoys relating thoughts and ideas. He is usually prepared to accept the views and opinions of others only at a technical competency level. He tends not to care how he is seen as measuring up to others' standards as it is his own standards that are important to him.

He may feel under strain if he is unclear about what is expected of him or if duties at work are subject to change at short notice. He can be independent to the point of stubbornness and places a high value on professionalism. He is likely to prefer the dialogue which is going on in his head with his internal critic to participation in meaningless social chit-chat with others. At times it is possible for him to so adapt his conversation style that he may be mistaken as extraverted. He may appear not to be overly concerned with the needs of others.

Equally comfortable thinking things through or talking them out, Paul balances these two processes well. He views life as an intellectual challenge and needs to think things through before deciding. He values truth above all else and is primarily convinced by logical reasoning. He makes decisions after a great deal of thought and may not be dissuaded by emotional or muddled arguments. He sees himself as realistic, practical and matter-of-fact, although others may not always see the practicality of some of his decisions.

He may at times make others feel defensive due to his incisive, critical and often persistent questioning. Paul's many accomplishments are achieved mainly through determination and perseverance in reaching or exceeding his high standards. People count on Paul for insightful analyses and forthright judgments. Paul's quizzical and probing nature may create solutions which open up fresh processes. He may be more interested in the challenge of searching for a solution than seeing the solution being put to practical use.

He may occasionally be slow at coming to a decision, or try to have a decision reversed, as he has a need to analyse all the available alternatives. Politically aware, Paul is normally comfortable with his decisions even in the face of possible conflict with others in more senior positions. Making decisions comes logically to him, although his need

for detachment results in colleagues viewing him as rather distant. He prefers to make decisions based on 'gut feel' rather than on exhaustive and repetitive analysis. He will be swayed by guarantees and case histories.'

I appreciate that this brief profile is based on a particular theoretical lens but trust, given the accuracy accorded to it by colleagues, that it will enable the reader to some extent to be able to 'see through my eyes' in understanding and interpreting the way in which I have approached and conducted my inquiry. I return briefly in the final chapter to reflect on my personal transformation and deep learning as a result of exploring the practice-academy nexus which forms the basis of my inquiry, reflecting my 'practitioner as researcher' experience and through my long engagement with the Partnership and researching and writing this thesis.

Study Context²

The setting for the case study was an economic partnership set up in a sub-region of Southern England. I refer to it as the Partnership or LEP – local economic partnership – in this thesis. It was a complex Partnership comprising some 30 diverse organizations from the public, private and voluntary/community sectors. The drivers for its formation were threefold: 'economic', 'local political', and 'national political'. The 'economic' driver was a recognition among the various partners that the numerous agencies and councils all had a role to play in creating the conditions for the continued economic well-being of the sub-region. The 'local political' driver was as a result of local government re-organization (LGR) by the then Conservative Government which the year before had broken up the County Council, which included a conurbation and a large rural hinterland, into a largely rural County Council (Brookshire County Council and six constituent District Councils) and two separate urban 'unitary authorities', Chilton Borough Council (CBC) and Denbury Borough Council (DBC). These politically dictated units did not correspond with 'economic space', and so it was recognized that the 'original' County Council area

² See Glossary for a list of the 'actors', organizations and their abbreviations.

had in some way to be re-defined as an economic sub-region, without compromising the sovereign status of the new local government political units. The original suggestion of a partnership to take on this super-ordinate role was championed by my employing organization, Brookshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), which retained a brief for the whole of the sub-region. The TEC was largely funded through government, but was set up as a private company limited by guarantee, and led by the private sector.

LGR had been a damaging and fraught process for local government, and when I joined the TEC just as the LEP was being mooted, there was an evident bitterness from those who remained at the County Council, operating over a much reduced and largely rural area, at the break-up of the old County Council. There was a feeling of denial and betrayal by those who fought the re-organization, and a feeling of release and exhilaration within the two new urban unitary authorities which, following a long struggle, had finally managed to secure a political separation from the largely rural-interest dominated County. The reverberations from this seismic change in the local government structure were to resound throughout the period of my study, and sensitivities ran high between organizations and the individuals who were affected.

Another 'local' political driver was the private sector, which was frustrated throughout the LGR period that the focus had shifted from collaboration and the pursuit of sustainable economic success, to self-destructive internal strife and dissent. However, the private sector itself was troubled by long-standing mistrust and dysfunction particularly between the TEC on the one hand, and the local Business Link, Business Link Brookshire (BLB) and the Brookshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), which shared the same chief executive, on the other.

The 'national political' context was provided by a New Labour Government which, if anything, strengthened a faith in partnership initiated by the previous Tory Government, as the preferred means of delivering 'joined-up' strategies and

services on the ground. This was apparent in a range of publicly provided services (Balloch and Taylor, 2001b) and in the context of my study, this became manifest in Government guidance to TECs (HM Government 1994, 1996) that they should seek to take a lead in establishing local economic development partnerships in their areas. This was closely followed by the new Government fulfilling its manifesto promise to set up regional development agencies (RDAs) in England. This saw, in the case of our region, the LEP quickly emerge as the RDA's principal sub-regional partner³, thus providing an external boost to the LEP's role and credibility, and positioning it in a key influencing and strategic role within the sub-region.

Thus, what started out as a relatively loose network of co-operating agencies posing little threat to the established sub-regional organizational dynamic equilibrium suddenly became much more important and a threat both to the new order externally imposed by Government through LGR, and to the Chamber and Business Link. Having achieved independence from the County, the two urban authorities were highly suspicious that the LEP would try to force them back into the County through the Partnership. The Chief Executives of the two unitary authorities let me know in no uncertain terms through separate telephone calls (expletives undeleted) that they were not about to co-operate within the LEP if this were the hidden agenda.

The designation of the RDA by the New Labour Government and the creation of a representative regional assembly had caused suspicions that this was a pre-cursor to yet another round of LGR at some future stage. Regional and sub-regional units of local government could in this scenario substitute for the existing arrangement, which was anathema to the new unitary authorities. As a consequence of their urban geographies and close proximity to similar urban areas in an adjoining region, they then sought to align themselves within partnerships spanning the regional boundary, whilst retaining a self-confessed 'grudging' membership of the LEP.

³ This came about partly as a result of the first LEP Chairman's being appointed as a Board Member of the RDA.

Similarly, BCCI and BLB could sense that the balance of power between them and the TEC, which through animosity was a source of energy and identity to them within the organizational environment, was becoming threatened by the emergence of an 'umbrella body' to represent all of the economic development interests of the sub-region. The threat of disturbance to the equilibrium, a process of 'unfreezing', had begun (Lewin, 1951).

Transformation Phases of the Study

This section of the chapter sets out the transformational stages of the Partnership. The labels I have devised are my own interpretations but derive from discussions with my reflective mentors (see Chapter 3) as well as other individuals active in the Partnership. These were not pre-set but rather emerged through reflection as the Partnership developed so they were ascribed these labels with hindsight, apart from the final level of transformation which was aspirational on my part.

My thesis is a detailed reflective account of the third and final phase of the case study, which I describe as '*Board formation*'. This is a label I have coined for this period of my research and describes the Partnership processes and my personal reflections on them during a one year period when the LEP transformed from a collaborative network to a Partnership. It encompassed a time of profound change for the LEP and the Brookshire sub-region, comprising the areas covered by Brookshire County and the two unitary local authorities of Chilton and Denbury.

I undertook detailed research for the first two phases of my investigation, which I have labelled '*Creation*' and '*Recognition*'. I have not written up these episodes in my thesis for the sake of brevity, but they do form an important backdrop to the *Board formation* phase. I include brief summaries below in order to help the reader position the narrative in context.

Creation Phase

The *Creation* phase concerned the setting up and early stages of the LEP over an 18 month period culminating in a Partnership Review comprising a survey of Partners, followed by a presentation of findings and a day-long debate about the implications for the future development of the LEP. This stage in the putative Partnership's development was characterized by a feeling of optimism as a loose network of agencies came into being following a recommendation by consultants, Coopers Lybrand. They had been commissioned to advise the local authorities and principal public agencies in the sub-region on the best way of pursuing economic development in the Brookshire sub-region following LGR. I had just joined the TEC three months before the creation of what was to become the LEP. As the TEC was the only body to cover the whole of the sub-region, and had the resources to take the initiative, it was expected that it would offer to convene the Partnership. I therefore volunteered my services to undertake that task, having previously discussed this possibility with my manager, the Chief Executive of the TEC, Tom Wills.

Not long after this, a senior business figure, John Piper, who was a director of a construction company and from a well-known and long-established local family, became Chairman of the Partnership. In the early days it was called the Brookshire Area Economic Partnership. However, this was later changed to the Chilton, Brookshire and Denbury Economic Partnership (LEP) reflecting the political sensitivity of the two new unitary authorities which were previously part of Brookshire Council.

I soon found myself at the centre of all the Partners' expectations to lead and stimulate meaningful collaborative effort. My initial intention was simply to establish the idea of Partner organizations working on key economic development issues across the sub-region. This meant developing good working relations, initially mainly at officer level, to establish the LEP as a recognised entity in the political/organizational landscape. The Partnership was still at this stage 'virtual' and fragile. It was given most credence by the production, for the first time in the

area's history, of a sub-regional strategy that was a genuine collaborative effort and important as a way of building up personal relationships and enough trust to give confidence that the collaboration might develop into something more substantial (Vangen and Huxham, 2003b). In addition, on a more pragmatic basis, there was already much inter-organizational working on issues such as business start-up, economic intelligence, and inward investment (including key industrial sites). However, the Partnership was still, in reality, a relatively loose network that had grown in stature adaptively and organically. It was also driven by the goodwill of largely public sector executives, who could see the potential benefit of working together, largely outside of the political arena and in a rather low key but effective way.

I operated by enthusing, persuading, proselytising and demonstrating to the various partner organizations the potential value of and prospects for working together. There was no central direction or mandate that a partnership had to be created (e.g. as for Government-funded partnerships). This was a critical difference compared to many multisectoral partnerships whose members, purpose and resources are set by the main funders, typically Central Government. The creation of the LEP in contrast was a voluntary phenomenon and, therefore, there was an initial sense of mould-breaking and reframing of economic and interorganizational possibilities by taking more local control of our own economic fortunes. It was, however, driven by certain other factors:

- The need, post LGR, for machinery to be put in place to provide a forum for the new Unitary Authorities to work with the County Council and its constituent District Councils on key economic development issues that transcended local authority (LA) boundaries.
- The advent of the Regional Development Agency, and its desire to work through coherent, representative sub-regional partnerships (SRPs) of which the LEP was one.

- The TEC's desire (encouraged strongly by Government) to foster partnership working on a local basis.
- A belief among key local protagonists, particularly the TEC and some key private sector interests, that an economic partnership was 'a good thing' in order to reduce duplication and to promote co-operation, coherence and synergy.

The major achievement in this phase was simply the creation of the LEP, which I refer to as *T₁ transformation* – from having no co-ordinating or co-operating organizational mechanism for economic development in the sub-region, to having some machinery in place, even though it was at that time relatively simplistic.

Nevertheless, the LEP had begun to act as a vehicle for dialogue between Partners on economic development issues. Economic space transcended the new political entities and the creation of the LEP was a recognition of this reality and that ways now had to be found to deal with such issues cross-organizationally and cross-sectorally. The process of thinking, working and acting together had begun, and the principle of a sub-regional partnership was established, although in truth at this stage a 'partnership' could not be said to exist in any formal sense. It was rather a loose network principally comprised of economic development and policy executives who were keen to make collaboration work. Progress was made, for example, on combining our resources to manage a sub-regional research programme, to respond to a government consultation on the setting up of regional development agencies, to co-ordinate inward investment and regeneration activities, and to maximise external funding opportunities to support local economic development.

We considered that to transform ourselves from this loose network of officers to a fully-fledged Partnership with a representative and accountable political tier was the next step-change in the LEP's development. At the end of this creation phase of the partnership's development I was satisfied that a good start had been made and

my limited ambition of fostering collaborative working on matters of mutual interest had been achieved. However, owing to unforeseen circumstances the advent of the 'Board formation' phase was delayed as the Partnership suddenly became a political hot potato.

Recognition Phase

The second phase of the research lasted for 6 months after the 'creation' period and was characterised by a period of chaos for the LEP and a time of great frustration and uncertainty for me personally. I have characterised this cycle as the T_2 recognition phase of partnership transformation.

This phase of the life of the LEP was more emergent than planned. At 'officer level' fellow collaborators and I had hoped during this stage that the LEP would grow in power in partners' and stakeholders' estimation through the establishment of a political level Board. However, this soon proved to be wildly optimistic. Instead the Partnership, from my initial perspective, veered off out of control into a period of anarchy when it was not clear to me if it would even survive, given the level of uncertainty that pertained. This was a highly stressful period as the Partnership seemed to go into a kind of paralysis, as previously muted interorganizational tensions surfaced and fluid, sometimes oscillating factions or clans within the Partnership emerged.

This was the result of a number of inter-related factors, both internal and external. Internally, stresses and strains were caused by the growing recognition by some Partners of the potential significance of the LEP as a new, major force for change. Initial recognition had given way to a fear that the new Partnership represented a threat to some of the key partners. For example, both the unitary authorities, at Chief Executive level, feared that it might become a back-door way of re-creating one local government body for the whole of the sub-region. It was perceived that the advent of the RDA might focus political minds on sub-regional units of local

governance – and this was anathema to the unitary authorities. A quote from a telephone conversation with one of the Chief Executives describes the emotion:

"I didn't spend the last three years of my life trying to get out of the fucking County for you to try and put us fucking back in!"

Similarly, the two unitary authorities were lobbying at the time to become part of a new proposed region and to strengthen existing ties with a cross-border alliance of local authorities that would not necessarily include Brookshire. On this account too, the LEP was seen as a politically inferior Partnership of which to be a member – something to which 'lip service' should be paid whilst Chilton and Denbury Councils were actively lobbying to create a new region with which they would feel a greater sense of identity, extending the political space between them and the rural county.

Another local cause for instability was the LEP's lack of status and governance. Thus, despite their officers' close involvement with the Partnership, DBC's Chief Executive refused to acknowledge its existence since from his perspective it had no local legitimacy or associated corporate governance, and its membership and activities were, therefore, deemed unaccountable. His perception that the LEP was a TEC creation, and an unelected, undemocratic body, only served to strengthen this conviction.

The rapid rise of the LEP in the consciousness of established organizations in the sub-region also caused concerns to be expressed about the Partnership's role vis-à-vis its constituent members. It began to be seen in some quarters as a threat to the organizational equilibrium, as a potential power that might threaten the roles, independence and power bases of particular protagonists. Thus, Partners such as BCCI and BLB saw the Partnership as a possible tempering influence on their combined degree of freedom to act unilaterally within their areas of responsibility. It was seen as a potential brake on their freedom to act within their own organizational domains and governance structures signalling a diminution of power. As the loose network became stronger and the 'LEP' name invaded conversations

and consciousness, this concern became palpable as the Partnership took shape. In other words, the LEP had now acquired an existence, identity and personality distinct from its constituent parts, and the significance of this was becoming apparent to decision-makers in the key constituent organizations.

External discontinuities were also at work during this period, stemming from the radical agenda of the New Labour government. During this period the government announced that TECs would no longer be responsible for delivering its work-based training agenda and would lose their contracts with government. TECs were to be replaced by a new government Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) called the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Another new agency to champion the cause of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) was also announced, the Small Business Service (SBS), and it would be seeking to shake-up the current Business Link structure by making existing Business Links, Government-funded agencies providing help to small and medium-sized businesses, compete for three year rolling contracts.

At the same time the newly established RDA, which had just been set up in April 1999 (with John Piper as a Board Member), began to take its first steps. The Agency quickly realised that it needed to work with sub-regional structures if it was to be effective, especially given the social, economic, geographic and cultural diversity of the region. Thus, the LEP became the RDA's official sub-regional Partnership, the vehicle through which it would carry out its roles and responsibilities within the Brookshire area. This new-found status had a major impact on the degree of legitimacy and importance of the Partnership from the perspective of its members. The route to the RDA was now via the LEP, so Partners needed to ensure that their particular issues were flagged up within LEP policies and strategies, formal and informal.

The response of some of the key Partners to these radical drivers was to take stock of the situation and ponder the implications of this new-found status and importance of the LEP. This was both in the light of impending changes to government-funded

institutions to drive local skills, learning and business services, and in response to a growing awareness of the power and potential of the LEP. Typically, the views of Partners were ambiguous. On the one hand, the Partnership offered a strong opportunity to plan, co-ordinate and represent the views of the whole sub-region, which was generally seen as positive. On the other hand, it represented a threat to the current balance of power, which caused key organizations to suddenly take notice of the Partnership and to try to shape it so that its potential could be maximised without upsetting the status quo too radically.

Thus, a group of key Partners: including representatives from the TEC, BCCI, BLB and the three primary local authorities: BCC, DBC and CBC under the Chairmanship of Don Watson, a BCCI member, met over a 6 month period to consider how they wanted the Partnership to proceed. Although personally frustrated throughout this phase as I was excluded from these deliberations (as to a large extent was my Chairman, John Piper, although in his case this was more deliberate policy), on reflection this was an important turning point in the development of the Partnership.

At the time it seemed folly to let pragmatic, developmental matters suffer so that vested political interests could take control of the destiny of the Partnership. A short period of introspection might have been understandable, but it seemed to me that this was a deliberate attempt to hobble the Partnership, to bring it under the control of those who saw it more as a threat to their organizations than an opportunity to transform the economic fortunes of the sub-region. I thought that the Partnership might not survive. However, with hindsight this period demonstrated that the Partnership was now suddenly seen as a threat to the established sub-regional organizational and political order. The forthcoming demise of the TEC and the establishment of the SBS had begun to concentrate minds as to the shape, purpose and role of the LEP in the new organizational landscape. My feelings of stress were often related to being excluded from certain phases of discussions, and not knowing what was going on, as the 'big players' among the Partners became embroiled in debates in various groups. This brought the Partnership centre-stage,

and it became recognised as an at least potentially powerful alliance to preserve a degree of local control of the sub-region's economic destiny.

My aspirations for the LEP were for it to have proper governance, a respected public profile and to continue on a steady path towards establishing the Partnership as a genuine strategic recognised entity in the sub-region. During this phase I genuinely felt the Partnership would fall apart and my hopes for it dashed. Although a frustrating period for me personally, however, in hindsight, this was a very productive time for the Partnership as so many future possibilities were debated at various forums, formally and informally, involving many people, but most importantly those who considered themselves business and community leaders. On reflection, this period of chaos was probably a pre-condition for the next level of transformation which some Partners (including me) were trying to create: the establishment of an accountable and representative Partnership Board and a recognition that the LEP could play a significant part in shaping the economic future of the sub-region.

Hence, I have called this phase *T₂ transformation* – the acknowledgement and *recognition* by Partners of the potential power and importance of the LEP and the need to consider a form of Governance acceptable to all the Partners. In a short space of time the Partnership had become very significant at a political level. The debate that occurred was important in cementing the LEP's credentials as the acknowledged vehicle for resolving sub-regional economic interests. It also established the Partnership as the key representative body for the whole sub-region, despite the range of competing interests it covered. This phase of transformation I claim to be highly significant in laying the foundations for partnership governance, which I see as germane to my definition of 'partnership'.⁴

Board formation Phase

Following the period of critical introspection described above, the Partnership emerged with an agreed model for the structure of the Board. Ironically, given what

⁴ See Chapter 3

had gone before, the process of establishing the Board happened relatively quickly - within 2 months. This coincided with the inauguration of a new Chairman, George Patterson, and a new envisaged role for the Partnership as both the supplier of Board Members for the putative LSC and New Business Link (NBL), and as a major player in the process of BLB's bid to the SBS to win the franchise as the NBL. Over a period of 9 months this phase covered the new LEP Board's first steps in establishing itself as the legitimate, strategic body for promoting and co-ordinating economic development in the sub-region.

By this time I felt back, if not in control, at least in harness, and able to influence the speed and nature of the process. The achievement of creating an agreed form of Partnership governance through the setting up of a representative Board was not the ultimate in the transformational process, but in my view was a necessary step along the way. This happened later than I had hoped but from the ashes of the *recognition* phase, the Partnership emerged stronger than before and provided a top level forum for the key political players in the sub-region to conduct a face to face dialogue with each other. I label this phase in the transformation process as *T₃ – Board formation*.

Conclusion

This chapter sets the scene for my case study, which considers in detail the *Board formation* phase of transformation described in Chapter 4. Partnerships typically operate with looser structures than organizations, and this frees up space for players in partnerships to exploit opportunities to gain influence and challenge hierarchies. A particular issue in the literature concerns the ways in which minority interests are frequently marginalized by Government and funding agencies, even when ostensibly the partnership is created to empower and engage communities (e.g. Eden and Huxham, 2001; Hastings, 1999). This type of power differential is well documented, particularly in Government mandated and funded regeneration partnerships. This study, however, considers the case of a voluntary strategic multisectoral economic partnership where power differentials and authority through command of resources played a relatively insignificant part compared to mandated

partnerships. Yet, the influence and manifestation of aspects of power were still significant in determining partnership trajectory, both from within the partnership and externally.

The study considers these issues from the viewpoint of an insider, observing and also playing a significant part in the surfaced, hidden and subtle ways in which power is played out. The account is based on first-, second-, and third-person approaches in the form of action research presented as a case study (Torbert, 2001; Yin, 1994). Its inspiration is to address some of the criticisms levelled at papers by Levin and Engelstad and Gustavsen in the Special Issue of Human Relations in 1993 (Elden and Chisholm, 1993). It therefore exposes the emergence of transformational and power-related issues rather than presenting an historic-evaluative, rationalized and externalized account. It avoids any pretence of a sanitized or anodyne process and attempts to provide lessons for both policy and practice. It will conclude that there was a process by which different forms and sources of power became established; how perspective played a large part in the perception of who had power; the pervasive influence of 'shadows of the past' (Pettigrew, 2003) and 'shadows of the future' (Axelrod, 1984); the important yet often underestimated influence of personalities and 'clans' within partnership structures; and the defining influence of Government power, even in a non-mandated partnership.

It will also suggest that first-, second-, and third-person perspectives provide a useful methodological framework for considering complex social entities such as the power dynamics within multiorganizational partnerships. This approach offers a triangulated perspective based on explicit personal reflection as a major actor in my own right both as practitioner and researcher; second-person voices based on dialogue undertaken throughout the research between myself and other key Partners as practitioners and interviewees, both formal and informal, and with 'reflective mentors' who assisted me with my interpretation of events; and third-person approaches based on the Partnership's views of power and transformational processes. This is a theme which I use as an integrating theme throughout my

thesis representing a thread that runs through my inquiry and which I use to shape my final chapter.

My three key research questions are as follows:

1. *To understand better how issues of transformation and power arise emergently and shape partnership dynamics*
2. *To analyse power relations through inquiring into first-, second-, and third- person perspectives*
3. *To reflect on emergent issues and to draw conclusions that contribute to a better understanding of transformation and power in multiorganizational partnerships*

These objectives have been partly shaped by the literature, but also by my own hunches and interests developed within the LEP as I experienced its unfolding story. As with Huxham and Vangen (2001) my aim has been to add to knowledge by exploring aspects of practice in order to generate theory which can in turn inform and influence practice. However, I do not separate out theory from practice as one of the implications of my inquiry is that they are inextricably bound together and that it is futile to attempt an artificial split between them.

Against this backdrop of rapid change in which initial excitement and steady progress of collaboration in a low key network had progressed to the LEP's position at the centre of political debate about the future of the sub-region's governance, the Partnership had reached a critical stage in its development.

I explore in detail some of the key episodes and 'points of power' (Huxham and Beech, 2002) that shaped the Board formation phase of transformation in Chapter 4. This Chapter contains the key data upon which the thesis is based and includes predominantly first- and second-person perspectives on transformational and power issues that characterized the Partnership during the Board formation stage of its

existence. These themes are then explored in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 in terms of predominantly third-person and first-person reflections respectively, in order to provide a rounded and balanced account from the three perspectives. I do not claim that these categories of voice are always entirely discrete, and as will be shown in Chapter 5 trying to elicit the third-person voice of the Partnership was philosophically and methodologically problematic. Yet I do claim this triangulated way of hearing 'its voice, your voice and my voice' offers a useful strategy for my inquiry. However, before exploring these perspectives in detail, in the next Chapter I consider the literature on multiorganizational partnerships with particular reference and resonance to my research situation followed in Chapter 3 by a detailed account of my research methodology.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Multiorganizational Partnerships

Introduction

The literature on partnerships and collaboration is enormous and mushrooming in line with an ever increasing political and policy focus on this form of interorganizational activity and governance. Partnerships are seen as a means of making sense of disparate government policy at local level (Webb, 1991), as a way of dealing with complexity and change at a meta-level (Perlmutter and Trist, 1986; Sink, 2001), and as forums to manage the so called 'wicked issues' (Rittel and Weber, 1973) of co-ordination and collaboration among organizations with very different accountabilities, cultures, and resources (Kickert, 1993; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Stewart, 1996).

The potential range of a full literature review would be too vast an undertaking given the limited aims of this thesis. There is a huge literature, for example, on Non-Governmental Organization Partnerships, Strategic Alliances, Industrial Relations Partnerships, and Business Partnerships which may offer insights that are transferable to a strategic, multi-sectoral and organizational partnership, but which largely relate by definition to specific lines of enquiry (Huxham and Vangen, 2001). There is also a huge literature on aspects of human behaviour that has relevance to partnerships, which is outside the scope of this Review. Thus, whilst, for example, I recognize that issues of trust are important in partnerships, they are also relevant to a wide range of human and organizational interaction and therefore I have decided to omit specific reference to them, unless they are relevant to my core themes. At the same time I was conscious not to frame my literature review too narrowly on issues of power and transformation. This was partly because the literature precisely on this topic is sparse but also to allow the reader to contextualize my case study within a reasonable bandwidth of relevance to these themes.

The literature is largely a mixed bag in terms of quality and theoretical content. Generally, most of the mainly theoretical expositions have emanated from the

USA, especially in the 80's and 90's, whilst most of the explicitly empirical and practical approaches have been UK-based accounts of partnerships, particularly in urban regeneration and health/social care. Often, it is difficult to elicit a philosophical or theoretical basis to published output, and it is also sometimes hard to ascertain the exact aims and purposes of some of the research. Nevertheless, there is a rich, recent and relevant literature on partnerships and collaboration that provides many genuine insights into the challenges and opportunities inherent in partnership working. These studies have generally adopted an inductive approach to generate theory from practice (e.g. Huxham's prodigious research output – see List of References; also Armistead and Pettigrew, 2004 – see Armistead and Pettigrew (2004)).

In addition authors have approached the subject of multi-organizational collaboration and partnerships from very different theoretical perspectives, with different objectives in mind, and using a range of research strategies and methods (Gray and Wood, 1991; Huxham and Vangen, 2001; Wood and Gray, 1991). The literature tends to be scattered across a range of disciplines, e.g. sociology, economics, organization theory, policy and political studies, economic development and regeneration, health and social care, etc. The underlying research paradigms, especially in recent years, have emphasized interpretive approaches, particularly ethnographic and phenomenological studies and participative action research, case studies, etc. However, positivist approaches also feature in the literature (e.g. O'Toole and Meier, 2004; Thomson and Miller 2003), although these are few and far between, largely because they tend to be limited in their explanatory value and ability to provide practical as well as theoretical insight in a phenomenally rich and complex policy and research environment.

The sheer scale and complexity of the literature is, therefore, daunting. In order to make it more manageable for the purposes of this thesis I have chosen to restrict my field of inquiry largely to the literature on multi- and inter-organizational collaboration and partnership, which in itself is massive. The database I have developed contains 650 entries emanating from both sides of the Atlantic. This database of material has formed the backdrop to my inquiry and has run in parallel with my research. This has helped me to stay focused in

my literature search and reading, as well as informing my interpretation of events as they unfolded in the course of my inquiry.

The literature that roughly corresponds to my particular line of inquiry was expertly summarised by Gray and Wood (1991) and Wood and Gray (1991). These articles remain the bedrock of theoretical discussion on collaboration and partnership in an inter-organizational context. Although the literature has grown exponentially since then, there has been little new a priori theoretical development as compared with expositions deriving theory from closely observing and interpreting practice. On the other hand if theoretical development is judged by the richness of language and insight in the literature then there has been a massive increase both in output and richness. The result of this has been a switch from attempting to build a single theory of collaboration and partnership to an approach that is complex, multifaceted and builds from practice. Like the present study theory is being constructed from a myriad of specific engagements between researchers and practitioners and is thus grounded in experience.

Much of the literature over the past 10 or so years, especially in the UK, has been driven by successive governments' obsession with partnership as a means of delivering better, more coherent, more equitable joined-up services at local level. This is almost an acknowledgement that, irrespective of political persuasion, Central Government has found it very hard to join-up their policies at local level. In fact, as Stewart (2002) points out, Government has paid very little attention to local implementation issues, and has a very limited appreciation of the complexities - practical, conceptual and political - involved in partnership-working.

Thus, many of the studies in the 1990's related to the domains of urban regeneration through initiatives such as City Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), as well as the application of European funds (e.g. de Groot, 1992; Hambleton and Thomas, 1995; Hastings, 1996; Hutchinson, 1995; Khamis, 1997; Mabbott, 1993; Oatley, 1995; Taussik and Smalley, 1998). Many of these initiatives 'required' partnerships to be founded in order to join a 'beauty parade' to attract funds, and thus were mandated rather than voluntary –

although many new voluntary multi-organizational partnerships have also sprung up, including the case for my research, the LEP.

This chapter will consider some of the key issues concerning multiorganizational partnerships which are particularly relevant to the themes surrounding this thesis:

- Variety of context in the partnership literature
- Related definitional issues
- A personal conception of partnership
- Theories of partnership
- Governance with respect to networks, markets and hierarchies
- Transformation and synergy
- Power
- Notions of a Partnership Lifecycle and
- Leadership

Variety of Context

As noted by many authors, research in inter-organizational relations has attracted an astonishing variety of disciplines, research paradigms, theoretical perspectives and sectoral focuses (Gray and Wood, 1991; Huxham, 1996a; Huxham and Vangen, 2000b), including economics, strategic management, organization theory, policy studies, international relations and management science.

Research strategies vary enormously from positivist to interpretive, including phenomenological and ethnographic approaches. Methodologies include action research, case studies, focus groups and documentation-based policy analysis. Some research is based on private sector inter-organizational studies, including supply chain relationships (e.g. Cooper and Wallace, 2000; Ross, 1997); strategic alliances (e.g. Inkpen and Beamish, 1997; Lorange and Roos, 1992); international joint ventures (e.g. Child and Faulkner, 1998; Meschi, 1997); and public/private partnerships (e.g. Carley, 2000; Finn, 2001; Hilditch, 2001).

Others are concerned with more public sector-dominated inter-organizational relationships, e.g. in housing (Hilditch, 2001; Northmore, 2001; Reid, 2001); health (Davies, J. K., 2001; Higgins et al., 1994; Robinson and Paxton, 1998); local government (Kearns and Turok, 2000; Stewart, 1996; Wheeler, 1996); the environment (Davies, 2002; Long and Arnold, 1995; Pasquero, 1991); urban regeneration (e.g. Carley et al., 2000; Davies, 2002; Hastings, 1996); employer/union or 'social' partnerships (e.g. Ackers and Payne, 1998; Bacon and Storey, 2000; Guest and Peccei, 2000); Local Strategic Partnerships (e.g. Pearson, 2001; Rowe and Devanney, 2003; Stewart, 2002); as well as sub-regional and regional partnerships (e.g. Pettigrew, 2003; Rowe and Devanney, 2003; University of Warwick et al., 2003).

It is, therefore, difficult to carve out a coherent and consistent body of literature that uniquely relates to this thesis. There are aspects from this wide variety of literatures, paradigms, and approaches that have influenced my thinking and research, and informed my research strategy. As might be expected given this background, there are serious definitional and terminological issues that hinder communication. There is a danger that by addressing these in too much detail in this review, that my purpose will become diverted into an arid discussion of nomenclature. However, failing to address the issue at all will likely cause the reader to become even more confused as the thesis unfolds. I set out below therefore a brief account of some of the definitional issues involved, focusing on the way I define and use the key concepts for the purpose of this thesis.

Definitional Issues

The question of what we mean by the terms 'network', 'networking' 'co-operation', 'co-ordination' 'partnership', 'collaboration' and 'collaborative advantage' has exercised researchers over the years. However, there is no one clear, accepted definition of these terms, which are often used interchangeably without further explication (e.g. Himmelman, 1996; Huxham, 2003b). For example, in a recent monograph on collaboration among non-profit institutions, the terms 'partnership' and 'collaboration' are used interchangeably despite the fact that the authors spend time discussing various definitions of collaboration (Nissan and Burlingame, 2003).

Some authors have attempted to elaborate a continuum of definitions, distinguishing, for example, co-operation at one end of the spectrum in terms of intensity and sophistication, from collaboration and strategic restructuring at the other; and collaboration from co-operation and co-ordination, based on levels of formality, planning, mission and role division (e.g. Mattesich and Monsey, 1992; Myers, 1998; Pratt, Gordon et al., 1998).

In the context of the private sector, Lorange and Roos (1992) propose a continuum with the 'pure market' relationship of purchaser and supplier at one extreme moving through co-operative ventures of increasing formality, first to joint ventures and then through co-ownership to full integration through mergers and acquisitions.

Himmelman (1996) is one of the few authors to explicate in detail his position on definitional issues. Like Lorange and Roos, he also proposes, in an increasing range of ambitiousness, a '*continuum of definitions and strategies*' (page 22). At one extreme he defines networking as the '*exchange of information for mutual benefit*' (page 27). At the other extreme he defines *collaboration* as the '*exchange of information, altering activities, sharing resources and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose*' (page 22). *Collaboration* is defined as the most complex process along a developmental continuum that includes networking, co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration. Co-ordination is defined as '*exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose*' (page 27). Co-ordination is seen as requiring more organizational involvement than networking. *Co-operation* is defined as '*exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose*' (page 28). Co-operation requires even greater organizational commitments and in some cases may involve legal arrangements. Shared resources can encompass a variety of human, financial, and technical contributions, including knowledge, staffing, physical property, access to people, money and others.

Himmelman's definition of collaboration emphasises the enhancement of the capacity of another organization to share risks, responsibilities, resources and rewards, all of which can increase the potential of collaboration beyond other

ways of working together. In this sense collaboration is a relationship in which each person or organization endeavours to help their partners to become better at what they do. This definition is relevant in the context of my thesis, which will suggest increasingly sophisticated degrees of transformation, with the ultimate aspirational level representing a position whereby the collaborators or partners are able to envision beyond their organizational or personal boundaries and see their contribution as a part of a greater super-ordinate shared vision.

So, the meaning of partnership may be ambiguous, and may mean different things to different partners. Both 'partnership' and 'collaboration' are terms which are used to describe partnership activity. They may be used to describe a form of organization or a method or process of working (Hutchinson and Campbell, 1998). Partnership can be seen as a process rather than a 'thing' and so it can always be made to work better. In the following section I attempt to disentangle this confusion, not so much in the hope of persuading others of my view, but rather to explain to the reader how I distinguish these terms for the purpose of this thesis.

Partnership – a personal conception

The term 'partnership' is often used synonymously with collaboration in the literature, although interestingly often by different groups of authors. I am persuaded to adopt Himmelman's definition of collaboration as described in the previous section. However, I do not believe it represents the most complex form of co-human endeavour as he claims in his continuum of genres. Partnership for the purpose of this thesis represents more than simply a collaborative group. It implies a degree of formal governance beyond the project level, a degree of commitment that extends beyond the short-term, and a strategic element (whether acknowledged or not) that transcends both short term and operational perspectives. Thus, I see collaborating as an essential but not sufficient criterion for a partnership to exist. Partnership is therefore more than collaboration, although collaborating is a defining aspect of partnership.

Most commentators, however, have concluded that there is no clear and uncontested definition of partnership (Dowling, Powell et al., 2004; Geddes and Benington, 2001; Glendinning, 2002; Mayo and Anastacio, 1999; Miller and

Ahmad, 2000; Powell, Exworthy et al., 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Indeed Ling (2002, page 82) claims that the partnership literature amounts to *'methodological anarchy and definitional chaos'*. It is hard to disagree with this conclusion.

From the literature there are various definitions of 'partnership'. The Audit Commission's definition, for example, considers partnership as a joint working arrangement where partners are otherwise independent bodies co-operating to achieve a common goal; this may⁵ involve the creation of new organizational structures or processes to plan and implement a joint programme, as well as sharing relevant information, risks and rewards. (Audit Commission, 1998) This view suggests that new structures and processes are optional in contrast to my definition.

Bennett and Krebs (1990), in my view rather loosely, claim that partnerships can range from agreements between actors to work towards a common end, to agreements which form a legal contract through which specific targets for performance are defined by the contracting parties. I consider this definition not sufficiently discriminating to be useful.

Similarly, Powell and Exworthy (2002) see partnerships as no more than *'quasi-networks'* as opposed to a distinct category or entity, in contrast to authors such as Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) who say: *'Partnership as organizational structure is analytically distinct from network as a mode of governance the means by which social co-ordination is achieved'* (page 314): a view which resonates with my own conception. They see partnership as analytically distinct from network as a mode of governance because of the means by which social co-ordination is achieved. Although a partnership may not be a better means of social co-ordination than a network in terms of trust, reciprocity and mutual benefit, it allows for a variety of means of functioning through market and hierarchical relationships as well as networking.

Bailey, Barker et al. (1995) define partnership as *'a coalition of interests drawn from more than one sector in order to prepare and oversee an agreed strategy for the regeneration of a defined area'* (page 27). This definition, in the context of

⁵ My emphasis.

urban regeneration policy in Britain, emphasizes the strategic aspects of partnership that accord with a transformational partnership model.

Hutchinson and Campbell (1998) tend to see partnership as a process rather than a 'thing'. This definition again seems limited according to my conception. It implies that a partnership process would be sufficient to define a partnership. I would claim this is partnership working or a collaboration rather than a partnership as it omits the essential governance element that gives substance to the concept.

Mayo (1997) notes that dictionary definitions imply shared interests and that policy makers have tended to focus on something like symbiosis in which the result of partnership is a multiplicative rather than an additive outcome, i.e. the partners working together achieve more than they would by working alone.

Quite apart from these issues, there is a large body of literature on 'how to do partnership', including key success factors; the barriers to partnership; and why partnerships arise in some circumstances but not others. Rather than attempt to review all this literature here, I selectively refer to authors where relevant in this thesis.

Partnership is therefore as much contested as a definition as it is as a functioning, processual entity. For the purpose of this thesis, which relates to a particular multiorganizational strategic partnership, it is important to understand that I was an active participant within a Partnership that had progressed to the Board formation. I do not believe that partnership can be said to exist, as opposed to a collaboration or network, without a progressive movement towards processes and structures that can enable at the very least organizational partners to influence each other through the medium of a superordinate entity that transcends the identity of the individual organizations that make up the partnership: in other words, some form of governance that is recognised by all the partners. This form of governance may include a variety of forms as alluded to above and these are discussed later in this chapter.

Thus, my definition of partnership can be summed up as *'a particular form of collaboration in which organizations agree to work together, under a distinct*

form of governance structure, in order to achieve a common purpose. This is in the expectation of achieving more by working in partnership than could be achieved working separately, and may involve processes for sharing information and resources, and enhancing the capacity of other partners to perform better for the common good'.

I now consider the theoretical basis for partnership and collaboration, and in doing so assess the relevance of these theories to current conceptions and manifestations of multiorganizational partnerships.

Theories of Partnership and Collaboration

Why do partnerships form and in what circumstances? The early theories of partnership were particularly of North American origin and tended to be deductive in style. Although not usually quantitative, they tended to start with hypotheses that were then tested against particular collaborations or partnerships. The emphasis was not on the complexity, dynamics, nature of leadership and power, ambiguity or complexity of actual partnerships, but rather theories on competing postulations of the purpose of partnership and why they formed.

The more inductive theories of partnership that arose in the UK particularly related to political moves in the 1980s and 1990s, in a variety of contexts, to improve partnership working between agencies and professions, and between Government and its dependent agencies and communities. Ultimately, this was related to a desire to improve the relevance and quality of delivery of public services, which is still a major concern of Government today. It was also a recognition that Governments could not achieve these goals on their own. Although superficially this desire to involve agencies and communities in decision-making was welcomed, it brought with it real tensions between empowerment and control, and issues of accountability and governance. Research in this field is richly qualitative in style and generally attempts to draw theory out of practice (e.g. Eden and Huxham, 1996; Eden and Huxham, 2001; Huxham, 1996b; Vangen and Huxham, 2003b). Methodologies typically include phenomenological, case study and action research approaches.

The literature I draw on for my study is mostly of the latter kind. However, it would be remiss not to provide a brief summary of these more deductive theories as they often offer explanatory value, particularly regarding the pre-conditions for collaboration, if not the process of collaboration itself. They can be seen as part of a drive towards a general theory of collaboration or partnership working which reached its zenith with two landmark publications by Gray and Wood (1991) and Wood and Gray (1991). Ironically, and unpresciently, the former publication is called *'Collaborative alliances: Moving from practice to theory'*, as since then the collaboration literature has tended to move in the opposite direction. Since the mid 1990s theory exposition has become divergent rather than convergent, certainly more rich and tantalising, and characterised by complexity, contingency and uncertainty (e.g. Huxham, 1996c; Huxham and Vangen, 2000a; Huxham and Vangen, 2001). Arguably, however, the two cited publications by Wood and Gray remain the most recent attempt (even in 2005) to review the various strands of partnership theory.

I set out below a brief resume of these theoretical threads and the ideas of the authors most associated with them.

Gray and Wood (1991) identify 6 major theoretical perspectives that appear to have significant potential for explaining collaboration and collaborative alliances:

- Resource dependence theory
- Corporate social performance theory/institutional economics theory
- Strategic management/social ecology theory
- Microeconomics theory
- Institutional theory/ Negotiated Order theory
- Political theory

Wood and Gray (1991) argue that the key limitation of (then) existing theory is that most perspectives were oriented towards the individual focal organization rather than an interorganizational problem domain. This is one of the problems of reviewing the collaboration literature. Although it is relevant to partnerships, it may not be useful for understanding collaborative alliances or partnerships, although Wood and Gray claim they are well-suited to the purpose.

In addition, as many of the theories deal with pre-conditions for collaboration, they tend to jump to outcomes without examining what happens in between. This is one of the reasons for the approach I have taken in this thesis, to explicitly look at what happens inside an actual partnership rather than simply focusing on beginnings and ends.

I have, therefore, selected three of these theories which I believe warrant further examination in relation to the particular nature of my investigation: Resource Dependence Theory; Institutional/Negotiated Order Theory; and Political Theory, and have added a further theory arising out of the literature, particularly in the USA, referred to as Urban Regime Theory.

Resource Dependence Theory

This theory focuses on the overall allocation of resources in the interorganizational field, among all players in the domain. It attempts to explain how and why organizations act to protect or enhance collective interests, when their immediate self interests appear to align more closely with non-collaborative behaviour.

The theory suggests that organizational partners prefer not to become involved in an interorganizational relationship unless they are compelled to do so, either because of a scarcity of (or a perceived dependence on others to obtain) resources or because of specialization, which requires organizations to fulfil unique obligations placed on them (Cook, 1977). There is conflicting evidence, according to Cook (and Van de Ven, 1976) as to whether domain similarity helps or hinders the establishment of inter-organizational relationships.

This theory is also closely related to Exchange Theory, originating in the work of Blau (1964). He emphasized the impact of a series of unequal exchanges between organizations and how this could create patterns of power and dependence. Organizations that need resources controlled or possessed by others are faced with actual or perceived dependence. Looked at from the other perspective, those organizations which possess resources needed or coveted by others are thereby conferred with power.

Blau's theory has been extended to explain interorganizational relationships by Aldrich (1979) and Benson (1975), suggesting that these relationships '*emerge incrementally, grow with resource transactions that are perceived to be equitable, and develop into a web of inter-dependencies*' (Van de Ven and Walker, 1984, page 603). The importance of the theory is that it recognizes power and resource differentials and dynamics, and hence the motivation of organizations to collaborate with others even when they would prefer not to do so.

Resource Dependency or Exchange Theory is thus concerned with examining patterns of contest, power and domination in an environment characterized by the struggle over scarce resources (Alter and Hage, 1993; Klijn, 1997). This theory links with a later section in this literature review looking at power in partnerships, where the relevance of the theory to the motivation to form partnerships is obvious (Anastacio, Gidley et al., 2000). Thus, the prospect of bringing together complementary resources, not just restricted to finance (Clarke, 1996), can provide at least the potential for collaborative advantage (Gould et al., 1999; Huxham, 1996b; Huxham and Macdonald, 1992; Lawrence et al., 1999; Spekman et al., 1998). Clearly one of the ironies of this theory in relation to partnerships is that it is difficult to establish the equality and reciprocity on which partnership is often predicated if some partners enjoy substantially greater resources than others (Hill, 1997; Mayo, 1997; Mayo and Taylor, 2001). Dependency is thus 'built in'.

In summary, although primarily an explanation for the creation and development of collaborative alliances, resource dependence theory also has contemporary value in helping us to understand not only a partnership's *raison d'etre*, but also the continuing processual dynamics of resource interdependence and exchange within partnerships.

Institutional/Negotiated Order Theory

This theory is associated with the seminal work of Emery and Trist (1973), developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and DiMaggio (1988) building on an article by Meyer and Rowan (1977). The basis of the theory is that organizations adjust to institutional influences in order to achieve legitimacy.

Emery and Trist (1973) claimed that successful adaptation to a turbulent environment is enhanced if organizations move towards a negotiated order in which they acknowledge their interdependence and take the purposes of other organizations into account. They do this by conforming to or complying with institutional norms and rituals (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Related to this idea is the notion that, given the above, there may be institutionalized structures, norms and patterns of thought that are shared among collaborating organizations within a domain. These can develop into a sustained organizational behavioural construct that is owned by the collaborating parties. Negotiated Order Theory thus focuses on the nature and dynamics of shared understandings of the domain's structures and processes, limits and possibilities. The theory emphasizes the responsiveness of collaborating organizations and interdependency based on cultural norms and legitimacy as opposed to resources. As such it can be seen to be readily applicable to collaborative alliances and partnerships especially where resource and power differentials are not significant, and may also play a part to temper power imbalances even where there are considerable resource differentials.

DiMaggio (1988) recognized that his theory was not a complete explanation of the phenomena he described, particularly stating that it did not deny politically motivated behaviour. However, he focuses on the everyday aspects of (inter)organizational relationships that do not depend on politically motivated actors, but are rather rooted in the structures, practices and mores of the domain. As long as actors are guided, consciously or otherwise, by these norms and expectations, he claims that political variation in actors' interests will not play a significant role in the outcome.

The theory offers an explanation as to why politically motivated actors sometimes fail to achieve their goals. They may not have a full understanding of the links between means and ends owing to limited cognition and what DiMaggio called 'coordination', which today we might describe as related to complexity. Thus there is a potential decoupling of interest and outcome in a situation of systemic complexity and uncertainty, which might tend to limit political behaviour where the risk of not achieving one's goal is high. Furthermore, if an actor believes that a political intervention may lead to

negative unintended consequences, he may decide not to take the risk. This, of course, will tend to support the importance of negotiated order theory as a way of understanding interorganizational relationships that are isostatic in relation to each other.

Again, it can be readily appreciated how this theory might translate into a better understanding of partnership behaviours, especially the longer the collaborative domain has been in existence, allowing cultural norms, mutual responsiveness and processes to embed. It also may help to explain why overtly political behaviour is more prevalent in growing partnerships.

It may also account for the tendency of partnerships, taking account of unequal resources and possible political conflict, to conform to norms imposed by the environment within which they operate. For example, in the UK partnerships will tend to work not only within the rules and norms reflected in the partnership's own domain, but also within those imposed by financing institutions, and Government in particular, (e.g. Morgan et al., 1999; Parkinson, 1996). In order to continue receiving financial support, for example, partnerships and their members will try to increase their legitimacy by adopting externally imposed norms, rules, beliefs, processes and expectations that then become part of the partnership culture, thereby reinforcing negotiated order (Oliver, 1990).

Zucker (1988) criticizes DiMaggio's theory on a number of grounds, but particularly that his starting principle is a tightly structured social system rather than an unstable entropic entity. She also claims that DiMaggio only deals with institution-building once it is formed rather than as a process of continual maintenance. These points are valid taken from Zucker's perspective of an inchoate, desultory collaboration in the early stages of formation, but I believe do not undermine DiMaggio's rather different starting point, which in fairness he makes explicit. Certainly, however, this theory may best apply to stable, mature collaborations or partnerships rather than adolescent ones. All of this gives credence to the idea that different theories may apply to partnerships at different stages of their lifecycles, of which more later in this chapter.

Political Theory

Political Theory focuses on private interests and conflict (Gray and Wood, 1991). It has been used to explain intraorganizational relations (Benson, 1975); societal-level dynamics (Dahl, 1967, 1982; Wildavsky, 1979); and international relations (Keohane, 1984; Strange, 1988). It is inherently a relational theory that considers who has access to power and resources and who does not. It deals with the reality of interest-driven and conflictual behaviour by agents pursuing their own goals within an organization (sic).

Like the other theories the reader needs to abstract from the organizational to the interorganizational context in order to consider its significance. It is also necessary to distinguish between organizational and personal agency effects, as is illustrated in my research, although frequently they are synonymous at senior level in organizations (See Chapter 4).

The issue at stake is the difference between espoused adherence to common goals and partnership working and the practical reality of partners pursuing their own interests and agendas within a partnership. Essentially this theory looks beyond the rhetoric of collaborative ideals and asks the question "whose interests are likely to predominate and who will try to transform whom?" (Mayo, 1997). Very often these conflicts of interest are suspected rather than surfaced and can lead to false assumptions of motive and effect (Argyris, 1990). Usually such conflicts are not based on individuals or even individual organizations, but rather pluralistic alliances and clans - groups of interest whether based on sector, for example, public, private, community and voluntary sectors, between organizations, between professions, or between professionals and volunteers.

Mayo (ibid.) points to one particular source of potential friction when public authorities seek to identify 'representatives' who will provide, it is hoped, short cuts to consultation. This is labelled the 'Godfather' approach. The Godfather is the spokesperson identified *'to represent their (i.e. other user) views in all contexts, inappropriately assuming a consensus of interests and views'* (page 13). This was also an approach I witnessed in the early stages of the LEP. This is not to say, as Mayo implies, that this is necessarily negative as it may be the best way to stimulate partnerships into action provided the 'Godfather'

commands wide respect amongst most of the partners. However, it may not be a sustainable or democratically acceptable approach in the long run.

In contrast to this model, mature partnership may require the **surrender** of individual partner power rather than its pursuit in order to generate 'distributed power'. Few partnerships may achieve this state of mutual surrender even if they avowedly aspire to it. So unless there were strong incentives for this to happen there is more likelihood of resistance to self-disempowerment (Springett, 1995). This implies that partnerships have their work cut out to prevent splintering and to maintain and nurture the partnership ethic as well as adherence to its overarching goals and objectives (Vangen and Huxham, 2003b). This phenomenon was also a key issue in my case study.

The black arts of political manoeuvring are also not confined to politicians. Partnership managers and executives can exercise much influence through the creation of agendas, definition of issues and creation and dissemination of text (Lawrence et al., 1999; Phillips and Hardy, 1997). Inevitably therefore, partnership managers will influence which, and the way in which, substantive issues become part of the collaboration (Vangen and Huxham, 2003a). Moreover, some authors claim that 'change agents' and 'boundary spanners' can learn and deploy skills not only in managing process but shaping process in interorganizational domains (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Williams, 2002). In many ways we still know little about the role of change agents and the ways in which they operate as opposed to the skills they may require to undertake their roles (Ottaway, 1983; Porras and Robertson, 1992; Weisbord, 1998). We also know little about the areas in which they choose or are directed to intervene, whether in 'disagreements' or in 'controversies'. The former are susceptible to solution through discussion, the latter are more intractable as they tend to be disputes about meaning, and cannot be resolved by appeals to facts or objective reasoning alone (Schön and Rein, 1994). I append my own contribution to this debate as Pettigrew (2003) to this thesis (Pettigrew, 2003), and explore further the implications of some of these issues in Chapter 7.

Urban Regime Theory

North American in origin, urban regime theory attempts to explain collaboration in terms of power broking within key, powerful public and private interests in American cities. It lies outside the scope of purely pluralist or elitist conceptions of collaboration, but includes elements of both. Regime theory tries to explain how and why public authorities and business elites collaborate in informal networks to generate economic growth. Its main proponents, Elkin (1987) and Stone (1988, 1989) claim that it is a sophisticated, neo-pluralist understanding of local networking, focusing on the state-market relationship in US urban politics. Through longitudinal studies of decision-making hegemonies in cities these authors argue that governing power depends on sustained inter-organizational collaboration around agreed objectives, with business elites prominent in their influence.

The theory suggests that individuals and organizations have to collaborate to achieve outputs and that building regimes is a struggle (Stone, 1989). They have to be produced by wilful, powerful agents, whose interests may be contested inside the partnership as well as outside, but who ultimately know that change is impossible without close coalition with other powerful players (DiGaetano, 1997). They may not share the same culture or background, but what they have is a mutual recognition that they need each other in order to achieve their respective goals.

The theory has generated debate as to whether urban regimes can be identified in Britain (e.g. Davies, J. S., 2001; Harding, 2000; Stoker and Mossberger, 1994). Set within the framework of regime theory, Bailey, Barker et al. (1995), for example, examine the part which public-private partnerships have played in the evolution of British urban policy as it responds to global economic changes and local political and ideological developments.

Integral to regime theory is the notion that partnerships may be as much about bringing organizations into co-operation with the state (or ruling hegemony) as with each other. Davies (2000) sees this as an attempt to bring disparate and possibly excluded and disaffected societal groups into state-driven governing mechanisms, blurring the edges between state and non-state institutions (see

also Stoker, 1998; Peters, 1998; Hirst, 2000). Thus, whilst Governments may seem to be relinquishing direct control through empowering through partnerships, it is, as Davies (op. cit.) contends, actually attempting to purchase wider *effective* control. The history of Government-sponsored urban regeneration initiatives illustrates this phenomenon well, with Government often mandating the formation of partnerships and prescribing their membership in order for them to access resources (Bailey, Barker et al., 1995; Stewart, 1994).

The counter to Urban Regime Theory has been propounded principally by Rhodes (1988; 1996a, b; 1997; 1999) who contends that governing increasingly depends on the interaction of public and private sector actors in networks which are becoming removed from influence and control by central states. As theoretically attractive as this 'governing without government' proposition appears, it does not seem to be borne out in practice. Davies (2002), for example, argues that not only is the state still more than capable of getting its own way in the politics of regeneration, but that partnerships are a distinctive mode of governance which fit neither the old model of governance by government, nor the 'new' model of governance by network.

Regime theory, particularly during the period of Conservative administration in the UK (prior to 1997) seems to have some relevance to the way in which Government-mandated regeneration partnerships were set up and run. Arguably, although there is less private sector involvement in partnerships in the period of New Labour so far, the point that partnerships are strongly influenced by elite players, led by the Government, seems to stand up. Even in cases such as the one I investigate in this thesis, which was not Government-mandated (although it later became recognized by the RDA, one of its key regional agencies), the influence of external Government influence was to prove crucial in influencing its development. In addition, aspects of the way in which power plays became visible can be plausibly explained by Regime Theory (Chapters 4, 6 and 7).

Governance: Networks, Markets and Hierarchies

Overlain on these definitional and theoretical issues is another important strain in the literature: the triptych of markets, hierarchies and networks. A number of

authors (e.g. Ouchi, 1991; Thompson et al., 1991), building on the early work of Coase and Williamson, using similar but varying terminology, have pointed to these modes of governance as distinct yet overlapping genres (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1985, 1992).

Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) claim that *'failure to distinguish between partnerships as organizational manifestations and the modes of social co-ordination that accompany them, has constrained theoretical development and empirical investigation'* (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998, page 314). Drawing on studies of UK urban regeneration they conclude that market and hierarchical arrangements as well as networking are evident in most partnerships. In common with many other authors they propose that partnerships pass through a life-cycle (e.g. in this case where different modes of governance assume particular importance at different points in time and in relation to particular partnership tasks). Strategies to develop effective partnerships thus involve combining different modes of governance to reflect shifting power relations between various partners at any one point stimulating co-operation or competition. This is an important insight in terms of my research as it explains the different modes of partnership conduct through its stages of development reflecting also its reactions to external factors. However, in my experience this shifting in emphasis in *modi operandi* in terms of market, hierarchy and network may be more unconscious than conscious, reflecting reaction to unforeseen circumstances rather than planned change.

Transformation and Synergy

A large part of my research was to track and reflect upon the processes of transformation within a particular partnership and to reflexively consider my own role as a pro-active participant within it. Most of what follows relates closely to the earlier discussion on theories of partnership and collaboration, so to avoid duplication I have extracted what I consider to be the key themes of transformation and synergy.

Mackintosh (1992) suggests that partnership is fundamentally pursued in order to reap the synergy of complementary resources that partners bring to the table. She suggests three models of partnership: synergy; budget enlargement; and

transformational. She suggests that this distinction points to increasing levels of commitment.

'If each partner stands to gain from the additional resources that other partners bring, from pooling ideas, knowledge and financial resources, then partnership 'adds value' for each participant. It can generate 'new insights or solutions' and provide a 'synergy'...' (page 210).

The synergy model suggests that by combining their knowledge, resources, approaches and operational cultures, partner organizations will be able to achieve more together than they would by working on their own. This can be seen as related to, and a progression from, exchange theory, except that in this case the implications are that in total, for collaborating partners, there is a perceived prospect not just of an exchange, but the creation of additional benefits for the collaboration as a whole.

The budget enlargement model, typical of many British regeneration partnerships where the Government is a major influence, is predicated on the idea that by working together the partnership will gain access to additional funds that neither could access on their own. This can be seen as a manifestation of the 'resource theory' of partnership, although often such 'partnerships' are artificial – set up as a pre-requisite to attract funding.

The transformational model claims that the various partner organizations can benefit from exposing themselves to the assumptions and working methods of other partners; that is, it will stimulate innovation as part of a continuing process of development and change.

Mackintosh's paper was very influential because it introduced the idea of transformation in partnership. Her idea of a 'transformational model' of partnership is one in which the partners change by adapting towards each other: a manifestation of institutional theory. She notes (page 216) that partnership is a *'mutual struggle for transformation'*, which suggests rather more political processes at work than simply isomorphic systemic dynamics. Clearly this unidirectional model of transformation contrasts with the idea of mutual goal

alignment. In her model partners' goals and objectives are fought over with each partner trying to convert others to their way of thinking. Transformation is then '*a process whereby partners seek to change or challenge the aims and operating cultures of other partners*' (Hastings, 1996, page 262).

As an insider within the LEP I was aware of this transformational model inasmuch as I consciously tried to avoid any accusation that I might be trying in some way to align other organizations to my employer's view of the world. I knew, however, as became apparent during my research, that this was not always how partners viewed my behaviour, despite my best efforts to be seen to be fair (see Chapter 4 and Pettigrew (2003)).

In contrast, the 'mutual transformation' model describes '*a less coercive, antagonistic or competitive set of interactions or relationships in which each partner might be willing to accept the need to change themselves, as well as aspire to change others*' (Hastings, 1996, page 263). This view of transformation questions whether partners influence and change each other in terms of their objectives, values and assumptions through interaction. If so, are the results translated into changes in practice, such as operational cultures, the dynamics and direction of change, and which partners change and to what extent?

Sink (1996) sees transformation from the perspective of '*betterment to... empowerment*', suggesting the need for '*double transformation*' (page 106) between corporate leaders and minorities. This suggests support for the notion of mutual transformation. Sink says, however, that this takes time and risk, both of which are in short supply.

My working hypothesis when I began my research, outlined in Chapter 1, was to posit a further dimension of transformation: could the Partnership not only cause partners to influence each other profoundly, but go further and create a superordinately different shared culture defined as characterising the Partnership? In theory, an even higher level of transformation could be judged to have been reached if the Partnership then was able to work together internally with a shared vision and externally influence the sub-region's strategies, policies and institutions. This tentatively suggests a theoretical

framework, building on the work of other authors, which may offer a touchstone against which to judge the progress of transformation within a partnership. It also implies increasing degrees of difficulty and complexity, and as many authors on collaboration and partnership testify, few interorganizational or intersectoral partnerships get beyond Type 1 transformation (e.g. Huxham, 1996b; Vangen and Huxham, 2003b; Webb, 1991). A simple extended model of transformation may thus be suggested and this is developed in Chapter 7.

A main focus of Hastings' (1996) paper was to explore whether participants in partnerships recognised 'transformation' as being part of the partnership agenda and to examine whether they perceived potential for different forms of transformation to take place between partners. The paper concluded by suggesting there was a need to develop conceptual and methodological frameworks and empirical tools to measure whether transformation does in fact take place during the progress of partnerships. In a later paper (Hastings, 1999) she goes on to explore the notion that transformative relationships are an important expression of the exercise of power within partnerships. Using discourse analysis she demonstrates how aspects of transformation actually occur during the progress of a regeneration partnership. Clearly transformation and power are closely linked concepts and I go on to discuss the significance of the application of different forms of power later in this chapter.

Very much related to transformation is the concept of synergy discussed above. Partnerships are seen as having the potential to increase resource efficiency, making better use of existing resources by reducing duplication and sharing overheads. They can add value by bringing together complementary services and fostering innovation and synergy. They can also enable leveraging of new resources either by enabling access to grant regimes or using private sector partners to overcome public sector constraints on access to capital markets (Mackintosh, 1992).

As Mayo (1997) points out policy makers have based their view of partnership principally from the aspect of synergy (at least anticipated) and budget enlargement rather than transformation. Potentially at least transformation involves change, and a greater emphasis on internal relationships and power dynamics. However, this limited view of transformation would inevitably lead to

the most powerful partner(s) dominating the others. Power may be defined and manifest itself in a number of ways (see next section). However, for the moment it is clear that without agreed superordinate goals above those of the constituent members, the result of this kind of transformational struggle becomes predictable...even more so where voluntary and community interests are represented in the partnership alongside big corporate public and private organizations.

Definitions of partnership often imply inclusiveness and equality, but as in other forms of social organization power differentials still exist and these manifest themselves in a variety of ways that can easily undermine the purpose for which the partnership was set up in the first place. Thus the idea of clans, coalitions and 'Godfathers' (Mayo, 1997) within partnerships can emerge, serving to cause suspicion and resentment among those partners believing themselves or being seen by more powerful interests as being relatively weak. These ideas are explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

Power

Although not figuring highly in the partnership literature, aspects of power comprise one of the most written about and contentious aspects of human behaviour in the social sciences. From Bertrand Russell to Jurgen Habermas, Max Weber to J.K. Galbraith, eminent authors have tried to define the concept of power in a vast variety of ways and sought to understand it in a wide range of theoretical stances (see for example Lukes, 1986). Thus, '*power is a complex and ambiguous concept*' (Greiner and Schein, 1988, page 13). It is concerned with the exercise of influence over others in order to achieve one's specific goals. There are many potential sources of power, ways in which it is manifest, both potentially and actually, in a variety of contexts. Power is multilayered and dynamic in nature and can be exerted not only downwards (e.g. Weber, 1978), but also upwards (e.g. Gabarro and Kotter, 1980) and laterally (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973). Kotter (1985) argues persuasively that this kind of power without formal authority is essential to the effective functioning of organizations.

Building on this base theories can be categorised in a number of ways. Summarising the classical literature on the subject Greiner and Schein (op. cit.)

sum up the main theories about power in terms of the rational, bureaucratic model; the collegial, consensus model; and the pluralistic/Political model. The main characteristics of these models are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Typology of Power Theories (based on Greiner & Schein, 1988)

Model	Features
Rational / Bureaucratic	Top down authority; hierarchical structures; formal vertical communications; upward power seen as illegitimate or even disruptive; lateral power not considered; integration only at the apex of the pyramid.
Collegial / Consensus	Interactive interpersonal and small group behaviour encouraged; few or no rules of engagement; little formal authority; upward power encouraged; downward power barely tolerated; lateral power the norm; collaboration encouraged.
Pluralistic / Political	Competing interest groups based on their own goals but often for perception of organization-wide benefit; conflict seen as inevitable; interest groups coalesce and reform; lateral power recognized as important for managerial effectiveness; upward power exerted to win resources; downward power important to ensure needs of whole organization are not compromised and to resolve inter-group conflict; downward power itself in conflict sometimes with upward power.

The above typology only takes the explanation of power so far. Certainly, in a partnership context, with a high degree of expected or real interdependence between organizations, the opportunity for any one organization to act unilaterally is limited (Kotter, 1985). The greater the number of partners, diversity and interdependence, moreover, the greater will be the need to somehow resolve conflicting views and opinions. It follows, therefore, that the focus of power and effective conflict resolution becomes much more complex and difficult.

Thus, top down rational/bureaucratic power is rarely possible in partnership. As a hierarchical form of power there is rarely a single referent organization or person, a consensually acknowledged leader, who can force solutions on the other parties without some form of reaction or retaliation (Trist, 1983). There is perhaps more likelihood of collegial/consensus power, but rarely are partnerships able to reach this utopian state without a process of reaching consensus or compromise and at least a degree of pluralistic/political activity. This may be overt or covert and may take place at various levels within a partnership and between a variety of ever-changing actors. Furthermore, because power is dynamic, shared and ambiguous, no one actor can ever know the 'true' state of play at any time within a partnership and so perspectives on the partnership's power distribution and activity will vary greatly (Pettigrew, 2003).

Power can also be seen as a feature of the course of interaction, but its exercise is conditional on the way the user and others involved in the interaction define events. Theorists argue that this conception resonates well with people's experience of power in everyday life (Flood and Romm, 1996). The opportunity for people to influence decision-making occurs in the process of interaction and dialogue. It is through interaction that ideas are shared, meanings exchanged and perceptions defined and redefined. This is second-person power.

Significant decisions may involve overt manifestations of power-related behaviour based on the budget and size of partner organizations (Balloch and Taylor, 2001b; Blau, 1964), any special expertise, skills or knowledge track record and reputation; formal bestowed authority; influential personalities; or some combination of these elements. Covert ploys may include blocking; agenda setting and manipulation; backstaging; faction creation; and undermining behaviours (Buchanan and Badham, 1999).

Clearly, achieving consensus rather than compromise takes a lot of effort and is problematic in terms of the skills and resources required to achieve it. It is also sensitive to the nature and complexity of issues being addressed, whether 'disagreements' or 'controversies' (Schön and Rein, 1994). Persuasion takes time and partners have to give and take, persuade and be persuaded, influence and be influenced. Any unsubtle power interventions, even covert ones, are

quickly 'rumbled' and can lead to a breakdown of trust making conflict resolution and consensus-building even more difficult in future. This can then lead to protracted power struggles and possible collapse of the partnership, paralysed ironically by the often agreed need to come together to solve shared domain issues.

Thus, partnership is laden with complex and often confusing issues of inter-organizational power. Yet, as Balloch and Taylor (2001a) point out it is common for these issues to remain undiscussed and undiscussable, which paradoxically is the antithesis of what a partnership approach might be expected to deliver:

'If a partnership does not address issues of power it will remain symbolic rather than real. An apparent consensus may simply mean that the opinions of more powerful partners are dominating agendas and processes. Where this happens, only limited notions of partnership are entertained...' (page 284).

Frequently, controversial issues cannot be discussed, not just because they may be considered too difficult, but because they never reach the agenda. This is a manifestation of Lukes' Second and Third Dimensions of Power (Lukes, 1974). These go beyond not merely deciding on controversial issues, but on actively ensuring that agendas only contain matters ruling elites want to see on the table, actively ensuring that decisions are not made. It is the power to define the terms and culture within which public debate takes place and may be a result of social or institutional forces as well as through individuals' decisions. In this way potential conflict is avoided and the power of those setting agendas remains uncontested. Unequal partners may tacitly then accept their situation, believing themselves to be 'out of order'. They may scale down their expectations, forget the aspirations they started with, and accept outcomes that fail to meet their needs (Hastings, McArthur et al., 1996; Stewart and Taylor, 1995).

Furthermore, Anastacio, Gidley et al. (2000), in a major study of community regeneration, claim that power inequalities were evident even before the programme's launch. Agendas were already determined through a bidding process subject to tight timeframes that reinforced initial power imbalances as only the better resourced agencies in terms of money and expertise could

influence the agenda. This was exacerbated by *'the complexity of partnership processes (that meant) smaller groups without paid staff (could) rarely afford to engage...'* (page 49). This was a major factor in the degree of participation witnessed in the LEP, where only the better resourced agencies could effectively influence agendas.

Thus, frequently in partnerships issues may go on simmering in the background, at least insofar as those whose issues remain unaddressed are concerned. Furthermore, as Lukes (1974) points out, some of these marginalized parties may not even be aware of their interests, let alone be conscious enough to know that they are not being addressed.

Power within the Partnership Literature

Much of the literature on power is theoretical and has an intra-organizational focus (e.g. see Lukes, 1986). It is relatively recently that authors such as Huxham and her collaborators have addressed the issue in their work with partnership practitioners (see reference list). Studies of partnership relationships have largely ignored or superficially treated issues of power, influence and conflict among participants - including central and local government, community and voluntary groups, private sector organizations and QUANGOS (Hastings, 1999; Marsh and Murie, 1997). As Stuart (2002) points out: *'seldom does the literature provide a critical engagement with the day-to-day practicalities of partnership working'* (page 43). Neither, as Martin (1999) points out, *'are questions of power relations and participation between groups and organizations fully examined'* (page 101).

Policy makers frequently claim that they want to see partnership embedded in practice (e.g. Department of Health, 1997; Department for Education and Employment, 1997; Learning and Skills Council, 2001), but here too there are few accounts on how partnerships deal with aspects of power, largely because such documents are prescriptive and narrative and intended for general consumption or adherence.

However, many current authors in the partnership literature now point to issues of power inequalities arising from competing agendas as posing problems for

the effective functioning of partnerships (e.g. Eden and Huxham, 2001; Hastings, 1999; Himmelman, 1996; Judge and Ryman, 2001; Vangen and Huxham, 2003b).

Issues of power imbalance are cited as at the core of why many partnerships, (particularly delivery partnerships mandated and funded by Government) fail to live up to expectations (e.g. Eden and Huxham, 2001; Hastings, 1999). Partnership is criticized as in too many cases leaving existing power relationships intact, rather than transforming them. In the field of community regeneration, for example, partnerships have often been dominated by the more powerful partners such as central and local government compared to communities and service users, who are now a required part of most partnerships (but not necessarily of equivalent power as policy makers and funders). By and large they have remained on the margins of processes where the rules of the game are determined by government partners, legitimating rather than making decisions. Power relationships are also reflected in the resources available to different partners, which are often very uneven (Balloch and Taylor, 2001b). Hardy et al. (1998) also show that power can be hidden behind a façade of trust and collaboration, which are in reality part of the repertoire of control and manipulation of weaker parties by stronger ones.

Partnership, whilst offering the prospect of a reframing of problem domains, can therefore result in the ossification of power relationships. Powerful players before the partnership remain powerful players within it; less powerful players, if they are included at all, remain less powerful. Often in the UK at least, the most powerful player may not even be within the Partnership if it has been set up at the behest of Government and/or is dependent on the Government for resources. The rules of engagement are frequently decided by Government, leaving the partnership to 'play the game', legitimating Government policy rather than making decisions on their own account and on their own agendas (Balloch and Taylor, 2001b).

Partnerships may thus be as much about bringing other groups into co-operation with the state as they are about bringing local organizations into partnership with each other (Atkinson, 1999). Many of the partnerships promoted by the British government in virtually all walks of life are promoted under the banner of

empowerment when in reality, especially where they are mandated by Government (and certainly where they are financed by Government), they can be seen as part of the machinery of state. As I will demonstrate in the story of my involvement with the LEP, this phenomenon is not restricted just to mandated partnerships as Government can still externally influence voluntary partnerships too (Chapters 4 and 7).

The idea of a 'power infrastructure' in partnerships suggests there are critical 'points of power' which together make up the power infrastructure of the collaboration (Huxham and Beech, 2002). Examples include the naming of the collaboration since this is likely to influence what it does. Furthermore, those who choose who to involve are powerful, but those who choose the process of who to involve may be more so. The idea of 'points of power' is pursued in Chapter 7.

Perceived and real ambiguities about membership of collaborations can also impact upon power differentials. Simply not being clear about who the members are is problematic if a partner is trying to understand power relationships and agendas. This feature of partnership can be exacerbated by constant and often unannounced changes in membership, whether of organizations or individuals, and the lack of a clear process for accommodating these changes: *'carefully negotiated social order and carefully nurtured trust may be knocked down at any time by changes in membership'* (Huxham and Vangen, 2000a, page 798). The major change processes in public sector agencies as in this study was a case in point.

Whilst partnership and collaboration are generally seen as a way to counteract the power of any one dominant organization and to foster collaborative working relationships among organizations sharing a problem domain (Trist, 1985), it is evident that paradoxically partnership can often provide a platform for political manoeuvring. This phenomenon is often strongly evident in public and non-profit collaborations (Lawrence et al., 1999), whether the partnership is voluntary or mandated.

Power as Syntax

There are thus many different ways to think about power in partnerships which makes it difficult to provide a coherent or straightforward summary of the literature. Power is rarely typologised in a way that bridges the policy/practice divide. In contrast to the 'structuralist' view of power set out in Figure 2, power can be considered on the basis of how it is created and mediated between individuals. One such attempt by Cavanaugh (1984) stimulated my thinking on how power might be classified in terms of a syntactical schema. I set this out below in Figure 3.

This more classical typology of power in my own experience is still highly relevant to the ways in which power manifests itself in practice through the agency of key individuals. These aspects are explored in more detail in Chapter 4, and their implications in Chapter 7. In addition they may be related to the stage at which the partnership is functioning in its life cycle.

Figure 3: Typology of Power Theories (based on Cavanaugh (1984))

Theory	Characteristics
First-Person: Power as a characteristic of the individual	Based on conscious human activation with the environment. Based on individual self perception of power as charisma. Power transferable with the person rather than situation specific.
Second-Person: Power as an interpersonal construct.	Person believes he can influence another person based on a belief about his relative power in relation to specific others in specific situations. Target's perception of power in the person generates the reciprocal power relationship between them to become mutually dependent. French and Raven (1960) suggest there are 5 bases of social power: reward, co-ercive, legitimate, referent and expert. Later, Raven (1965) added information as a sixth power base. Three of these bases: reward, co-ercive and informational power are focused on the power holder and his ability to change the behaviour of the target despite resistance by the target. The other three bases: legitimate, referent and expert, place part of the success of the power-holder on the perceptions the target has about him.
Third-Person: Power as a commodity rather than the process and result of an interaction.	Power is discussed in economic terms and treated as something that must be expended in order for an individual to manifest it. Power in this sense is 'tradable' by the power holder in order to maintain or enhance his or her position. He/she has acquired 'power resources' that can be used as 'currency' in exchange transactions. <i>'The transactional nature of power as a commodity is reflected in several ways. First, the acquisition of power can be considered an 'investment' by the source. Second, because investment is involved, the source must weigh the trade-offs and costs required in the use of power or the maintenance of a power position. Third, the higher the cost of manifesting power, the less likely it is that an individual will invoke its use'</i> (Cavanaugh, 1984, page 12), which has links to institutional/ negotiated Order Theory.

Partnership Life Cycle

As with notions of forming, storming, norming and performing in teams (Tuckman, 1965)⁶ among the variety of research referred to earlier, we can

⁶ and later 'adjourning' Tuckman and Jensen (1977)

discern phases in the collaboration process conceptualised as a life cycle. Gray (1985, 1989) and McCann (1983), for example, suggest that a progression through three sequential phases - problem-setting, direction-setting and structuring - is a natural process for collaborations, although this may be subject to interruptions, enhancements or impediments influenced by internal and external forces.

Similar to Tuckman's original conception there is little empirical research that would support this theory, although its enduring popular recognition and support suggests that there may be some broadly discernible stages in a collaborative relationship. Austrom and Lad (1989) advocate 'direct research' which entails the longitudinal, in-depth observation of a social entity which is itself going through the learning process. To properly assess this phenomenon, they say it is necessary to follow a collaboration through its life cycle.

Other authors, notably Vangen and her colleagues in their extensive contribution to the literature in search of emergent practice-oriented theory, tend not to conceptualise collaboration in stages (e.g. Huxham and Vangen, 2001), as this conceptualisation has not surfaced in their dialogues with practitioners. Cropper (1996) acknowledges that there are issues over sustaining collaboration over a period of time and that the key is good network relationships and mode of governance, but he also stops short of any discussion on life cycles. Hutchinson and Campbell (1998) for clarity present a logical series of stages partnerships go through. However, they acknowledge that reality can be rather different.

Of recent contributions to the literature Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) are most prominent in advocating life cycles as a useful approach to studying partnerships related to corresponding modes of governance. They identify four stages:

- *Pre-partnership collaboration*, characterized by a network mode of governance based on informality, trust and a sense of common purpose
- *Partnership creation and consolidation*, characterized by hierarchy based upon assertion of status and authority differentials and the formalization of procedures

- *Partnership programme delivery*, characterized by market (or quasi-market) mechanisms of tendering and contract, with low levels of co-operation between providers
- *Partnership termination or succession*, characterized by a reassertion of a network governance mode as a means to maintain agency commitment, community involvement and staff employment

The authors acknowledge that these different modes of governance overlap and can coexist throughout a partnership's life cycle. The balance and tensions between different modes shift as the agenda for action and the relationship between partners change. However, the network mode of governance is seen as having enduring importance throughout the life cycle of partnerships, which was true in my own study.

The jury is probably out on whether in reality there are generalised stages a partnership may progress through from birth to death. This may be more obvious in partnerships which have an imposed life span set for them (e.g. City Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships – see for example Davoudi and Healey, 1995; Geddes and Martin, 1996; Stewart, 1994) compared to those which live a 'natural lifespan'. It is probably best to think of life cycle in partnerships as an abstraction which may offer pointers in considering where any particular partnership may lie along a hypothetical continuum according to particular criteria. In the case which is the subject of this thesis, the Partnership was in its infancy and certainly some of the ideas about life cycle provide at least a partial framework for analysis. However, in my view simplified notions of a life span continuum or cycle applied generically will almost certainly fail to capture the complexity of any single partnership.

Leadership

Issues of leadership are inextricably related to power. As with issues of power, however, until recently the literature on collaboration and partnership⁷ has had little to say about leadership. There is a rich literature about the nature and

⁷ For the purpose of this section I use the terms collaboration and partnership interchangeably

characteristics of leadership in the context of single organizations (Bryman, 1996; Denis et al. 2001; Fiedler, 1996). However, there has been relatively little attention paid as to whether these approaches translate adaptively into the partnership context or whether the inter-organizational and often inter-sectoral nature of collaborative working demands a more fundamental re-appraisal of the nature of leadership in these more complex partnership domains.

Huxham and Vangen (2000c) suggest a progression of theoretical development in the literature that includes traits, contingency and transformational approaches among its threads (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1986, 1996; Fiedler, 1967, 1996; Stewart, 1963; Stodgill, 1974). These 'first order' theories summarized in Figure 4 are in contrast to later work by Huxham and Vangen (2000c), who emphasise the importance of structures and processes to leadership in collaboration as much as the nature of the participants. The literature on leadership around these themes is well developed and I do not propose to dwell too long on these aspects in order to focus particularly on leadership in partnerships. Nevertheless, these facets of leadership are still regarded by practitioners as highly relevant to their experience of partnerships (Armistead et al., 2004).

Figure 4: Summary of Leadership Theories

Theory	Summary	Key References
Trait	Self-confidence, charisma, empathy, ambition, self-control, curiosity	Hippocrates (5 th century BC); Myers and McCaulley (1985)
Contingency/Situational	Different styles for different situations. Leaders need a repertoire of skills and styles	Hempill, 1949; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982
Contingency/Situational (variant)	Change the leader to suit the situation	Fiedler, 1967
Institutional	Traits and style of leaders are tempered by the institutional context	Elgie, 1995
Transactional to Transformational	Focus on leader/follower relationships based on a series of exchanges and bargains transformed to relationships based on persuading followers to commit to the vision, objectives and needs of the group/partnership. Links to emotional intelligence.	Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002)

Transformation, Complexity and Stakeholder Theory

Most of the theories outlined in Figure 4 presume a leader-follower relationship and a single leader with goals and objectives he/she wants to achieve through influencing other people in an organization. A degree of hierarchy, mandated authority and power is implied together with a limited need to collaborate across other organizations and sectors.

The transformational approach has generated a lot of attention in contemporary organizations, where the vogue for leadership courses for executives is often based on the theories of James Burns and Bernard Bass. It resonates with ideas about empowering followers to the point that the distinction between leaders and followers becomes blurred if not entirely meaningless. Clearly in the context of understanding leadership within partnerships, transformation theory offers an attractive normative model if not necessarily an accurate description of partnership practice.

Partnership and collaboration, however, introduce a degree of complexity and ambiguity wherein inter-organizational relationships are at least theoretically more horizontal than hierarchical; where there is uncertainty about who leads and who follows; whether leadership can be represented by organizations rather than individuals within organizations (Stewart, 1999); and whether governance arrangements (if they exist at all) really reflect leadership as it is played out in practice. Despite the high ideals of partnerships and enlightened recognition of the need to tackle important social, economic and environmental issues collaboratively, most authors point to the difficulties of collaboration in practice (Bruner and Spekman, 1998; Kanter, 1994; Webb, 1991). These include competing and hidden agendas (Eden and Huxham, 2001; Judge and Ryman, 2001), lack of trust (Vangen and Huxham, 2003b) and vulnerability to political manoeuvring as well as Political interference (Stewart, 1999; Stewart, 2002).

Stakeholder theory acknowledges that organizations need to consider the needs and interests of their employees, consumers, neighbours, communities, the Government, special interest groups, etc. (Freeman, 1984). This theory focuses on domains of shared interest (Trist, 1983) and thus takes us forward beyond purely a concern for intra-organizational affairs. However, it is still predicated on

a view from a particular organizational perspective rather than an inter-sectoral or inter-organizational system as a whole. The focus on the organization in its environment rather than individuals is helpful, but arguably this theory can be regarded as having implications for leadership, rather than a leadership theory in itself.

Complexity theory has also been applied to the theory of leadership (see for example Gleick, 1987; Wheatley, 1994). This theory, drawing from the 'new' science of chaos, takes us further towards an understanding of the particular aspects of leadership as applied to partnerships. It emphasises the dynamics of social networks, interdependence and self-organization. Thus, this theory acknowledges that central control, authority and homogeneity are not sufficient to describe complex leadership as found in partnerships. Rather it focuses on those aspects of leadership not vested in one individual or even one organization (organism). Leadership is seen as being distributed, multi-layered, dynamic, diverse and uncertain. Organizations or partnerships are seen as being complex adaptive systems whose ability to thrive depends on their fitness to survive in a complex, dynamic socio-ecological web. There are clear echoes here of a form of unstable institutional isomorphism in which conscious human intervention and control may play only a small part in a partnership's trajectory.

The critical difference between this view of leadership and transformation theory is that the former (complexity theory) does not depend on political control while the latter (transformation theory) assumes a leader who leads and followers who follow. Transformation theory is an effect of conscious strategy. Complexity offers deep insights into the working of interdependent systems and the interconnectedness of organisational phenomena and its tendency to self-regulation through 'strange attractors'. However, since no individual can conceive of the system as a whole, yet decisions on intervention have to be made in the context of limited time and knowledge, it follows that complexity in itself is insufficient as a theory to guide practical leadership intervention. However, as discussed earlier in the context of institutional isomorphism it may lead political actors to be wary of interventions when their ramifications may be uncertain and ultimately damaging.

Towards an Integrative Theory of Leadership in Partnerships

Leadership in multi-sector partnerships has received little specific attention in the partnership and collaboration literature until recently (Huxham, 2003b). The Cabinet office, for example, stated recently that '*...too little attention is paid to the growing importance of leadership across organisational boundaries...*' (Cabinet Office, 2005, Page 1).

Carley (2000) deemed it essential that

- responsibilities for leadership, agenda setting and management are shared between partners
- the 'personality' or culture of the lead partner is not allowed to dominate the partnership
- 'institutional space' is made for different agencies to participate in their own way and at their own pace; and
- agencies consider how appropriate their own structures and cultures are for partnership working and are prepared to change these in order to become more effective at partnership working.

Leadership may be conceptualized as about process rather than trait, behaviour or abstract complexity theories. In this sense leadership can be seen as less about the leadership qualities of individuals as concerning the encoded relationships between people represented by the underlying processes they have put in place to ensure consistency and responsiveness in an organization or partnership. This idea is closely related to the idea of distributed leadership, whereby practitioners collaborate at all levels to create a sense of shared direction and purpose and create and monitor processes that are embodied in their constructed systems. In this sense the idea of leadership being a characteristic of particular individuals becomes redundant and the difference between 'leaders and followers' becomes blurred to the point of meaninglessness (Spillane, 2004). It points to leadership as a collective task (Drath, 2003) and that it emerges from an interacting group of individuals with

open boundaries (Bennet et al., 2003). These ideas would appear to resonate with the inherent situation in which individuals and organizations find themselves in collaboration and partnership settings.

Bryson and Crosby (1992) first proposed the idea of leadership needing to be shared in an inter-organizational public sector context. They suggest that leadership may be expressed through the processes operating within partnerships. Murrell (1997) also argued for a sharing of responsibilities, whilst Vansina (1999) sees diversity – of resources, skills and perceptions - within a partnership as a source of leadership synergy, although there is little about how this can be catalysed or indeed who does the catalyzing. This perspective suggests that leadership can take on an impersonal nature, being built into systems for inspiring and nurturing a partnership. However, it would be absurd to suggest that underlying processes alone define the extra dimensions of leadership appropriate for successful partnership.

Feyerherm (1994) painted a picture of members of a collaborative group contributing different forms of leadership to the collaboration, whether consciously or otherwise. This perspective emphasizes the role of emergent or informal leaders (Hosking, 1988; Kent and Moss, 1994). Very often in partnerships it is difficult to locate how and where leadership is enacted. This approach suggests that leadership behaviours may well be invisible and go unrecognised, involving backstaging and informal influencing (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Pettigrew, 2003) among actors who may not carry an official 'leader' tag.

This form of activity is thus often conducted not necessarily by acknowledged 'leaders' but by political entrepreneurs (Laver, 1997) who may or may not be operating on behalf of sectional or political interests, and sometimes on their own personal interests. It may further be a characteristic of partnership that opportunities arise for individuals to emerge as informal leaders as they become empowered by their employing organizations to engage in partnership activity and as the need to manage complexity in some aspect of the partnership emerges.

Partnership working often involves a redistribution or even a fragmentation of pre-existing power relations (Chrislip and Larson, 1994) and this phenomenon can open up opportunities for new forms of distributed leadership to emerge. It can also, however, lead to dissembling behaviours as some partners espouse the principle of partnership working whilst behaving contrarily (Argyris, 1990). This can lead to problems and crises of trust between the internal partnership leadership and its constituent organizational leaders as the latter pragmatically play the partnership game without any fundamental reappraisal of appropriate personal and organizational behavioural changes (Atkinson, 1999). Thus, what I go on to call 'the shadows of the past' (see Chapters 4 and 7): previous, often unresolved issues between organizations and individuals tied up with complex issues of power and position in shifting hierarchies, can then colour any subsequent attempts to develop new partnership-based approaches.

This more subtle and complex view of leadership emphasizes the importance both of structures and processes as well as participants within multisector partnerships (Huxham and Vangen, 2000c; Vangen and Huxham, 2003a) and picks up on and develops the trait, contingency and transformational theories summarized in Figure 4.

We can see a progression from the trait/style approaches, which can be characterized as first-person theories through to an appreciation of leadership in partnerships as fundamentally a combination of first-, second-, and third-person approaches (Figure 5). First-person refers to purely trait and behaviour-related aspects of leadership whereby leadership is conceived of as a feature of individuals; second-person takes account of inter-relationships between leaders and 'contextual others' which sees leadership as the effect of the interaction between individuals; while third-person approaches reflect a focus on processes within partnerships which may underlie or be the result of first and second-person effects, and which may refer to whole systems, either from the perspective of a participant or an external observer. These third-person approaches may not be immediately obvious as aspects of leadership⁸, but may explain why first and second-person conceptualizations of leadership have proved inadequate on their own in describing leadership in practice.

⁸ See Armistead et al. (2004)

Figure 5: Towards an Integrative Theory of Leadership in Partnerships

<i>Theory</i>	<i>First-Person</i>	<i>Second-Person</i>	<i>Third-Person</i>
Trait	x		
Contingency/Situational	x	x	
Contingency/Situational (variant)	x	x	
Institutional		x	
Transactional to Transformational	x	x	
Complexity			x
Stakeholder		x	
Distributed	x	x	x
Partnership	x	x	x

This shift in how we recognize and describe leadership in partnerships mirrors the parallel development in the co-ordination of social organization from markets to hierarchies to networks (Thompson, Frances, et al., 1991). This does not imply that one mode successively replaces the other. Rather it implies an increasing degree of organizational and governmental complexity and over layering in order to understand and resolve complex interrelated societal issues (Ashby, 1956; Trist, 1983).

This increasing degree of sophistication in turn implies the need for a set of interdependent relationships based on trust, loyalty, and reciprocity that enable collaborative activity to be developed and maintained (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998) based on a shared understanding of these first-, second-, and third-person approaches to leadership in partnerships. Similarly, Coulson (1998) sees *'achieving constructive relationships, sufficiently robust to manage the processes of institutional change, as the key to effective leadership'* (page 4), which also seems highly applicable in a partnership context.

The implications for partnership practitioners are that focusing on any one of the above ways of thinking about leadership will provide only a partial understanding. Firstly, individuals need to know themselves, have a high degree of emotional intelligence in terms of relationships with others and deploy behaviours that fit with context. Secondly, individuals and organizations within

partnerships need to be able to relate to others with a stake in the domain and make themselves vulnerable to influence and receptive to complementary forms of leadership. Thirdly, organizations and partnerships need to consider the counterintuitive view that leadership, perhaps especially in partnership settings, needs to be viewed as a distributed phenomenon and rooted in process rather than simply human trait and behaviour.

They perhaps also need to consider the limits of policy-led regulation and political leadership owing to uncertainty and 'the law of unintended consequences' arising from interventions into complex systems. They need to appreciate the systemic nature of interorganizational or intersectoral alliances, acknowledge that a degree of self-regulation will emerge from seeming chaos, and that no one organization or individual will ever be able to be aware of all the complexity involved in the system, let alone control it (Pettigrew, 2003). In this context perhaps the current desire for partnerships to be 'rationalized' (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2001) evidences a failure of faith in self-regulation and perhaps a misplaced belief in the rationale and outcomes from targeted or purposeful intervention.

The demands on partnership practitioners are, therefore, prodigious in terms of first-, second- and third-person skills, awareness and competences and may explain to some extent why partnership and collaboration have so far proved so problematic, despite the political rhetoric of partnerships as a panacea and a means of tackling 'wicked'⁹ social issues (Clarke and Stewart, 1997; Rittel and Weber, 1973). Leadership in partnerships is, therefore, a crucial area for further research and theoretical and practical development and offers the prospect of a deeper understanding both of leadership as a social phenomenon as well as a key factor in improving how partnerships work in practice¹⁰.

Role and Skill of Partnership Managers and Change Agents

I have included a brief literature summary of this topic as this thesis is largely a reflective account of my experience as a Partnership Manager and change

⁹ A wicked problem is complex and often intractable. There is no unilinear solution; there is no 'stopping' point; any apparent 'solution' often generates other problems; and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer, but rather better or worse alternatives.

¹⁰ See Armistead et al. (2004)

agent and I found my own agency effect to be influential in the development of the Partnership.¹¹ A published article based on this research is included as Pettigrew (2003) to this thesis (also, Pettigrew, 2003).

Buchanan and Boddy (1992) provided a seminal treatise on this subject largely in the context of a single organization and directed explicit top-down mandated change processes. Their book concerns organizational change and the managerial competencies required to effect it, particularly related to complexity and rapid change instigated by Information Technology. The authors tend not to distinguish between the terms 'change agent' and 'project manager', which they use interchangeably, but then go on to distinguish later in the book in terms of specific competencies in the participatory management of change.

The authors paint a vivid picture of change management processes but tend to neglect the subtle steering and influence across organizational boundaries as in partnerships, where there may not be an explicit understood, agreed or shared change process. Thus, they set out competencies for a change agent, but what emerge are rather competencies of project managers in the context of organizational change.

Reviewing actual change processes in the literature, they conclude that the following competencies are key:

- Sensitivity to the needs and interests of a range of stakeholders
- Interpersonal and social skills: communication, listening, building effective relationships and team building
- 'Process' skills, as a priority over traditional project management skills of 'control' and 'content'

This list begins to map out some of the competencies required of change agents. Although still in the context of the single organization, they show a progression from more limited project management skills.

¹¹ See Chapter 7

The 'process' view of change agents is also emphasized by Pettigrew (1987). He emphasizes the need for skills in intervening in an organization's political and cultural systems. These skills include building adequate support for proposals, and the simultaneous management of the content, context and process of change and the relationships between these three sets of factors. He offers little detail, however, on what these intervention skills may mean in practice. He also distinguishes between inner and outer context. The inner context of change relates to the history of the organization, its structure, its culture and its political system. The outer context of change relates to environmental factors, such as competitor behaviour, or customer demands. This is an acknowledgement of the range of territory an effective change agent has to cover, although the scope of the paper does not extend to change agency in a partnership context.

Still in the context of the single organization, Kanter (1983) cites three key competencies for the change agent to master:

- Power skills to overcome apathy and resistance
- Team skills
- Change architect skills

Again, however, these are not mapped out in detail in her paper, although the territory is again relevant for the partnership manager or change agent.

Buchanan and Boddy (1992) summarise accounts from the literature by saying that organizational change agents should be sensitive to the power and influence of key individuals and groups and to changing patterns of power: *'The competencies of the change agent...concern negotiating and selling... manipulating perceptions... and the use of accepted organization rituals further to legitimize change and the actions of the change agent'* (page 26). They recognize two separate stages for the change agent: 'public performance', based on rational, logical publicly accountable change; and 'backstaging', which concerns the deployment of power skills and intervention in political and cultural systems: influencing, negotiating, selling and 'managing meaning'. They see the latter as an exercise in creativity through symbolic actions to legitimize change and reframe and reinterpret events to achieve participatory change.

Change agency (Buchanan and Storey, 1977) rather than agent may be a more accurate description of the importance of investigating the media of transformation in organizations and partnerships. However, as this is a reflective account of my personal experience, I have retained the term 'change agent'. Comparatively little attention is accorded to the role of individuals in the conduct of interorganizational relationships, whether these be termed 'boundary spanners' (Alter and Hage, 1993), 'political entrepreneurs' (Laver, 1997), 'networkers', 'network brokers' 'catalysts' or even 'collabronauts' (Williams, 2002). Webb (1991) says that:

'the public policy literatures operate at the level of whole organizations, professions and middle-range theory. Yet practitioners consistently highlight the level of interpersonal relations when discussing coordination and collaboration...What is needed is both theoretical explanation of collaborative behaviour at this level and a way of spanning the mezo and micro levels of explanation. The spanning of levels of analysis is a fundamental challenge to social science...' (page 237).

There is also a gap in the literature regarding the role of internal change agents as opposed to external change agents (Hartley et al., 1997; Williams, 2002). In both respects I hope that this thesis partly responds to these issues.

Stemming from my role within the LEP, a key personal interest is the role of people whose primary aim is to influence, change or transform interorganizational relationships within a partnership. I am particularly interested in the role of people who see themselves or are seen by others as fitting this bill. I recognize, however, that change agents in practice are just as likely to belong very firmly within their own organizations, but whose role involves exerting significant influence over a shared partnership domain. This would be particularly true of partnership-minded organizational chairmen and chief executives.

Thus, change agents or other individuals working across boundaries in interorganizational space also have to understand and respond to the

uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity that characterize post modern societal and organizational conditions (Huxham and Vangen, 2000a). This implies that:

'the skills and competency profile of individuals who are focused on the management of interdependencies will not be professional or knowledge-based, but rely more on relational and interpersonal attributes designed to build social capital. They will build cultures of trust, improve levels of cognitive ability to understand complexity and be able to operate within non-hierarchical environments with dispersed configurations of power relationships' (Williams, 2002, page 106).

Poxton (1999) and Williams (2002) emphasize the important role of practitioners and managers and individuals in the collaboration process as opposed to the more common focus on inter-organizational structures and mechanisms. Stewart (1999, 2002) also claims in the context of complex partnership working that it is partly dependent on the vision, skills and behaviour of key individuals. Bardach (1998) suggests *'it is clear that whatever else might help explain success in the collaborative process, the efforts and creativity of what I call purposive practitioners is an essential explanatory ingredient'* (page 6). One of the reasons I propose for the lack of attention to the roles of individual key partnership players is the difficulty external researchers have in gaining in-depth access to the day to day life of partnerships in action, and hence the importance of reflexive accounts of insider partnership practitioners.

The role of partnership managers and change agents is often seen as highly influential because they act as brokers to allow information symmetry and *'as mutually trusted lynchpins between social groups, human catalysts can bridge and help overcome informational asymmetries, establish a common set of expectations, and facilitate goal adjustment'* (Ebers, 1997, page 31). Furthermore, Ebers says they can foster co-operation and exchange; act as neutral arbitrators in conflict resolution; and reduce communication costs and uncertainty. The role played by catalysts is also associated with innovation and entrepreneurship because of a greater access to external partnering, critical resources and information.

In a similar vein, some early authors in this area, (e.g. Friend et al., 1974) ask for 'network catalysers' with reticulation and networking skills and judgements. They emphasize the importance of cultivating interpersonal relationships, communication, political skills and an appreciation of the interdependencies around the structure of problems and their potential solutions. This description is echoed by authors such as deLeon (1996) , who also sees boundary spanners as catalysts who may be considered mavericks or public entrepreneurs and Leadbetter and Goss (1998) who emphasize 'civic entrepreneurship'.

The role of the change agent can also be seen as closely related to the exercise, management and mediation of power relations. This was a strong political undercurrent running through my research on the Partnership's processes and interactions. I became very aware of the schizophrenia of having to perform a public role whilst also 'backstaging' behind the scenes, intervening informally with partners at different levels to influence and mollify, maintain support, block or obviate resistance, and to enthuse and limit any possible damage (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). This in turn has led me to reflect on my own relationship with others within the Partnership, and my attempts to promote transformation through '*power of balance*' and resisting behaviours that sought to retain '*balance of power*' (Torbert, 1991) within the Partnership controlled by vested interests. I pursue this theme further in Chapter 6.

However, with the opportunity to exercise power in a partnership comes attendant personal vulnerability, which is a theme I explore further in Pettigrew (2003). In an analysis of the accounts of change agents, Buchanan and Boddy (op. cit.) suggest four dimensions in which this vulnerability is experienced:

- Shifting sands: goals and priorities change through time
- Interlocking organizational dependencies
- Ownership: responsibility for change and outcomes
- Postures adopted by top management

'The vulnerability of the change agent is (thus) seen to be high where goals and priorities change frequently, where there are many complex interdependencies, where change responsibilities are

ambiguous, and where senior management is either hostile or indifferent...' (page 28).

The authors add that what is exceptional for change agents to possess or acquire is broader expertise *'incorporating the diagnostic, evaluative and judgemental capabilities that lead to the effective use of a list of competencies or tools'* (page 29). Expertise is concerned with the deployment of these competencies in a given context.

Moreover, partnership managers and change agents are vested with considerable powers of influence not just through expertise but because of the focal position they often hold in partnerships. The control of agendas and dissemination of papers for meetings and control of minutes, whilst seemingly innocuous activities are actually power-laden (Lawrence et al., 1999; Lukes, 1974). Thus, partnership managers and change agents in whatever guise can strongly and subtly influence the direction of partnership dialogue, who participates, and direction taken. Simply having access to more information from a variety of sources within the partnership and awareness of the most pertinent issues is also a major source of power for a manager or change agent, giving him or her a powerful, though often understated, leadership role in shaping understanding of partnership members (Vangen and Huxham, 2003a). The implications of these points are explored in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

This literature review on key aspects of multiorganizational and often multisectoral collaboration and partnership amply demonstrates the richness and complexity in the literature. It is diverse and complex in terms of discipline, theme and methodology. It is also theoretically eclectic and definitionally contentious.

I am aware that this review merely scratches the surface of the subject and I have had to omit some interesting themes and references owing to the need to keep the review reasonably concise and manageable. I have also tried to apply a bandwidth to my review in order to focus on my twin themes of power and transformation. I have thus tried to focus on those theoretical aspects that most

relate to my research interests and which resonated with me as I conducted my work and reflected on events in the LEP. I have attempted to summarise the key definitions, concepts and theories, but acknowledge that this is a complex and contested area where there is little agreement among authors.

I have set out my definition of partnership as distinct from other forms of collaboration owing to the existence of some form of governance being in existence as well as networking activity, such that the partnership exhibits signs of structure, hierarchy and processes rather than simply alliances, collaborations or networks.

The key themes I take forward into my thesis relate to the theoretical literature including issues of resource dependence and exchange as the basis for power relations within partnerships and between partnerships and external institutions; ideas about how institutions adapt to each other within a partnership through 'isomorphic adjustment' as suggested in negotiated order theory; the contested nature of power within partnerships as explicated by political theory, emphasizing the role of individuals and 'clans' struggling to impose their will upon others in a pluralistic environment; and the related concept of regime theory which posits alliances of blocs within a collaboration or partnership comprised of powerful public and private interests which do not necessarily agree on issues but which recognize that they wield significant power and can strongly influence the direction of transformation. These theories I see as not as competitors or a lens through which to view partnerships as a whole, but rather as helpful guides to understanding and interpreting specific situations and events in my study and as an aid to reflection.

I also take forward the notion of transformational approaches, both unidirectional and mutual, which I believe have a strong influence on how power is manifested and played out in partnerships and which can partly determine the synergistic capacity of partnerships in their development trajectories. Considered in this way, the nature of power relations and dynamics is seen to relate closely to the willingness of partners to make themselves open to transformation rather than just to transform others.

Finally, building on my guiding concept introduced in the previous chapter, I have introduced, in discussing the literature on power and leadership relevant to partnership, the concept of first-, second-, and third-person syntax as a means of triangulating thought and interpretation about partnership issues. I suggest that this insight bridges the purely reflexive with dialogical exchanges, and allows comparison with data drawn from the Partnership as an entity. I expand on this idea in the following chapters.

The themes I have elicited in this chapter will be picked up particularly in Chapters 4 to 7 where I describe and analyse the key aspects of power in the context of transformational processes that pertain particularly to my case study. Before then, the following chapter discusses the rationale for the methodology I have used in conducting the study and some of the issues I encountered in applying it.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Methodological Issues

Introduction

Given my purpose in undertaking this research as explained in Chapter 1, I was faced with the need to devise a methodology for the work that would be appropriate. Since I was seeking to describe, reflect upon and gain insights into emergent transformation processes within a particular multiorganizational Partnership over a period of time, I chose to adopt an interpretive rather than a positivist approach. This meant that I would seek to derive theory from practice via qualitative approaches to data gathering and analysis rather than setting up a priori hypotheses which I would then test quantitatively.

The fact of being an insider gave me unique access to the inner workings of a complex, multiorganizational Partnership that is usually denied to most academic researchers. Even where such researchers are called in, usually to evaluate a partnership's activities, they often have to do so in an ex post facto way rather than emergently. They cannot, therefore, realistically describe a 'real time' process of direct influence and involvement and reflect the dilemmas and issues facing a partnership life, capturing theories in use rather than espoused theories (Argyris and Schön, 1974, 1978, 1991) and at a profound level (Huxham and Vangen, 2001):

'The deeper picture can only be gained either by capturing the considerations people make at the point of action and what they actually do or by combining the views, experiences and incidents described by many people' (page 8).

Thus, most of the accounts of partnership-related issues, particularly over the last 20 years tend to be post hoc and evaluative in nature, notably in the field of regeneration partnerships in the UK (e.g. McGregor et al., 1996; Purdue et al., 2000; Scottish Office Central Research Unit, 1996). In contrast my research provides an emergent, insider insight into actual partnership processes underpinned by real life events. This unique research opportunity, as well as helping to fill a gap in the literature, would be wasted it seemed to me, by denying the opportunity to really get inside the Partnership and tell its and my story of engagement with it. Thus, again it seemed most appropriate to adopt a methodology that encouraged and reflected my deep involvement with the subject rather than one which would seek to reduce the richness of this complex, interwoven subject area. Hence, I was satisfied that an interpretive approach would suit my needs much better than a scientific, positivistic quantitative research strategy (Outhwaite, 1987).

Philosophical Approach

The approach I chose inherently meant that I veered towards the philosophy that reality is negotiated rather than objectively real. The world I wanted to explore - a multisectoral Partnership - was characterized by complexity, uncertainty, dynamism and paradox. It was composed of multilayered, complex sets of social interactions situated in time and space (Giddens, 1984) in which I myself was an influential player. Part of my research was explicitly reflexive as I was consciously trying to reflect on and improve my practice as a professional and seek to generate theory from that practice in an iterative way (Schön, 1983). Such a complex social entity as a multiorganizational partnership cannot, in my view, have a single objective reality that is 'knowable' or even 'recognizable' by all who participated in it. Hence, it seemed appropriate to accept this situation and use myself as the research instrument as a means of helping others understand the nature of multisectoral partnerships and transformation, if only (or rather mainly) through my own eyes. This epistemological approach meant that I accepted that my own values and experience coloured what followed and that as a researcher I had consciously and unconsciously influenced the changing 'reality' I witnessed, as well

as being influenced by it. It was thus impossible to separate the object of my interest – the LEP – from me as an active participant in the Partnership. Indeed I did not want to, as the fascinating aspect of undertaking this study was the interaction between researcher as reflective practitioner and the Partnership as an entity composed of a myriad of interactive social constructions.

All I can claim is that the story that follows is honestly recounted and reflected upon and represents one person's attempt to understand a particular Partnership's transformation from the inside and the role of the partnership professional within this environment. As a case study I accept that it is situated in time and space and may not be replicable elsewhere, although I would hope that readers would find insights from the study that will have resonance in other similar contexts. Issues of validity are about the judgement of the reader as to whether the story and reflections feel 'genuine'.

The approach I adopted has its roots in a form of relativism that states that there is no objective reality but only different sets of concepts and meanings that people agree to describe the world (Feyerabend, 1975). This social constructionist view would accord with the idea that there are multiple ways in which to conceive the world and the task of research is to understand how these multiple shared constructions of knowledge shape experience and understanding (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This implies the use of research methods that attempt to inquire into how these constructions of the world are built up, shared and used to make sense of social interventions and outcomes. Such a philosophy accepts that the researcher is an integral part of the reshaping process and cannot, indeed must not, be considered as an objective external observer of the phenomena under investigation. To understand these social phenomena requires an approach to inquiry that is emergent (Eisenhardt, 1989), taking into full account the fact that the social milieu is shaped by a multitude of systemic factors and agency effects (Giddens, 1984). Furthermore Taylor (1971) argues that any science of humanity has to be interpretive because of the nature of the subject – human beings – are self-interpreting animals.

However, as much as I personally am attracted to this view of the world, it is problematic to the extent that it becomes hard to consider anything in concrete terms if this view is taken to the extreme. It becomes difficult to talk, for example, about the Partnership or its constituent organizations as an entity, if they have multiple, unknowable meanings to its participants. I acknowledge that they probably do, but in order to talk sensibly about the Partnership I have to ascribe it with the properties of an objective entity, even if this is an abstraction, as otherwise it would defy any kind of shared conceptualization. I return this point in Chapter 5 as it had a fundamental impact in trying to elicit the third-person voice of the Partnership as a reified entity.

This leads to an ontological position that accepts that there is no fact or conception of reality that is beyond dispute and that 'facts' are theory-laden. However, it starts with the assumption that there is some form of reality beyond our individual conception of it. The task of research then is to generate theories that describe the real world and to test them in action. This philosophy is known as 'critical realism' and is associated with the works of Roy Bhaskar and Rom Harre (Archer et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 1989, 1990; Harre, 1986). The attraction of this philosophy is that it avoids taking too much of a positivist or relativist position and the rather zero-sum consequence of the tension between these two competing paradigms. It does not mean that the researcher must consider everything as real as it acknowledges that values and politically motivated behaviour have an important influence on reality. Critical realism is the philosophical bedrock of my study but I acknowledge that I personally am sympathetic to the constructionist end of the spectrum in the context of this study. This approach emphasizes interpretive action theory and encompasses phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and interpretive sociologies. It suggests that action is meaningful, that meanings are social meanings, and that these meanings are essentially generated through action and reflection rather than on a hypothetical basis (Trist, 1976).

The other ontological underpinning for my research is 'philosophical hermeneutics', a branch of philosophical thought which is essentially about interpreting human

behaviour. It focuses on the interpretation of human experience and drawing out empathetic understanding (Holloway, 1997). The best known modern proponents of philosophical hermeneutics are Habermas and Gadamer (see list of references). It is essentially about generating meanings that require interpretive effort, seeking to bridge between the world we understand and that which is alien to us. Its particular importance to me in the context of this study is the explicit acknowledgement that the interpreter's own interpretation of the world is part and parcel of understanding problematic phenomena. It thus encompasses the importance of the reflexive dimension of understanding and takes into account the interpreter's situation in generating understanding. This philosophy accepts that biases in the position of interpreters are inevitable, but something more to be celebrated than frowned upon as in positivism. I thus take the position espoused by Gadamer (1976) who sees '*prejudices (as) the biases of our openness to the world*' (page 9). Where I am aware of my own biases I try to make these plain (as, for example, in Chapter 6), and where not I have to rely on the judgement of the reader as to whether these affect the validity of the research.

Developing from this philosophical position as explained in the previous chapter, I undertook research over a three year period which was underpinned by an Action Research strategy. A published paper is appended to this thesis which provides my account of undertaking action research in the role of a change agent, describing issues of power and conflict resolution¹. The particular phase in the Partnership's development I explore in the main part of this study (Chapter 4) can be considered as a presentation of action research in the form of a case study.

Action Research

The origins of action research are unclear within the literature, but generally it is accepted that it originated with Kurt Lewin, an American psychologist, in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Lewin, 1946, 1951). McKernan (1991) states that action research as a method of inquiry has evolved over the last century and careful study

¹ Pettigrew (2003)

of the literature shows *'clearly and convincingly that action research is a root derivative of the scientific method'* (page 8) reaching back to the Science in Education movement of the late nineteenth century.

Lewin constructed a theory of action research which proceeded *'in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of action'* (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990, page 8). McKernan claimed that Lewin argued that in order to *'understand and change certain social practices, social scientists have to include practitioners from the real social world in all phases of inquiry'* (McKernan 1991, page 10). This construction of action research theory by Lewin made action research an acceptable method of inquiry.

The definition of Action Research is far from simple. It encompasses a broad church of philosophies and applications, and for every researcher/practitioner there will be a different emphasis in the definition. The choice of type of action research to follow will always depend on the purpose of the investigation. McKernan (op. cit.) lists three types of Action Research:

Type 1: the scientific/technical view

Type 2: practical – deliberative

Type 3: critical – emancipatory

The underpinning basis of the research I have been undertaking clearly does not fall into the category of scientific/technical as characterized by Lewin, but perhaps sits between Types 2 and 3. It is clearly interpretative in nature and grounded in the practical reality I encountered working within a complex strategic sub-regional Partnership. However, the participatory nature of the research, whilst falling short of the ideal form espoused by writers such as Whyte and Reason (see reference list), has a critical aspect, although it stops short of being 'emancipatory'.

My own philosophy would come close to that propounded by Reason and Bradbury (2001, page 1) that Action Research is:

'a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes...it seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.'

My fundamental belief is that human beings have the power potentially to transform society to suit any shared purpose provided that they can conceive together a shared understanding of present reality, construe a shared vision of a desirable future, and configure a means of reaching that destination. This needs to be achieved in a way that is genuinely liberating for all the actors based on consensus rather than compromise or mere acquiescence.

As an insider working within the Partnership to achieve 'progress' and working participatively at various levels and degrees of intensity with the partners, a research strategy was chosen that would reflect this deep degree of involvement and the philosophical stance that I have taken. The nature of the Partnership implied a highly inter-related and inter-dependent system, and the need to capture and reflect on the complex dynamics of emergent processes of change suggested an action research approach (Lewin, 1973). This basic approach seemed most appropriate as a strategy governing my investigation given the close interaction between researcher and researched and also the fact that as a partnership professional a major interest was the extent to which I could add value to knowledge about multisectoral partnerships through providing and receiving advice and guidance in action.

This research strategy stresses collaboration, involvement and participation, which seem particularly apt for a partnership setting. There are variants on this theme (e.g. Brooks and Watkins, 1994; Elden and Chisholm, 1993), each emphasising particular nuances and strategies within this basic approach. The choice of an

action research strategy also fitted well with the underlying philosophical basis of the study described above as 'critical realism'.

Ellis and Kiely (2000) provide a typology of action research technologies based on the degree of risk, which is also highly relevant to my research context. There was a clear link but also an ambiguity in my role as manager of the Partnership but also conducting research within it. Key participants in the partnership were aware of my research in general but not necessarily in detail. I return to this point under the methodological issues section. In addition I felt I became identified as being the embodiment of the Partnership, at the fulcrum of its administration, and with influence across all the Partners, although without the equivalent authority in hierarchical terms as the individuals who were the key players in the Partnership. Thus, whilst the Partnership was ostensibly a form of network, it was also composed of highly hierarchical organizations whose leaders carried more power than I did within the Partnership. I explain more about this situation in Pettigrew (2003) at Pettigrew (2003). The consequence was that I felt vulnerable and exposed on many occasions in carrying out my role, although to others I seemed 'powerful' (see Chapter 5), and as I say in Chapter 7, my own power was on reflection very real.

The Ellis and Kiely framework recognizes 'action research' (Chisholm and Eden, 1993; Eden and Huxham, 1996) which is perceived as having a low level of personal and organizational risk and is concerned with individual and organizational effectiveness. 'Participatory action research' (Reason, 1994 a, b; Whyte, 1991) emphasizes empowerment and emancipation through enhanced awareness of the need for groups to transform their lives and social conditions through co-inquiry. Here there is considerable risk for individuals and the organization within which they work, especially in a business context. 'Action science' (Argyris, 1999; Argyris and Schön, 1991) seeks to change behaviours in organizations through co-interpreting knowledge that reveals pathological barriers to learning and transformation, for example through defensive routines, 'fancy footwork' and 'skilled incompetence' (Argyris, 1999). Action science attempts to

surface these personal defence mechanisms, and as such there are significant risks to the individual and the group unless this is already part of the culture of the organization and relationships are mature. Finally, Ellis and Kiely identify 'action learning' as a discrete genre (Marsick and O'Neil, 1999; Raelin, 1997) which emphasizes peer learning in sets, with a relatively low risk to the individual and the organization.

Initially, I envisaged my own research as 'fitting' within a participatory action research domain. However, as the scale of the research focused more on the political dynamics of the process of Partnership transformation, so the scale at which I was principally working increased from the sub-group level to Partnership Board level. This and the pace of change, and my changing role within the Partnership, led me increasingly towards a scale of influence that was more holistic than I had originally envisaged, operating from top to bottom in the Partnership through various levels of interaction and participation (Coghlan, 2000).

It is, thus, difficult to locate precisely in which action inquiry domain my research sits. I would say that the action research model (Eden and Huxham, 1996) was my guide but I was nevertheless exposed and vulnerable in a high-risk situation, both for the Partnership and myself, and deeply immersed in the situation in which I was involved (Evered and Louis, 1981). This personal investment in an inherently risky situation made, however, for a deep learning opportunity, a chance for first-, second-, and third-person transformation through generative rather than adaptive learning (Senge, 1990). I was consciously managing and intervening in order to improve the effectiveness and reputation of the LEP, but I was also hoping to enhance the experience of other members of the Partnership as well as myself. There was thus an intensive degree of participation that I actively fostered in order consciously to build dialogue, confidence, learning and consensus in the members of the Partnership. It is this degree of personal involvement, interaction and participation, coupled with the complexity inherent in inter-organizational networks and partnerships that defines the essentials of my research strategy.

In addition, my approach has been influenced by the work of Torbert and his interweaving of first-, second-, and third-person inquiry as developmental action inquiry (e.g. Chandler and Torbert, 2003; Fisher and Torbert, 1995; Hartwell and Torbert, 1999; Reason and Torbert, 2001; Torbert, 2001). His ideas about inquiring in real time into multiple possible transformations seemed particularly apt to my own situation in trying to maintain a real time critical awareness of myself in relation to others and the implications of our interactions for the Partnership as a whole. He and collaborators use this theory to provide:

'...a way of understanding personal, organizational and social scientific development as a sequence of different voices or action-logics. Each later action-logic allows all the previous options and more. Each later voice leads towards increasing integration of inquiry and action in the real time first-, second-, and third-person research practices of our day to day lives' (Hartwell and Torbert, 1999, page 192).

Thus, I became aware of the *'multivocal, chaotic interplay'* (Hartwell and Torbert, *ibid.*, page 193) of these first-, second-, and third-person voices, a typology which seems too simple as a model of the noise I experienced but which helped me understand the discordant reality of temporal partnership complexity. At the same time it helped me perceive certain descants and resonances that gave meaning to seeming chaos.

I do not think any one form of action research from those discussed above is any better than another as the setting and purpose should have primacy over the chosen strategy rather than any pre-conception of the approach to be used. In addition, trying to define various sub-sets of the genre can seem divisive rather than integrative (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Thus, my inquiry is informed by an eclectically informed action research strategy and presented as a case study that reflects these various methodological influences.

Case Study Approach

The study of local contexts allows a test bed for theory: to fashion and understand change in particular situations. Where existing theories don't fit, local studies, with their emphasis on conversation and reflection, provide a base from which to generate explanations specific to the context.

Case studies are an established strategy for the rigorous study of a particular organization or situation. They focus on the particular without claiming to represent the general and are situated in time and place. They are empirical in the sense of being based on evidence and interpretation of events or phenomena in context (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and can involve multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Robson, 2002; Yin, 1994).

In introducing his theory of structuration Giddens (1984) reflects that:

'The situated nature of social interaction can usefully be examined in relation to the different locales through which the daily activities of industries are co-ordinated. Locales are not just places but settings of social interaction. Time-space 'fixity' also normally means social 'fixity'; the substantially 'given' character of the physical milieu of day-to-day life interlaces with routine and is deeply influential in the contours of institutional reproduction' (page xxx).

Although he was probably not thinking of case studies when he wrote this, Giddens sums up the specificity of this research approach. He also claims that: *'all social life can be represented as a series of episodes; encounters in circumstances of co-presence certainly have an episode form'* (page xxix). My research reflects this view of the nature of social interaction within the Partnership I studied, based on a particular episode in the LEP's development.

Robert Stake (1995), a leading proponent and advocate for the case study approach says:

'A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. A single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities – but rarely will we care enough to submit it to case. We study a case when it in itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interactions within its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (page xi).

Denscombe (1998) explains the value of case study under a number of headings:

- Spotlight on one instance
- In-depth study
- Focus on relationships and processes
- Natural settings
- Multiple sources and multiple methods

The circumstances that were important to me were a long-standing interest in and experience of partnership working and the fortuitous position I enjoyed of working closely within a particular multiorganizational partnership as its manager. In addition, as I was working on my own, a case study such as this was at a scale appropriate for me to manage in the time available.

I believe that my study fulfils these criteria and they describe well the philosophy and approach I have adopted. It has allowed me the opportunity to consider in depth the complexity inherent in a multiorganizational partnership and get to the nub of what was really driving or blocking transformation and the nature and impact of aspects of power within the LEP. On the other hand, I am aware that in academia case studies are sometimes seen as a 'soft option', with problems relating to validity and generalizability.

In the sense of their particularity, case studies may be seen as the antithesis of the scientific approach, which generally seeks to elicit universally applicable theories, models or laws to explain phenomena, although case studies can be quantitative as well as qualitative. Yet, practically speaking in real world social science research, it is arguably the case that all research is partial and particular to some degree for very practical reasons of time and cost as well as complexity. Whilst there may be criticisms over reliability, validity and bias, these can also be placed at the door of virtually every kind of qualitative research and not just case study research. Case study research, therefore, fits well with an interpretive, realist view of the world and is as much subject to issues of the rationality of the process of enquiry as any other qualitative research strategy. Furthermore, in making meaning from a mass of complex phenomena and data, the case study approach resonates with a hermeneutic philosophy as outlined earlier.

In my study the principal 'case' is the LEP, but as I was part and parcel of the Partnership and an active player within it, it is also partly a 'case' about me in relation to the Partnership. I try to make this clear in the study by reference to my own contemporaneous reflections on phenomena as they occurred, but the LEP provides the boundary within which the research is principally conducted.

The case study format allows a flexible approach to an essentially exploratory study, where the phenomena to be discussed are emergent. My literature review provided pointers for attention in trying to understand and interpret what was happening within the LEP, but I have tended to use these as a guide rather than a precise frame as there was a danger of 'seeing only nails if all I had was a hammer'. In other words, I did not want to fall into the trap of interpreting phenomena only as issues of power, leadership, complexity or whatever, to the exclusion of everything else. On the other hand, I have tried to use these pointers from the literature review to provide some focus and structure for the 'story' (Chapter 4), which otherwise would be too unwieldy and complex. I have, therefore, used my literature review to test out whether the key theories I have judged to be applicable to my case are borne out in practice through my research, and moreover, to suggest some ways in

which these theories may be qualified or improved through my close involvement within a multiorganizational Partnership over an extended period. I stop short of any claim that my findings are 'representative' of all or any other partnerships. However, equally there is no reason why the case I have investigated is fundamentally different to other partnerships of a similar type in other settings in terms of the issues that were being handled and the dynamics of the issues and processes involved.

Methodological and Ethical Issues

As explained in Chapter 1, this is a write-up as a case study of what I call the *Board formation* phase of the Partnership's development. Prior to this phase I had worked closely with three reflective mentors with whom I discussed issues concerning the development of the Partnership and my research. Originally my intention was to work with these close confidantes as co-researchers. However, it soon became apparent that this was problematic in terms of the changing scale at which I was working, i.e. at Board level, which meant that two out of my original three co-researchers were not sharing with me the detailed concerns of this phase of the development of the Partnership. In addition, I felt that the time commitment involved on their part and mine was unsustainable, although they remained interested in what I was trying to do. As busy executives in their own right it was impossible for them all to become intimately involved in the research. However, I continued to have meetings with them in a lesser role as 'reflective mentors' or 'critical friends'. In this capacity my relationship with them was easier to sustain through the Board formation phase of the Partnership's development and one of them in particular had a major part to play in this part of my research as I report in the following chapter.

It was important for the validity of my thesis that peer corroboration of my interpretation of events was achieved throughout my research. In addition to these reflective mentors, I was lucky to have the support of my PA who was a constant and trusted confidante throughout the period of my research. She provided a very

clear and consistent mirror for me to reflect on what was happening in the Partnership and helped me to come to considered judgments on a number of key issues. Additionally, as reported in the following chapter, I had the benefit of a close professional and personal relationship with the Chairman of the LEP, George Patterson, and my line manager, the TEC Chief Executive, Tom Wills throughout my tenure as Partnership manager and through my research. Formal interviews with them, excerpts of which appear in Chapter 4, were supplemented with informal discussions throughout the research.

However beneficial these relationships were to help me verify my approach to the research and findings, I was dissatisfied at the end of the day about the level of involvement of 'significant others' in my research as opposed to participation. Apart from issues of time commitment, it was difficult to engage reflective mentors, in particular, at a sufficiently deep level for me to claim, hand on heart, that my findings and conclusions were genuinely the result of a shared process. I do not place any blame on anyone in making this point, but merely wish to explain how difficult it was to undertake participative action research in an earnestly involving way. I accept that this has implications for my conclusions about the transformation of the Partnership and my role as Partnership Manager. Hence, as I made clear earlier, I understand that other members of the Partnership may well have alternative explanations for and conclusions about what happened. I therefore have to take full responsibility for all my conclusions and findings as the principal instrument of the research.

Furthermore, I had serious issues to contend with over the ambiguity bordering on schizophrenia of my twin roles as practitioner and researcher. It was difficult for me to separate the two roles clearly in the course of my fieldwork/practice which was not conducted as a 'fly on the wall' but as an active participant in the drama. I was not acting as a detached researcher but actively involved in a professional capacity and committed to achieving results. I was thereby able to report faithfully, but ultimately subjectively, on the phenomena I was taking part in as well as observing as a researcher. In order to get close to the action was a demanding and

sometimes emotionally draining experience. I felt the tensions of moving in and out of an ambiguous researcher/practitioner consciousness and felt a sense of guilt at times about collecting data in a form that was useful for the Partnership, but which I collected in a form I knew would be useful to me for the purposes of my research. This was particularly true of the Partnership Survey I conducted and I report on in Chapter 5, which was a genuine attempt to help the Partnership reflect on the issues it faced principally regarding equality, power and learning, but which also allowed me the opportunity to try to elicit the third-person voice of the Partnership. I explore these tensions further in that chapter.

This is not a unique dilemma in conducting insider research as demonstrated by Adler and Adler in their eloquent defence of different roles in field research (1987, page 86) where they state:

“Our goal should be the integration and full use of ourselves as, simultaneously, complex human beings with unique individual biographies and trained and dedicated researchers. To meander through our various roles...over the course of our research is not a grievous error, but a natural human phenomenon. The closer one gets to the phenomenon under study, the more one finds that it dissipates and is, at the same time, continuously re-created by members doing more or less what the membership-researcher is doing. By drawing on our complex and multifaceted selves (of which the research itself is but one dimension, rather than a separate entity), we get closer to the members’ behaviour’.

Of course the issue was the unknowable impact my research-motivated interactions and observations had on the Partnership. In practice the pace of one’s interactions with others did not allow a clear separation of the roles in my own mind, not always being self-aware or reflective enough in action to know in which role I was acting. I was always conscious, however, that the welfare of the Partnership was my first priority. I would never have compromised the Partnership’s well-being for my own

research and I like to think that the extra motivation of conducting my inquiry in such a unique setting added to my commitment to helping the Partnership to progress and resolve the multifarious but fascinating transformational and power issues it had to face and resolve as its story unfolded.

Nonetheless, the ethical issues are clear. Not everyone, and not least me, would have been aware at all times in which capacity I was acting, whether as researcher or active participant. I hope by the anonymizing of the setting and the actors in my account this will go some way to declaiming that my interest in the research was to further my and others' knowledge about partnership as a phenomenon and the way it worked in my case study (Robson, 2002). My objective was not to criticize individuals or organizations in an unappreciative sense or to minimize their valid voices whether I agreed with them or not. Yet I am aware that individuals and organizations may recognize themselves in this thesis who may not have been made aware or appreciated the nature of my research. I am concerned about this but I think it is unavoidable given the nature of my inquiry which was explicitly to report as an insider on the emergent processes and events in a live Partnership: to understand at a micro-scale Partnership dynamics relative to issues of transformation and power from a first-, second-, and third-person perspective.

First-, Second-, and Third-Person Voices

Consistent with my theme of exploring the first-, second-, and third-person metaphor through my research I decided on an approach to collecting data that would allow me to pursue these perspectives. I see the first-person voice as mine, the voice of the researcher as practitioner and practitioner as researcher; the second-voice is that generated by the inter-subjective interaction of individuals and groups; whilst the third-person voice is that of the entity being researched, in my case the Partnership.

These also had to be consistent with the underlying philosophical basis for my approach which can be described as an interpretive, case study based on action

research. I therefore consciously tried to consider methods of data collection that would be true to this approach. However, the distinctions between first-, second-, and third-person voices is not straightforward to apply in practice as these categories are not necessarily distinct. There is an inherent issue in hermeneutics in separating interpretations: mine from your's (singular and plural); mine from their's; and your's from theirs. Inevitably my first-person voice is reflexive and colours my interpretation of second and third-person voices².

Thus, whilst I was able to find a method of collecting data on my own attitudes in Chapter 6 which can be viewed as 'pure' first-person³, the accounts in Chapters 4 and 5 are a mixture in the former case of mainly second-person voices, and in the latter case of seeking the third-person voice of the Partnership as an entity. However, even these voices are heard through my first-person filter. In other words, where I needed to collect data on what Partners thought of an issue, in the context of a discussion, observations on a meeting or a survey the interpretation I give is my interpretation of their interpretation: what might be labeled a double hermeneutic. My resultant thesis can be viewed thus as a 'metahermeneutic', integrating and transcending these separate but interrelated perspectives.

Methods of Data Collection

In accordance with the above, I used a range of techniques to provide the data on which the study was based. These are described below in terms of the syntax described above.

² It is logically difficult to think of how second and third-person voices might be adjoined in the context of research generated and interpreted by one person, although it would be possible to conceive of this in the context of a team of researchers achieving a second-person interpretive consensus interacting with a third-person entity, e.g. a partnership in a reified sense.

³ Albeit my reflections will have been affected in unknowable ways by a myriad of other influences.

First-Person Voice

My first method was designed to capture data from internal Partnership meeting notes, papers and flipcharts upon which I reflected using the 'left hand column/right hand column' technique described by Argyris and Schön (1974). This allowed me to capture not only the data as it occurred but also my real-time reflection-in-action of what I thought was really going on in the exchanges of dialogue, papers and minutes. I refer to these throughout Chapter 4, the story of the *Board formation* phase of the LEP, which contains the key data on which my thesis is based. This technique allowed me to preserve my real time observations and thoughts, upon which in writing and re-writing my thesis further rounds of reflections have refined further my original observations. I distinguish in this Chapter real-time reflections with mature reflection developed subsequently as my research developed. I wrote reflections against all the Board minutes after each meeting to help me recall what I thought was going on in the Board Meetings. The minutes were the official minutes for which I was responsible. I refer to some of these reflections in the text as appropriate, as I have had to be highly selective in order to keep my thesis to a reasonable length and degree of complexity.

I was often the main author of papers and minutes in my role as secretary to the Partnership Board and can be seen as my personal agency effect in helping to shape the discourse of the LEP Board. This was a powerful role and one on which I say more in Chapter 7.

The second main data collection method in the first-person was an explicit means of exploring my own understanding of the power formations and dynamics within the Partnership. This was in order to understand how I considered myself and key Partners in relation to the organizations that made up the powerful players within the Partnership. I decided to undertake a repertory grid analysis (Kelly, 1955) on myself using a windows-based interactive software programme called 'Enquire Within', which is based on Kelly's personal construct theory. It is an application which:

- Develops, charts and clarifies thoughts and perceptions
- Produces verifiable personal constructs relating to specific lines of inquiry
- Explores and challenges knowledge, feelings and judgments

It can be used for personal or second-person explorations, but in this phase of the research I used it for purely reflexive purposes. It has the advantage of being:

- Theoretically sound
- Statistically rigorous
- Free from researcher bias
- 'Flexible and versatile'

This analysis forms the substance of Chapter 6, where I say more about the technique in that context. Suffice to say that I found it a very useful technique to explore my own thoughts and reflections and which I had used early in my research to understand with my reflective mentors how they viewed the Partnership in relation to others in which they were active or had been involved⁴.

Finally I kept a day book to collect the random thoughts and events; personal thoughts, reflections and ideas; comments of others, telephone calls, etc; which I used to capture the ephemera of day to day Partnership life.

Second-Person Voice

The main data collection method I used to capture second-person data was semi-structured interviews. The interviews afforded both corroboration and challenge to my interpretations of events and their meaning, and revealed insights into the Partnership, some of which was previously concealed from me.⁵ They were designed to help me understand from a different perspective how these key players interpreted phenomena and to share our understandings and anticipate issues

⁴ This work is not written up in my thesis

⁵ e.g. the DWG described in Chapter 4

affecting the Partnership. I undertook these interviews with key people during the Board formation phase of the case study. These were with Tom Wills, Chief Executive of the TEC and my organizational line manager; George Patterson, Chairman of the LEP and Chairman of the TEC; and Colin Powell and Danny Wilson, two of my reflective mentors, one a senior officer with Brookshire County Council and the other a senior executive and academic in a local university.

I chose this method as I wanted to capture their thoughts in such a way that they had scope to link ideas and insights without being constrained by a tightly framed questionnaire and because they were people who were senior and known to me and for whom I thought it would be important not to create an artificial interviewing environment. Thus, I adopted a discursive style while concentrating on asking open questions and capturing data both by note-taking and taping, although I found the former easier to work with than the latter as long as I wrote my notes up quickly after the interview. Although early interviewees did not mind my taping our discussions I felt that it inhibited their responses and decided that I could capture better notes more naturally using my own shorthand notes.

Third-Person

As part of my professional role I had to undertake a survey of partners during the Board formation phase of the Partnership's existence. This was because my tenure as Partnership secretary was coming to an end and following a traumatic period in the life of the Partnership, which I describe in Chapter 4, it was opportune to find out what we had learned from our tribulations. This was a 'for real' survey, designed to help all the members reflect on the successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses of the Partnership both from a personal and organizational perspective. My aim was to help the Partnership take stock of the issues with which it had grappled and to tease out the costs and benefits of being involved in the Partnership to date.

As for my interviews I allowed plenty of scope in the design of the questionnaire⁶, with an open style, for Partners to describe in their own way with no tick boxes what they felt about the Partnership. All responses were treated as confidential although they were grouped by sector in my analysis. I manually coded the responses with the help of my PA to ensure a consistent approach and benefited greatly from her contribution.

I was also motivated to undertake the survey, however, as a means of generating third-person data on how the Partnership viewed itself at this critical point in its development as one of its leading constituent members, the TEC, was being taken over by the LSC and as a new Business Link was being installed following a period of seismic institutional change instigated by central government.

The survey generated useful data for my research, a purpose its design was at least partly intended to achieve. Analysis and interpretation of this data forms the substance of Chapter 5 and the methods are described more fully there, including a discussion of the philosophical and methodological dilemmas and issues my research approach generated. I subsequently fed the results of the survey back to a meeting of the Partnership in order to gauge their reaction to my interpretation of their combined responses. The response to my findings was generally corroborative and affirmative, although there was some surprise at the feeling of relative powerlessness expressed by each of the sectors within the Partnership relative to each other. We had a lively debate on how the results should be interpreted and from their response I am confident that this interaction between my first-person reflections on the Partnership's third-person voice can be considered a valid account of how the Partnership self-assessed itself at that period in its life. And as I will show in Chapter 5 I consider whether or not the Partnership actually had a voice and the relationship between my search for it and the philosophical, methodological and practical barriers that presented themselves in the process. Although I used counts of responses to my survey as a means of assessing strength of feeling, I also present selected quotes, representing the views of

⁶ Appended to Chapter 5

Partners where they appeared to offer interesting insights, in order to leaven the account and give a qualitative flavour to the narrative. I use this technique in particular where classification of data into discrete categories proved difficult. Although the data is presented in tabular and numerical form, it should not be considered as in any way quantitative or positivist in nature. Rather it is designed to explore the possibility of discovering a validated third-person voice. I go into these methodological aspects in more detail in Chapter 5.

Summary

I therefore deployed a range of data collection methods based on first-, second-, and third-person voices. This form of triangulation built into my research design as well as data collection methodology has helped me feel confident about the validity of my conclusions.

Finally, I was profoundly influenced in unknowable ways by the naturally occurring real time data that bombarded me on a day by day basis as I went about my daily business (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). This was in the form of numerous meetings, casual and formal conversations, telephone calls and presentations, all of which have consciously or subliminally influenced my interpretation of events. I could not possibly have captured all this data through any of the methods I describe above. Furthermore, all of these influencers combined to help shape my conceptualization of events and through a process of re-reflection and '*defamiliarization*' (Thomas, 1993) over a long period whereby '*we take the collection of observations, anecdotes, impressions, documents and other symbolic representations that seem depressingly mundane and common and reframe them into something new...*' (page 43). I have certainly been influenced in this way, as almost certainly have others with whom I was involved in the Partnership, and thus have constructed a fuzzy form of reality based on formal as well as informal, conscious as well as unconscious interaction.

The following chapter now provides a first-, and second-person account of the narrative part of my thesis, describing themes in transformation and power as they emerged and upon which I expound in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 before drawing conclusions in the final chapter.

Chapter 4

Partnership in Action: Forming the Board and Making the Bids

Introduction

I have set out in previous chapters the aims, context and style of research; a literature review focusing on the key theories and ideas regarding collaboration and partnership; and an explanation of the methodology I adopted to undertake the study, including the underlying philosophical bases of my approach and some of the methodological issues inherent in my methodology related to my personal situation and context. These related to the ambiguity inherent in my role as both practitioner and researcher conducting an investigation within a live complex multiorganizational Partnership. I also suggested a way of looking at partnerships from a first-, second-, and third-person perspective, designed to triangulate between the different perspectives in order to provide a comprehensive appraisal of the case study and strengthen validity.

I explained in my literature review some of the key theories about transformation and power, how these concepts are related and the ways in which they are relevant for studies of partnerships. I also discussed various definitions of partnership, the influence of hierarchy and network (and to a lesser extent market) in trying to understand the dynamics of transformation and power; and the important role of the partnership manager as change agent in shaping meaning and writing the partnership story.

This chapter is a detailed reflective account of the third and final stage of my research, which I describe as '*Board formation*'. It is a label I have coined for this period of my study and describes the Partnership processes and my personal reflections on them during a one year period when the LEP transformed from a network to a 'Partnership' in the terms of my definition explained in Chapter 2 (Lowndes et al., 1997). It encompassed a time of profound change for the LEP and the Brookshire sub-region as an accountable Board was introduced to help make the Partnership more efficient and effective

(Carley, 2000). Resolving the make-up of the Partnership Board was also central to overcoming problems of capacity, diversity and conflicting interests (Stewart, 2002). The detailed background was explained in Chapter 1.

What follows is a narrative-style account of this particular phase in the Partnership's life in order to illustrate the dynamic processes and issues of transformation and power responding to the plea that *'theory needs to be sophisticated and sensitive to the micropolitics of power relationships'* (Webb, 1991, page 236).

I have predominantly taken a second-person perspective in this Chapter, listening to the voices of my reflective mentors and interviewees, as well as the documentation the Partnership produced during this key phase of my research. However, in a sense I am also listening to myself as a reflective partnership manager and researcher as I too was a key player since I produced much of the written Partnership documentation and observed and participated in most of the key episodes in the drama. I also reflect on the views and accounts expressed by others, adding my own interpretation where it might add explication. Thus, in this chapter I reveal the data on which the thesis is based in the form of a reflective narrative.

This account is dominated by three decisive events which served to trigger discontinuities in the Partnership that had profound effects on the balance of power within the LEP and the course of transformation:

- the decision by the Small Business Service (SBS) not to accept Business Link Brookshire's (BLB) bid for the franchise to deliver business services in the sub-region
- the decision by the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) to make a bid to the SBS and
- the subsequent decision by the SBS not to accept the LEP's bid.

As I was reading extensively on the theme of partnership whilst conducting the fieldwork for the study I began to focus on the relevance of some of the 'classic' theories of collaboration and partnership referred to in my literature review. In addition themes around aspects of power and transformation began to resonate most closely with the situation I was experiencing within the LEP. I was intrigued by Mackintosh's (1992) view that partnerships are explicitly transformational: a vehicle to change hearts and minds and achieve step change. Hastings (1999) also asserts that transformative relationships are an important expression of power within partnerships and that *'transformation can therefore be understood as an aspect of the micro-politics of power relations within partnership'* (page 92). I was reflecting on the stages of partnership development and transformation the LEP had reached thus far, the transformational and power drivers, and how these might play out during the Board formation phase. This section briefly considers the first two aspects and then in more detail sets the scene for a more detailed account of the key events covered in later sections of this chapter.

Stage in the Partnership Life Cycle

A number of authors as indicated in my literature review posit some form of life cycle for partnerships. These assume some form of cycle or staged progression in a generalized form that partnerships go through, generally resembling a bell curve. In many ways this echoes the familiar 'forming, storming, norming, performing' model often quoted in relation to the development of teams (Tuckman, 1965), with the addition of 'adjourning' (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977).

Chust et al. (1995, pages 65-67) identify four stages in the development of their partnership:

- curiosity and interest
- criticism and competitiveness
- co-operation
- collaboration

In many respects these stages capture the trajectory of the LEP over the course of my involvement with it.

Curiosity and Interest

In the beginning there was a great deal of anticipation and enthusiasm for the new Partnership. It had been *'talked about for 15 years'* according to the second Partnership Chairman, George Patterson, *'but nothing had happened'*. The Partnership was really at that stage a network of senior but not top tier officials from the key partnership agencies whose degree of involvement was variable, voluntary and arbitrary. My employing organization, the TEC, was a major driver through having discretionary resources it could apply to sub-regional partnership and economic development. Thus, in the early days the convening power of the TEC was critical to take-off, along with the carrot for other agencies of obtaining resources for joint projects that would not otherwise have got off the ground. There was thus a degree of resource dependency driving relationships with the TEC and myself at the centre of the collaborative network. There was also a degree of geographical as well as functional legitimacy for the TEC to play this role as it was the only organization with a brief for the whole sub-region and for sub-regional economic development. On the other hand some of the local authorities, and Denbury Council's Chief Executive in particular, were scathing about the TEC's *'democratic deficit'* as it was not locally elected and accountable.

At this stage there was no formal governance machinery in place, although *'plenary'* meetings were held every two months, chaired by the Partnership's first Chairman, John Piper. His was a charismatic style of leadership using charm and wit as a means of holding disparate partners together. On the other hand, in some quarters he was characterised by one conurbation-based partner as part of the Brookshire *'squirearchy'*, reflecting long-standing animosities between conurbation and county that were given political effect by LGR in the mid-1990s. His *'emergence'* as Chairman of the Partnership also generated comment as his appointment was not through any election process. He was self-appointed with the power of the TEC Board, of which he was a

prominent member, backing him. He became the spokesperson for the Partnership in this non-accountable way and although highly articulate, energetic and knowledgeable, his outspoken views almost generated legal action on one occasion when the BCCI took exception to some public remarks suggesting that BCCI was in some way financially supported by BLB. One of my reflective mentors commented on this as follows:

“There were various interventions by John Piper to try to achieve things... I guess the question I have is that, however well intentioned that intervention, was it the right thing in terms of how it was discharged? Because it might have led to people digging in their heels... it probably made people become more entrenched in their positions.”

Mayo (1997) refers to this as the ‘Godfather’ approach to partnership leadership. It was unsustainable, but from my perspective John Piper’s popularity and confidence generated enthusiasm and ambition for the Partnership among its members and was certainly the initial driving force. Clearly, however, his style could be provocative which unfortunately served to confirm to BCCI and BLB that the TEC and LEP were hostile to them.

However, he was not the only first-person power-broker, as in the course of one of my reflective mentor interviews I came to be much more aware of the power I personally was believed to have in effectively managing the affairs of the Partnership as its secretary. I explore this further in Pettigrew (2003) at Pettigrew (2003) and in Chapter 7. Suffice to say that although I was deemed to hold power there was an ambiguity over whether this was personal referent or expert power (French and Raven, 1960) or whether it derived from my ex officio position as a TEC executive director. Certainly, it was revealed to me that partners were uncertain as to whether I spoke and acted on behalf of the TEC or the LEP. On reflection I was not sure myself on whose precise behalf I acted. This led me to pursue the extent to which people and organizations co-identify within a partnership, a topic I explore in more detail in Chapter 6. Thus, there was a degree of naiveté about the Partnership in its network phase which I dubbed the *Creation* phase of transformation. It was driven by curiosity and interest and first- and second-person power/leadership mechanisms that

generated goodwill between John Piper, myself and the other practitioners and Partners.

Criticism and Competitiveness

The second phase of transformation, as explained in Chapter 1, derived from a complex set of circumstances internal and external to the Partnership and accords with Chust's 'criticism and competitiveness' stage in the partnership life cycle, and my *Recognition* phase of partnership transformation.

This was a period of critical introspection by a group of self-appointed Partnership organizations called the 'Don Watson Group' (DWG) which set themselves up very much at a political level. This was in response to major changes to the way in which the New Labour Government intended to deliver learning and business advice in the country, signalling the demise of the TEC and the rise of the RDA and subsequently the local LSC and NBL. This Group was ostensibly pondering the role of the Partnership in the new organizational landscape and how it should restructure itself to strategically influence the new organizations coming on stream. Tom Wills, Chief Executive of the TEC, recalls the real reason for the Group being set up:

'The Group met 3 or 4 times. It was Chatham House rules, so there were no minutes of what was said. The interesting thing was, there was very little disagreement in these Working Group meetings... Everyone knew where they wanted to get to, it was just a matter of 'how'. The two objectives were to, firstly, position the Partnership in relation to the putative local LSC and new Business Link Franchise, and the more immediate purpose (which was the real driver), was to find a way in which BLB could be authorised to produce the SBS bid on behalf of the Partnership that balanced BLB's desire to make the bid, and the LEP's desire that the bid should reflect the views of the wider Partnership if it was to achieve its blessing'.

In my perception, however, the setting up of the DWG served to paralyse the work and confidence of the Partnership for four months. Its main instigators were senior representatives of the BCCI, BLB and the LAs although the TEC was invited at Chief Executive level. There was a strong suspicion among

many Partners that this was a deliberate attempt on the one hand to slow the rapid transformational process of the Partnership as it was a threat to existing vested interests; yet, on the other an attempt to 'politicize' the LEP and for the self-appointed 'key organizations' to hijack the Partnership process for their own ends. I personally felt excluded, made worse by the fact that their meetings were clothed in secrecy operating under Chatham House rules. It seemed to me the antithesis of good partnership behaviour, yet as Stewart (2002) reports, this is not an unusual occurrence in large partnerships.

The Partnership had done well hitherto to create an umbrella under which all the members could work and, at a lower level, ignore the 'bad blood' between organizations and individuals that had dogged inter-organizational relations in the sub-region over many years. It seemed that these 'key' organizations fed off their animosity and did not want to lose power to third parties in the form of the RDA, the putative LSC, perhaps a NBL, and the Partnership itself.

This cabal of organizations and individuals thus reacted to a mutual threat to preserve their interests in the form similar to that described in the Literature Review as a 'regime'. Their power stemmed from the size and financial clout of their organizations to some extent, but not exclusively. The BCCI and BLB, for example, had a combined budget of no more than £3m compared to around the TEC's £25m and literally hundreds of millions in the case of the primary local authorities. Their power stemmed from their overtly political behaviour as organizations and individuals. They operated under a single Chief Executive to the extent that parallels were drawn between Sinn Fein and the provisional IRA. They were very largely composed of people who were senior in the private sector, and it was clear from comments made to me by the Chief Executive that they did not want to have their influence diluted by 'junior' members of the Partnership such as the District Councils of Brookshire and the community/voluntary sector. They were also rabidly anti TEC. The degree of internal conflict prior to this stage was substantial. Tom Wills reflected on his experience thus:

“(A) major issue was the degree of animosity that existed within the business community, which was defined as Brookshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), Brookshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and Business Link Brookshire (BLB). When I first became involved I didn’t realise the depth of animosity between and within the organisations: it was much greater than I’d realised. But the perception among the majority was that the animosity was worse than it was, and because of that, it was worse.”

He also pointed to the rawness of relationships between the local authorities:

“There was a lot of angst amongst the local authorities; both inter-angst and intra-angst. There was also a difficult issue about whether they ought to be part of one region or another and that has intensified. Then there was also Local Government Re-organisation (LGR), which created or festered existing tensions between the conurbation (Chilton and Denbury) and the county (Brookshire).”

Thus, the DWG drew together powerful factions in an alliance that reasserted the power of the ‘old guard’ but did not put an end to the historic strife between the organizations. Their animosity and suspicion was merely contained in dynamic equilibrium within the DWG, which eventually ran out of steam when key players such as the Chief Executive of DBC threatened to resign because of a perceived lack of progress. Certainly, on the issue of the SBS bid and balancing the desire for independence by BLB against the need for a partnership approach, nothing was resolved.

Looking back, however, this phase in the life of the Partnership was very significant. The LEP became the subject of intense debate and dialogue, a crucible of uncertainty, conflict, and controversy that signalled that it had arrived on the sub-regional political scene as a new and potentially powerful player. I christened this the T₂ transformation – a clear *recognition* by even the most cynical observers and participants who had hitherto dismissed or underestimated the Partnership, that it represented a new vehicle for locally determined sub-regional self-expression. It was recognised that it had the potential for the first time to unite previously distrustful factions or at least a

forum where constructive dialogue could take place, and provide a basis on which a shared reality could be constructed, despite what I have called '*the shadows of the past*', fraught pre-Partnership relationships that served to poison future hope and aspiration (Vickers, 1983).

Co-operation and Collaboration

There had been good co-operation and collaboration below political level throughout the life of the Partnership. I interpret these stages to imply co-operation and collaboration among the top players in the Partner organizations and a more democratic and systematic approach to resolving Partnership issues. Signs emerged at the end of the *Recognition* phase of transformation that a formula had been found upon which the 'key Partners' could agree on taking the corporate governance of the Partnership forward on a more accountable and representative basis. Recognition of the need to establish proper corporate governance was a crucial step towards discussions on the appropriate constitution of the LEP and form of incorporation. The decision to establish a Board was made, and this was John Piper's final achievement before handing over to George Patterson as Chairman.

The *Board formation* phase of transformation was concerned with three main inter-connected themes, which form the structure for the rest of this chapter:

- The transformation of the Partnership through the creation of a Board and thereby the introduction of a form of corporate governance.
- The process by which two failed bids were made (one from BLB on behalf of the Partnership and one by the LEP itself) to obtain the contract to provide services for small businesses from the SBS.
- The aftermath of these events and the impact on the LEP.

Towards Board formation

Personal Agency

My own role in this final phase of the research was important. As Partnership Manager, I was a de facto agent of change. I was consciously trying to drive a process of transformation that would create a confident, outward looking, respected and powerful Partnership. My aims for the Partnership at the beginning were ambitious. This went beyond the idea of one organization transforming another (Mackintosh, 1992) or even 'mutual transformation' (Hastings, 1999). I was interested in whether I could influence the LEP to reframe the way it considered the Partnership and the sub-region with a new shared identity. Ultimately, this would see its apotheosis in the LEP's transforming attitudes to economic development in the sub-region, with a clear vision and strategy, the means of implementing it via the LEP and its constituent members and a strong political profile in the region and sub-region.

I developed a close and cordial working relationship with the LEP's prospective new Chairman, George Patterson, who was the Chief Executive of a multinational engineering company based in the area as well as the Chair of the TEC and therefore my employer in another guise. This was helpful in the sense that we shared a 'TEC' view of the world, but problematic in the sense that some partners, particularly CBC and DBC, would come to see our relationship as representing the TEC trying to dictate the development of the Partnership rather than as neutral brokers.

Our aim was to help establish an accountable, 'political' top tier of governance for the Partnership. This would be a democratic decision-making body (a representative Board) transcending the individual Partners, and dealing with the main, strategic issues. It would try to maintain and develop the pre-Board network of Partners contributing to the spirit and purpose of the LEP. It would try to avoid, however, the 'cast of thousands' problem at previous Partnership meetings during the *Creation* and *Recognition* phases when it was impossible to debate and decide on issues with so many attending, often 25 to 40 people.

At these meetings, top tier executives would be present alongside third and sometimes even fourth tier, and organizational representatives would change with every meeting making continuity extremely difficult.

The advantage of this highly collegial arrangement (Greiner and Schein, 1988) was that participants from Partner organizations were able to be involved in a multi-layered way, making contributions upwardly and horizontally and be involved first-hand regarding the issues being debated. It gave the Partnership a democratic, if slightly chaotic feel, and helped expose the Partnership to participants who would otherwise have only a distant relationship with it. The learning that was being experienced was confirmed both by Partnership surveys I undertook, the latter of which during the Board formation phase is reported in the following chapter. In particular, there was an evident enthusiasm from some of the officers of the 6 District Councils that made up Brookshire, as they felt the Partnership gave them the opportunity to think and operate strategically and have a closer involvement with the other agencies and the private sector.

However, the disadvantage was that meetings could be long and rambling, with slow progress as virtually every angle on every issue from a variety of perspectives were aired. Decisions on action and ways forward tended to be provoked by John Piper or myself in an attempt to crystallize discussion and come to conclusions, or for example through some external trigger such as a deadline for the Partnership to respond to the RDA on a particular issue or consultation. As with most partnerships there was a need to reorganise on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness, but at some cost to inclusivity (Carley, 2000). What we had was a network with very little hierarchy and a pluralistic/political modus operandi in Greiner and Schein's (op. cit.) terms. It was, however, a lively, enjoyable milieu in which to operate, invigorated by 'a *light touch of anarchy*' (Feyerabend, 1975, page 20).

The Chairman knew that the Partnership would only be taken seriously if it had the support of the top people in the key agencies drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. I too saw this as an essential element that would help

create transformation in the Partnership from a loose network of officials working with goodwill across organizational (and sometimes professional) boundaries, to an incorporated interorganizational Partnership with its own Board, constitution, functions and processes. This would have real clout within the sub-region, as well as externally – particularly with the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and Regional Government Office (RGO). Thus, it was inevitable that hierarchy became factored into the network and a more traditional governance approach instituted in order to sharpen the direction setting and strategic capability of the Partnership.

Setting up the Board

Ironically, the decision to set up a Board was made at a Plenary Partnership meeting, which focused on how the DWG work should be taken forward. This was an important development for me because I was asked to arrange a special sub-group meeting, which meant I could kick start the stalled Partnership machine, which had been interrupted for around 4 months while the DWG considered the future role of the Partnership. We had to come up with a formula for the construction of a Board that would gain the approval of all the Partners and provide a platform for the future development of the Partnership. For me this was the golden opportunity to get the LEP back on a transformational trajectory and to overcome, as I saw it then, the wrecking tactics of those organizations and individuals bent on preserving the status quo and their vested interests. It also allowed me to re-engage with key Partners such as the Chief Executives of Brookshire and Chilton Councils, who were keen to see progress in the democratization of the Partnership, and who of course were expert in managing their own Councils and Committees. Being involved closely in shaping the process of who should be involved in the Board gave the sub-group and me a powerful role (Huxham, 2003b) and I was determined to make the most of it after feeling on the margins of power for so long. An excerpt from my reflections after the meeting is shown below:

I am really pleased that we reached a positive result in our meeting. It started off with a vaguely negative, desultory air, but once I stood up and took charge of the flip chart and began to facilitate the meeting, encouraging contributions and capturing them faithfully, we soon built up confidence that we could work things out. I am sure if I hadn't taken on a purposive pose we would have convinced ourselves that it was all too difficult and referred it back to the Plenary. I was deliberately up-beat and enthusiastic, and because I had given the issue a lot of thought prior to the meeting, I was able to shape the discussion whilst seeming to extemporize. I think I am just happy to be back in action again following the DWG hiatus.

The structure agreed at the Sub-Group meeting was as follows:

Local Authorities: John Lawson (BCC + District Councils)
(4 representatives) Graham Styles (BCC + District Councils)
Barry Cowans (BDC)
Bill Cowdrey (CBC)

Private Sector: Gary Yeading (CBI)
(4 representatives) Robert Hastings (BCCI)
Gordon Walsh (BCCI)
George Patterson (IoD)

(Nominated via the Brookshire Business Forum: a private sector umbrella group)

Key Interests: Rod Davenport (Further Education, FE)
(4 representatives) Geraldine Tiler (Higher Education, HE)
Sean Avery (Trades Union Congress, TUC)
Sue Hardwicke (Voluntary Sector)

The significance of the structure was the acceptance by the LAs of two seats for Brookshire County Council to match two for the conurbation, one for each of CBC and DBC. The Brookshire Business Forum (BBF) also agreed its representation relatively easily, although there was no place for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), at its own request, because of the threat of a DTI investigation into its affairs at national level. This meant that Madge Bottomley, my Chair of the Enterprise and Regeneration Committee at the TEC, could not

take up an ex officio place on behalf of the FSB. This strengthened the BCCI/BLB representation and simultaneously reduced the TEC's influence. In order to counteract these moves, behind the scenes Tom Willis and I helped to install Gary Yeading, the TEC's Deputy Chairman, as the CBI's Brookshire representative to fill a long-standing vacancy. This gave Gary the opportunity to be nominated by the CBI as the Brookshire Business Forum (BBF) representative on the Board. In this rather underhand way we were able to balance the private sector representation from the two distinct and rival 'camps'. It was a classic piece of 'backstaging' (Buchanan and Badham, 1999) and can be regarded as a clever move or unethical depending on one's point of view.

Agreement on the structure of the Board was a major step forward for the Partnership following so soon after the decision to set up a Board. I felt we were going places, especially as (principally at the suggestion of the Brookshire County Council Chief Executive) the agreed structure left no place for either of the main adversaries, the TEC and BLB. I knew that the TEC would be content for this to be the case, as it had its Chair and Deputy on the Board and knew that it would be going out of business in any case (see Chapter 1), but less so BLB as it would have only one direct representative via a BCCI nomination. Even although Betty Kitchener, the BLB and BCCI Chief Executive, was present at the meeting, the recommendation from the sub-group went forward and was approved by the Board and the LEP Plenary Group at their next meetings.

The agreement on the formula for the Partnership Board was a momentous achievement as it meant that a significant transformational threshold had been reached. On reflection this was achieved because in the first place the Partnership had gone through a period of reflection that had actually strengthened the identification felt towards it by previous sceptics. This was a lesson to me as I was far too impatient to achieve transformational potential without recognizing that other key Partners needed time to understand what the Partnership was about and where it should be going. In going through this process, power had become distributed throughout the main protagonists, who

were now making key contributions, not least because John Piper had already signalled his intention to resign the Partnership chair. Charismatic leadership was giving way to a more democratically-based form of leadership and a greater degree of hierarchy (see Armistead et al (2004)).

First Board Meeting

I decided not to attend the inaugural Board Meeting as it was up to the new Board to decide the support it required, although I did convene a prior Strategy Sub-Group meeting to try to identify the key priorities and issues the Partners wanted the Board to address. There was invariably a good, workmanlike, positive atmosphere at LEP network meetings because we were all at officer rather than political level, and all of us wanted the LEP to succeed. This meeting was, in fact, a good example of when the Partnership seemed to be at its best, in an emergent, brainstorming fashion with no constraining rules to hamper creativity. I reflected that this was because we were behaving in the old networking manner. I had striven behind the scenes to help create a new more formal governance structure for the Partnership and now wondered whether working within the LEP at a more formal political level would be more effective in establishing the Partnership on the sub-regional and regional stage. I hoped that I would be asked to become Secretary to the new Board following its first meeting. This would give me the opportunity to continue to influence the direction of the LEP, which I increasingly came to regard as 'my baby', probably unhelpfully as matters eventually turned out.

In the event the first Board Meeting went off like a damp squib. Matters were not helped by George Patterson's absence from the meeting at which he was to take over the chair from John Piper. The absence of key people at key occasions can hamper partnership events as much as changes in personnel through staff changes (Huxham and Vangen, 2000a). In addition, on reflection the Agenda was too ambitious and daunting for the new Board, which needed time to find its feet before dealing with substantive issues. It would have been better if there had been an open agenda to encourage a dialogue among the Board members so that they articulated their views and feelings about the role

of the Partnership. However, I still believed that the lack of progress at the meeting was also at least partly down to a lack of confidence and conviction among the Board Members themselves.

The contributions to the meeting as minuted suggested a distinct lack of belief in the Partnership. There was a particular irony that whilst most Partners espoused a desire in creating '*a strong partnership*' this had to be without any risk to the status and independence of individual Partners. The Chief Executive of Chilton Borough Council David Norton's comments illustrated this lack of confidence very well. He demonstrated a clear unwillingness even to shape the LEP into something his Council might value. He reserved Chilton's position regarding its relationship with the Partnership. Because of the close relationship between Chilton and Denbury Borough Councils representing conurbation interests and a desire to link with a neighbouring region rather than the one they were in, this was serious. It was a demonstration of the ambiguous attitude of some key Partners, and an evident passiveness – a 'wait and see' rather than a 'shape and mould' approach.

It was all the more galling as David was positive and perceptive in the Working Group meeting that had agreed the Board structure in the first place. Of course the first Board meeting was a highly visible political event as opposed to a Working Group and the messages changed accordingly and quite radically in tone. I could see that my role would have to be played out at this level from now on. Informality, fun and enthusiasm were going to be in short supply with this new political level of governance, whose lifeblood was based on gesture and posture. I knew I was going to have to find a way to keep the Partnership on track that depended more on playing the game according to the rules of political corporate governance.

Judging from the minutes, it is clear that David came to the Board Meeting (as do so many politicians and their senior advisers) with a pre-prepared 'line', and I suspected that this position was agreed beforehand with Jonathan Ball, Chief Executive of Denbury Borough Council. I could not see what threat the LEP could pose to the local authorities as there was no remit spoken or unspoken to

water down or replace proper democratic accountabilities. Of course David's fears went beyond these immediate concerns. Some 12 months before he had made it clear that he was not in favour of any 'pan Brookshire' political institution that might lead inexorably to Chilton 'going back into the County'. Nevertheless, when viewed through the perspective of history and the extremely difficult period of LGR that had done so much to sour relationships between conurbation and county, I had some sympathy with those whose views and fears he represented and reflected again on how the 'shadows of the past' serve to haunt relationships and limit future possibilities.

My frustrations in my reflective notes on the inaugural Board Meeting are still palpable as I look back on them:

I was expecting a sense of historic occasion, a sense of pride in their roles as representatives of the Brookshire sub-region, and a sense of mission. Where is their faith? It was not exactly high risk in my book to show some faith in our collective ability to configure our way towards the goals we shared. This did not involve giving up anything, just a willingness to look above the parapet, putting a line under the past and going forward with a new confidence and direction. However, it seems that they have a fear of the unknown and a degree of inertia, mistrust and doubt. For the Board's first meeting, this is deeply disappointing. In my own mind this was a transformational threshold, a significant rite de passage that ought to have been a cause for optimism, but instead contrived to turn into an inauspicious start to the brave new world of partnership governance...hardly a confident message to send out to Partners!

One of the main reasons for this was the dominating role in the meeting of the local authorities. They were unsure of their mandate to be representing their elected members on the Board and the legality of decisions made in a Partnership meeting that were the proper responsibility of elected councils. There was also an issue for the County Council which, for the first time since LGR, was taking on a strategic role on behalf of its constituent District Councils. The domination of the meeting by the LAs on procedural issues was testament to the 'parish-pump' nature of the discussion.

Despite all these feelings of discomfort, at least the Board had met and would continue so to do. There would be other occasions to build a sub-regional view of strategy, priorities and action. An important milestone had been reached in the Partnership's development which would have been unthinkable less than a year before, and was a remarkable achievement given the fraught circumstances out of which it emerged.

Despite strong efforts on my part to help get the Board off to a flying start, the first few steps were, therefore, faltering and frustrating. I produced a set of option papers which I considered to be a really professional piece of work, but at a meeting of a Board Sub-Group following the first Board meeting they were received with rather less enthusiasm than I would have expected. My reflections on the meeting are summed up by my conclusion after the meeting:

"I feel at the end of this meeting a profound sense of disappointment that the Sub-Group failed to grasp some of the key issues... they showed no enthusiasm... the meeting was all about the two gladiators, Gordon Walsh (Deputy Chairman of BLB) and George Patterson (Chairman of the LEP)... and carefully avoiding any conflict." I went on to reflect: "...at least I am... bringing the key protagonists together... talking about important issues... some learning has taken place, and I hope through more interactions... we can begin to break down the barriers to transformation.

Clearly, the internal politics between the Partners was going to have to be worked through before minds could be concentrated on higher-level strategy. Playing out this tense game was going to be their first priority, i.e. not being seen to give or take too much, especially in the early stages of the engagement. There were strong interpersonal tensions between George and Gordon, reflecting the history of animosity between the two camps – BLB/BCCI and TEC/FSB/loD. Whilst BLB was still hoping to be awarded the SBS franchise it was keen to keep the LEP in support but at arm's length as it sought to retain its prized, but increasingly fragile, independence. Gordon's power base was rooted in the private sector and therefore with the BLB/BCCI nexus and the extent to which this could continue depended on the outcome of BLB's bid for the franchise.

There was little I could do in this situation to help resolve the issues, other than hoping that through a dialogical process barriers would be broken down eventually. I was reminded of Axelrod's (1984) thesis in describing the Prisoners' Dilemma that the chances of defection receded the longer and more frequent the interaction. If we could sustain the Partnership Board as a forum for these interactions, I hoped, the chances were greater that beneficial 'tit for tat' predictable, positive exchanges would occur, thus building sufficient trust to carry the Partnership forward without necessarily burying the hatchet which almost visibly still lay on the surface. The 'gladiators' were quite deliberately skirting round their differences rather than confronting them, but could they continue to ignore the issues between them for the sake of the greater Partnership good?

Bid and Bid Again

BLB Bids

The announcement of a shake-up in the way Government provided business support services had also triggered much discussion if only superficial collaboration among Partners. The Partnership had rather crept up on the blind side of BLB. They couldn't ignore it once it had established credibility during the *Recognition* phase. Its chairman, Martin Beamish; Deputy Chairman, Gordon Walsh; and Chief Executive, Betty Kitchener, were determined that BLB would not defer to LEP under any circumstances. BLB wanted to make a bid to continue delivering business services under contract to the SBS. This had triggered tensions in the Partnership, as the other Partners felt that the Partnership should have a strong say in framing the bid. Tom Wills, Chief Executive of the TEC, recalled clearly the meeting that resulted in the setting up of the DWG, where battle lines were drawn:

"The Key Partners' meeting took place with Robert Hastings of BCCI in the chair. Gordon Walsh, Martin Beamish and Betty Kitchener represented the Link; George Patterson, Gary Yeading and myself represented the TEC. Jonathan Ball and Dai Jones represented the LAs (David Norton didn't turn up, but Jonathan said he could speak for Chilton). The meeting was very difficult. BLB

wanted control of the SBS franchise. Martin Beamish made it crystal clear that he didn't want, and wouldn't have, the LEP coming between BLB and the SBS. He wanted a direct relationship with the SBS, so the Partnership should butt out. Otherwise, he claimed, the LEP would just be performing the current intermediary role of the TEC, for which there was no need or justification".

"George Patterson countered that there had to be accountability and control by a wider constituency than the BLB Board. It wasn't just about financing the Business Link through an intermediary. No one gave a fig about that. But if Government wanted a Partnership bid and a Partnership approach, BLB would have to accept that a different form of governance would be required. This need not mean operational interference. But it did mean fitting in with the SBS's wider view of the role of BLs, and the LEP's strategy, which was itself wide-ranging. In other words, George was saying that BLB had to be a genuine part of the Partnership. It was obvious that Martin Beamish and George Patterson didn't see eye to eye... I remember there was floridness on the faces of both sides. Then Robert concluded – and this was already planned because Robert had had a pre-meeting with George – by proposing the setting up of a Working Party to move the pantechicon forward. Don Watson was proposed as the Chair on behalf of the LEP, and everyone agreed. It was the only way that the stalemate could be handled, and this is what George and Robert had obviously planned and anticipated".

Following a long period in which the DWG debated the issues, the compromise position began to emerge that BLB would prepare the bid for the SBS franchise, and consult with Partners. The LEP meantime would endorse the bid going forward to the SBS. This seemed to satisfy BLB's desire for independence and the status quo, and the LEP's desire to see BLB's strategy and activities within the local economic strategic context.

Subsequently, as BLB pressed ahead under its own steam, many of the Partners felt they were being treated perfunctorily by BLB in the process of making its bid. Not only were its consultations rushed and superficial, but the draft was subject to a very limited circulation and points made by consultees to improve the document failed to be translated into subsequent drafts. Offers by Partnership members, including myself, to help write the bid were eschewed by BLB. They were falsely confident that producing a perfunctory bid and being

seen to have consulted rather than having sought participative support would be enough to guarantee success. There seemed to be a belief within BLB that the bidding process would simply confirm BLB as the SBS's contractor in the sub-region and there was no need to put together a professional bid. Tom Willis reflected as follows:

"The trouble was that BLB did not handle the SBS bid properly. So when they asked for letters of support from Partners they didn't get one letter. They didn't consult meaningfully based on drafts; they just had a number of workshops. It was consultation, but not participation. In the end, of course, BLB submitted the bid without Partners' being given a chance to comment or input, so it wasn't surprising they could not get letters of support."

When in difficulty or need BLB had always relied on a 'Political' fix, which could be achieved through its Chairman, Martin Beamish, who was a retired senior civil servant who reputedly still wielded influence in Whitehall. The Partnership chairman, John Piper, with the agreement of the primary local authority Chief Executives¹, had agreed to provide a statement at the beginning of BLB's bid that actually supported BLB's making the bid, as opposed to supporting the bid itself. This was a subtle, but important, distinction, but was enough to allow BLB to claim in its submission that its bid enjoyed LEP support. The politics of tact or conflict avoidance had forced John Piper to become an apologist for BLB's bid, and the primary local authority Chief Executives, who were persuaded to draft the statement, were similarly compromised. It was clear that important decisions were being made on behalf of the Partnership by just a few influential personalities/ organizations.

This statement, signed by John Piper and drafted by the three Primary LA Chief Executives, was a clever piece of diplomacy but its disingenuousness had a negative effect on the Partnership as many Partners felt that it pandered to the requirements of a small cabal whose interests lay solely in obtaining the SBS franchise rather than strengthening ties with the Partnership at strategic level. The text of the statement, drawn largely from the report of the DWG, is set out in the box below.

¹ Brookshire County Council, Chilton Borough Council and Denbury Borough Council

The LEP is conducting a review in light of a range of circumstances which provide an opportunity for change and improvement.

It is recognised that there is interdependence with the more urban and more rural areas and this demonstrates the need to work together to realise the aspirations of the area.

Given that, and the developing role of the Regional Development Agency and its declared preference to deal with sub-regional partnerships, the time is right to review and refresh existing arrangements.

The loose Partnership that has existed in the past is regarded as not sufficient now. Great efforts are being made to create a Partnership which can unite the SBS franchisee and the LSC and other key Partners which need to be dealt with in a sub-regional basis. These include for example European issues and inward investment.

It is hoped that existing expertise in Economic Development, European funding, Bid Writing and Research will support the core Board and inform SBS and LSC bidding and business planning.

There is now general agreement between the Partners that a reinforced Partnership should take on these issues, and although further progress needs to be made, it is on its way. We are all aware of the need to contribute to and support the concept of spirit of partnership.

There is an enthusiasm to ensure that the work of SBS and LSC activities are firmly linked to the needs and strategy of the sub-region. Therefore the discussions about the future of the Partnership have been undertaken with that thought firmly in mind.

The clear objective is to form a core Partnership Board supported by an assembly of all Partners and which will provide the core of each of the SBS franchisee and Learning and Skills Council Boards.

Such a core Partnership Board will relate externally to the Regional Development Agency and other key players while enabling and ensuring both SBS and LSC support for the sub-regional economic development strategy.

The strength of such a revitalised Partnership will be that as opportunities arise, the appropriate Partner can take the lead and be supported in the principle by the whole Partnership and in particular by individual appropriate Partners.

It is within this concept that Business Link Brookshire submits this bid for the SBS franchise in Chilton, Brookshire and Denbury.

All this statement really achieved as far as many onlookers were concerned was to paper over the cracks of the fraught relationship between the BLB/BCCI faction and the rest of the LEP members. Many key Partners were very unhappy that BLB had made a submission that the Partnership as a whole did not support, were not asked to support, and which was of very poor quality. A number of key agencies, particularly at my level, felt let down not only by BLB but also by their organizational leaders who were likened to tergiversators in the process. The BLB argument went that until the LEP Board was formed there could be no definitive mandate from the Partnership. Therefore, in the context of a major change process in the governance of LEP, BLB was making the bid on its own behalf, but with the support of the Partnership. This was a clever exploitation of the fact that there was no recognized, accountable or agreed form of governance for the LEP at that time. It also highlighted, of course, the need to set up a system of accountable governance as soon as possible. Nonetheless, the fact that there was no formal decision-making Board for the Partnership did not stop BLB from asking for the LEP's approval of its making the bid (via the LEP Chairman, thus reconfirming his 'Godfather' status), and then to suggest it had approved its submission.

Many Partners were amazed that not only was the Partnership not asked to approve the bid, but even when it was submitted it received only limited circulation, largely to those organisations considered 'friendly' to BLB. It was even marked: *'Private and Confidential: Restricted Circulation'*, which hardly transmitted a genuinely wide collaborative effort let alone a partnership spirit. The statement was also undated to give the impression that it was co-terminus with approval of the final submission when in fact it had been written before anyone in the Partnership had seen or had the opportunity to comment on the bid. Skulduggery was clearly at work.

Many in the Partnership felt that it was being used by BLB, and that the LEP's reputation would be tarnished in the eyes of the RDA and RGO by being seen to support a clearly untenable and desultory proposal, and one that was designed to preserve the status quo, something which we knew was definitely not on the Government's agenda. In a sense BLB's overtly political behaviour

was entirely at odds not only with local sensibilities but also with the prevailing regional and national Political context. Furthermore, they clearly did not foresee any possible unintended consequences of their actions, possibly because there was an underlying confidence that these would be 'handled' by Martin Beamish.

Partly I saw the new Partnership Board acting as an ameliorating influence on BLB/BCCI, helping them work in partnership with the other organisations, and to reduce the threat many Partners believed they posed to the coherence of the LEP. I also hoped that if and when BLB won the SBS contract, the Partnership Board could yet exert some 'strategic' if not controlling, influence on BLB to re-align its style and modus operandi to the needs of LEP and the sub-regional strategy. I was not alone in this view as it was shared with my reflective mentors and other key people in the LEP and it was an issue that the DWG failed to resolve.

On the same day the Partnership Sub-Group met to discuss the role and purpose of the Partnership Board, Donald Unwin, Chief Executive of the SBS, wrote to Betty Kitchener to inform her that BLB's bid had been unsuccessful, and that the franchise would now be opened up to competition. A BLB press release claimed quite clearly but disingenuously that the bid had the support of the LEP, which infuriated the other Partners. It now appeared that not only had BLB failed, but, by association, the Partnership also. Betty and her team (notably not including any Board Members) met the RGO Director, Tom Slater, four days later to receive a fuller explanation of why the bid had failed. Partners had not seen the Unwin letter by that stage, even though its author had specifically asked that it be shared with the Partnership. I did eventually receive a copy by fax having spoken to an RGO official on the telephone. This was hardly the behaviour of trusted Partners and such dissembling did little to generate any sympathy for BLB's plight among the membership.

My conversation with the official was revealing. I shared a note of the conversation with George Patterson, Gary Yeading and Tom Wills. In essence, the official told me that BLB's bid had failed 'spectacularly' and was considered

the worst in the region, and probably the whole of England. In addition Betty's behaviour at the presentation had not found favour with the Panel. Her meeting with Tom Slater had apparently been close to boiling point, with her citing various 'political reasons', rather than the quality of the bid itself, as the 'real' reason for its failure to impress the Panel.

From the minute I heard the decision, I was disappointed as I realized this could mean the first step in the sub-region losing control of its Business Link, yet also vindicated following the critical views of the vast majority of the Partners. I was concerned about the negative reputational impact of a bid apparently endorsed by the LEP failing so badly. This feeling was shared by my reflective mentors, but more in sorrow than *Schadenfreude* at BLB's and LEP's misjudgment. One of my reflective mentors, sometime after the outcome of BLB's bid for the SBS franchise was known, expressed his feelings thus:

"The circumstances that led to BLB producing and submitting their bid were unfortunate. They were determined to go their own way, and lobbied hard to get the Partnership to support them. Clearly the senior Partners bent over backwards to avoid confrontation with the BLB Board, but it's backfired on them both now. Chickens have come home to roost."

There was now, it seemed, an obvious opportunity for the LEP to step in and submit (or more proactively be allowed to assist the submission of) a second bid, albeit against open competition. This possibility was immediately confirmed (unprompted) by the RGO official, who said *"Government Office would wish to support a bid coming from the Partnership. We want a bid that fits the needs of the Brookshire sub-region."*

This was as strong a signal as you could wish for from a Civil Servant. My immediate reaction to the conversation was that if the Partnership were to submit a decent bid, it would have an excellent chance of succeeding. I suggested in a note to George Patterson that the LEP should now announce publicly that it would be making a bid for the SBS franchise in the second round. This would hopefully ward off external predators and encourage members of the Partnership that all was not lost and that the LEP could come

to the sub-region's rescue by submitting its own bid to keep the franchise in the sub-region. This would also signal a significant shift in the balance of power within the LEP as the Partnership would now in effect invite BLB and BCCI to join in a Partnership-led bid. If BLB was going to survive it now needed the weight and resource of the LEP to win the second round bid. BLB had now become dependent on the Partnership for its future existence - a classic *raison d'être* for partnership formation and development: dependency, with the resource being potential access to political favour from Government.

If BLB said 'no' to support for an LEP bid, it knew that it could not possibly compete on its own against a Partnership bid. Furthermore, not supporting an LEP bid would ruin the Partnership's chances of securing the franchise, open up the certainty of external control of the service, and extinguish the slight chance of maintaining its own identity within the Partnership umbrella. So, their only option would be to agree to an LEP bid with BLB's support, and accept that this was their only hope of survival.

My note to the LEP Chairman, George Patterson, also suggested that this latter option would be anathema to Martin Beamish, who I knew would not easily accept, as he would see it, BLB's playing a subservient or subsidiary role to the LEP in a second bidding process. I also reported to George encouraging noises from the local authorities in favour of a Partnership bid, although they reported they would need time to take their Councils with them through due processes. I hoped this would not be too difficult to manage, but in a complex intersectoral partnership the barriers to expeditious decision-making are multiplied by the number of partners, particularly when these are democratic institutions, with their own complex and often politically fraught governance processes to navigate.

By the time that a detailed feedback letter had been sent to Betty by Tom Slater it became clear to me that this was a golden opportunity for the Partnership to seize the initiative and construct its own bid. I could immediately see that a successful Partnership bid would give it new confidence and an operationally important function in an area where I felt existing effort was

inadequate, and which would complement its strategic role. I thought we could 'fast-track' the transformational process, and drive through some of the Governance issues that were not being tackled expediently by the Board. Clearly, the BLB power-base had been badly shelled, and this would transform the balance of power within the Partnership more strongly towards the TEC/FSB/loD/LA/ TUC/voluntary sector. It would also strengthen George's hand relative to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of BLB, thus allowing the early period of the Board's existence to be characterized rather less like 'walking on egg shells' towards a more confident and strident approach.

There was an immediately beneficial impact of the SBS decision not to accept BLB's proposal on the level of optimism and enthusiasm at the Board's next meeting. Although still somewhat uncertain, the Board was keen that the LEP should play *'a very significant role on behalf of the sub-region'* (actual minute). The Board was still very much feeling its way, but this decision showed the way the wind was blowing and for my part it provided confirmation of the value of now having corporate governance machinery in place. The structural power of the Partnership was beginning to hold sway and, with the assistance of the RGO and SBS, could now tackle the political power of BLB and BCCI.

The key discussion was, of course, about BLB's bid failure. It was obvious that BLB still didn't seem to understand, or want to understand, the implications of the decision. They still thought that they could simply re-submit, but against a damning indictment of the bid by the RGO and SBS, this would not be an option. I saw this at the time as *'a golden opportunity to put the Partnership on the map, hasten its development, and catalyse transformational change'*. I believed that a second bid by BLB was 'doomed' because I knew that the RGO simply would be highly unlikely to accept BLB's continuing as before under the new SBS approach. I also suspected that the RGO's patience with BLB had finally run out.

I am still not sure exactly why the decision not to accept BLB's bid was made. Clearly, if SBS/RGO were of a mind to fail BLB, the Link gave them the perfect excuse by submitting such a poor bid. However, both my TEC Boss, Tom

Wills, and Betty Kitchener were in no doubt that the decision had been made in advance of the bid, and reasons for its failure subsequently manufactured to justify the decision. I was unsure whether this was true or not. The bid was so poor that the Panel had every right to reject it. If, however, a good bid had been submitted, would it still have been failed? Either way I didn't see a way back for BLB, which was subsequently proved to be the correct prognosis. In any case, I was now keen for the LEP Board to resolve quickly to decide on a Partnership bid.

It was fascinating to observe the progressive realisation during the course of that second Board meeting that a second BLB bid was not an option. It was an emergent, consensus based on reinterpretation of Tom Slater's letter. It demonstrated the worth of having a Board in place to deal with the difficult issues, as well as opportunities, arising from within the Partnership. The Board members were not just reading the words, but seeking interpretation and reinterpretation of what the writer, an adept 'Sir Humphrey' civil servant, was really saying 'between the lines'. I was interested to hear the Board Members make meaning based on the language and tone of the communication (Weick, 1995). The message was said to be 'clear': a second BLB bid would not be welcome and would not succeed. Gordon Walsh visibly paled as he reluctantly had to concede that this was indeed the only conclusion to be sensibly drawn from the letter. His and Betty's states of denial were shattered as a new consensus replaced their previous misconstrued interpretation of the situation. The Board had done its job in reframing that reality to one that allowed progress to be made. My reflections were as follows:

Having done so well to debate the issues and getting close to the obvious decision to agree the LEP's making the second bid, the good work was then undone by the Local Authorities. Despite being the most in favour of a LEP bid they persuaded themselves and the rest of the Board to set up a Working Group to recommend a course of action to the Board, and then embarrass everyone else present by an extended discourse on membership of the Group. After the meeting I was able to secure an immediate date for the Working Group, the next working day, and volunteers who were available and wanted to participate were invited to attend. At least no time would be lost, and I would have the opportunity of influencing the outcome, whilst being seen to involve due democratic process and dispassionate consideration of all the implications.

The Working Group meeting went very well from my point of view. I managed to gain control of the meeting yet again by commandeering pen and flipchart and encouraging contributions towards an emergent shared solution. I had already given thought to three of the options open to us. David Norton, who had warmed to the task, added option (3) at the meeting, which was an option I hadn't pre-conceived. :

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| (1) a second BLB bid | (3) seek another bidder |
| (2) a Partnership bid | (4) do nothing |

The obvious solution for me was option (2), looking at all the pros and cons. No one was present from the BLB/ BCCI camp, which was a pity as it would have been a chance for them to be part of the agreed recommendation to the Board to go for option (2). I did not know whether this was deliberate or they genuinely could not field anyone at short notice. Perhaps they knew the inevitable result and felt it was pointless to go through an exercise which could realistically only have one outcome. At the meeting there were some unequivocal criticisms of BLB's lack of commitment to Partnership working which might have been useful to 'bottom' with Betty present. As it was, the resultant paper was sent to BLB for comment prior to putting it forward at the next Partnership Board meeting.

We issued a press release the following day, relating to the Board's previous discussion. George's quote was:

'The Board of the LEP has resolved to ensure that a new bid generated from Partners will go forward to bring about a successful proposal for the Brookshire Small Business Service franchise. Steps are being taken to evaluate the best way to achieve this outcome. Continuity of service to customers is a prime consideration. A further statement will be made shortly to announce the decision of the Partnership Board on its preferred option among the available alternatives.'

This was a confident expression of a Board that was giving clear notice that it was taking control of the situation and, in the process, hopefully putting off any speculative external bidders for the sub-region's franchise. This was the quite rapid result of accelerated learning in the face of a crisis and opportunity, and had galvanised the Partnership into a period of positive action. There was some support among the District Authorities for option (3), and some concern that they were not represented on the Working Group, but option (2) was considered the best opportunity provided the Partnership Board had 'the courage and capacity' to make the bid. The scene was set for what I hoped would be a great leap forward by the Partnership.

There was a feeling among some of the Partners, again mainly at my level, that out of this debacle there might emerge an opportunity to strengthen the Partnership by providing it with an 'operational and official' as well as "strategic and voluntary' focus. By winning the bid the Partnership could achieve control over the delivery of business services with the delivery arm within the envelope of the LEP. In this position it would be able to influence the putative local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), as envisaged in the DWG Report, and endeavour to control an important aspect of delivering our sub-regional strategy.

The LEP Bids

The momentum behind an LEP bid increased when the Chief Executive of BCCI and BLB, Betty Kitchener, organised a Partnership meeting with Brian Pennington from the RDA, who had sat on the regional panel that assessed bids from the South West. This was an excellent meeting in which we were given a clear and positive steer about the issues we needed to address in the new bid. Betty and I made it clear that BLB were part of the Partnership that would be making the bid. I was keen to demonstrate sub-regional solidarity, and Betty wanted to be seen to be co-operating fully in any new bid. I knew that it would have enhanced our chances of winning the franchise if BLB were not involved at all, but this was politically impossible for the LEP. If the SBS and RGO simply wanted BLB airbrushed out of the picture, it wasn't possible for the LEP to deliver that outcome. Philosophically, despite the tensions, I still favoured inclusivity, and a learning approach to the new bid that would demonstrate to the RGO, SBS, BLB, BCCI, Betty Kitchener, George Walsh and Martin Beamish, that it was possible to work together effectively and achieve better results than going it alone. I also thought that perhaps this was the golden opportunity to finally lay the ghost of a history of tribal conflict.

The result, the same day, was an e-mail from Betty agreeing to a Partnership bid going forward. She wanted to attend part of the next LEP Board meeting, but George Patterson was not keen on her attendance, ostensibly because of

the difficulty of finding a precise slot for the SBS item, but I knew it was because he did not want to inhibit the discussion by her being present.

On the day of the Board meeting, however, the BCCI (the political wing of BLB - of which Betty was also the Chief Executive) made the following statement:

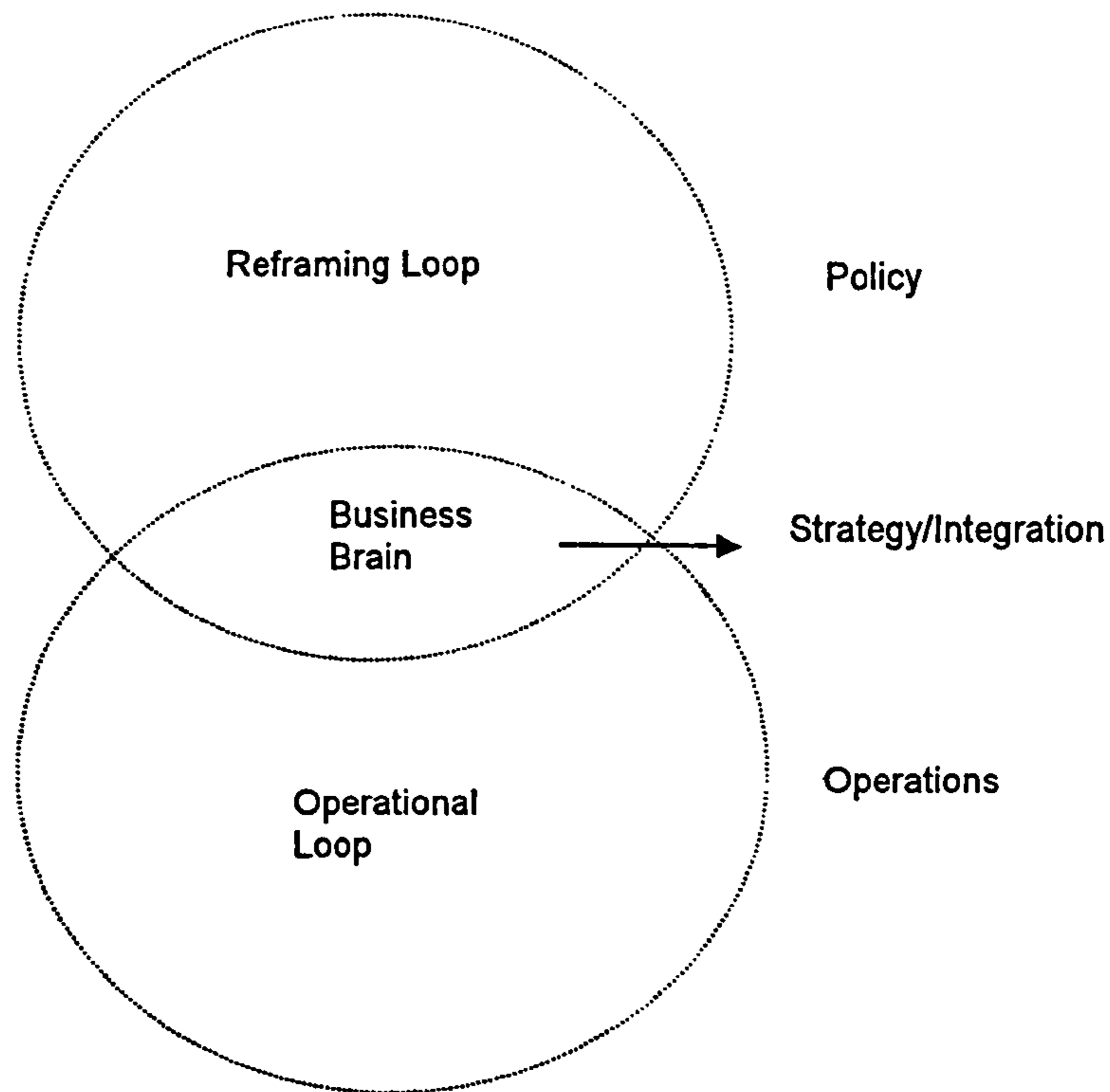
BCCI would favour a Brookshire, Chilton and Denbury based Partnership-led bid for the SBS franchise.

BCCI believes that Business Link Brookshire has demonstrated its ability to deliver similar business services successfully. As BLB's future sole guarantor, BCCI would recommend a clear distinction between operational responsibility and strategy. Strategy is the clear responsibility of the Partnership Board.

It was clear that BLB/BCCI were seeking some kind of salvation by 'clearly separating' operations from strategy. In other words, they acknowledged that they had no choice but to accept the LEP's bidding to the SBS, but with BLB, as the franchise operators, ready to continue much as before as a separate, independent entity. What they were clearly arguing for again was the status quo, with the LEP's making the bid, but having no 'say' over the nature, organisation, and style of BLB as an 'operational body'. Their argument was for a single-learning loop, rather than a double-learning loop, with operations and strategy closely interconnected (Figure 6) (Garratt, 2000).

Figure 6: Double-Learning Loop

(After Garratt, 2000)



It was apparent, therefore, that trouble lay in store for the LEP when the Board decided to make a bid for the SBS franchise. There was a long discussion weighing up all the options but the obvious answer was to make the bid ourselves. I felt this was a very significant leap forward for the Partnership, offering the prospect of a greater sense of unity and an opportunity to demonstrate that we were not just a talking shop but a body that could take decisive action. We put out the following Press Release on the Partnership's decision to bid for the franchise:

Having considered carefully the options open to the Partnership to secure a successful proposal for the SBS franchise, the LEP has resolved to make a bid. This decision carries the full support of Business Link Brookshire, whose initial submission proved unsuccessful. A bidding team is being established to construct the new proposal which will draw on the network's resources, and

seek private sector input. All of the key Partners are committed to provide staff and expertise to ensure that the bid meets SBS requirements.

Given the positive indications from the RGO and RDA about the LEP's making the bid I was convinced at the time we would be shooting at an open goal. The Partnership seemed more united than before, and I felt that we could now proceed to strengthen the corporate structure and governance required to incorporate BLB within the LEP structure. My naiveté can be seen in my reflections from this meeting:

I am pleased that the plans have won total support from the Board. All the background work has been vindicated, and I look forward to continued transformation. With all this support from Partners I don't see how we can fail. With the RDA and RGO also keen on a LEP bid I feel excited about turning our dream into reality. I need to marshal the power of the Partnership in a similar way as when I co-ordinated the production of the sub-regional strategy in the early days. I need to involve as many of the Partners as possible so that there is a strong sense of ownership and a new focus on the wider role of the New Business Link (NBL), especially with regard to social inclusion, more use of IT/ICT, and the new position from 'one stop shop' to 'first stop shop', which necessitates a brokerage approach and thus a strong partnership ethos.

My optimism was soon destroyed when it became clear that BLB/BCCI, as presaged by BCCI's Council Statement, were seeking a structural solution that saw a clear and distinct separation between the strategic role of LEP and the delivery role of BLB. My proposal accepted that the LEP would not be the right Board to oversee the franchise, but the franchise in my view had to be part of LEP. This would preserve the Partnership's strategic focus, NBL's delivery focus, with the latter operating within the envelope of the former. Apart from securing double-learning loop possibilities through cross-fertilisation between strategy and operations, there was a very practical point about accountability. The LEP could not make the bid, succeed and then promptly hand over all responsibility to a third party with a separate constitution. On this basis alone, the bid would signally fail no matter its inherent logic and quality.

More subtly, if there was an overriding imperative within the RGO, as I suspected, to provide no opportunity for the status quo to prevail, a proposal that offered the merest suggestion that BLB would simply continue as usual would be turned down. It was obvious to me that BLB needed to accept that, inevitably, it would have to transform itself before any semblance of the organisation was to continue. In practical terms this meant acceptance of the LEP's holding the franchise, but devolving operational control to a new separate BLB Board, with appropriate reporting structures in place to the Partnership Board. It wasn't discussed openly, but key figures on the Board knew that personnel changes within BLB – at least at Chairman and Chief Executive level – were necessary for any such transformation to take place. This, in the end, was what the RGO probably needed us to engineer before we would be allowed to succeed. It began to dawn on me at this stage that the Partnership could not transform itself if the Partners were unwilling to do so.

At the time, however, even though the balance of power had shifted, there was insufficient structural (third-person) or inter-subjective (second-person) power (Flood and Romm, 1996) by which the LEP could make this happen, even if the majority wanted it. Paradoxically, given my personal predilections in favour of the power of balance, it seemed there was insufficient hierarchical power – 'power over' – to effect the changes in BLB required for our bid to be successful, and for the franchise to stay in Brookshire sub-region.

My reflection was as follows:

... organizations under threat like BLB... will argue and act to protect their vested interests and continued existence. In this sense organisations are like people – their instinct is almost as biological as the human instinct – to 'fight their corner' when under threat. It would have been so much better if they could throw off this adaptive stance to one of accepting the need for a paradigm shift, but it is simply not in their nature. Although I don't personally agree with their stance, I understand the basic human emotion to survive in the face of what must seem like a concerted onslaught. To fall on their collective sword would be the best solution for the sub-region. But their identification is not with the Partnership or the future of the sub-region but with BLB as an organization and the battles they perceive they have won in the past.

One of my reflective mentors offered the following observation:

“There were too many influential Partners who were more interested in maintaining their relationships with the Chamber and Link. The implications for the Partnership as such probably didn’t cross their minds. So it was no surprise that the Link just kept on fighting their corner as they’ve always done... the Partnership could do nothing about it because the key Partners didn’t want to rock the boat.”

A major reason for this situation arising was ironically the cross-representation of members on different Councils and Boards. For example, Jonathan Ball was Chief Executive of Denbury Borough Council, and a non-executive Director of both the TEC and BLB. Similarly, Rod Davenport was Principal of a local FE College, President of BCCI, and Chair of the Learning Partnership, and so on. Split loyalties paralysed the Partnership’s ability to act in its and the sub-region’s best interests, and ultimately identification with a ‘Johnny-come-lately’ LEP was not seen as priority by its members. These horizontal relationships were so complex that it was never absolutely clear even to someone like me who ought to know on whose behalf points were being made. ‘Wearing multiple hats’ was not only confusing but could lead to fudged or actual conflicts of interest (Stewart, 2002).

On the one hand, this cross-representation ought to assist in helping organisations in the Partnership understand each other better, promote trust and learning, and thus reduce sources of misunderstanding and suspicion. On the other hand, if each representative ‘goes native’ with each organisation they represent, the result can be paradoxically to embed differences between organisations and generate inertia and a form of paralysis whereby no bloodless change is possible.

In the case of BLB such cross-representation had failed to resolve tense relationships between BLB and the TEC, and this tension had now been carried over into the Partnership context. With hindsight, this reflection confirms to me that in the situation Partners found themselves there was neither sufficient ‘power of balance’ nor ‘balance of power’ to effect the

changes required at BLB to pave the way for a successful Partnership bid. In other words, we lacked a collective, generational power that would have prevented us from becoming paralysed by shifting intra-Partnership alliances and conflict.

I led the process of writing the bid over a long summer of drafting and redrafting with the help of groups of Partners working on particular topics. I had to do this whilst suffering taunts from one of the LA Chief Executives about trying to create 'TEC Mark 2' through the LEP. The TEC's impending demise was seen in some quarters as the prime motivating force for the urgency George and I felt about winning the SBS bid and thereby securing a powerful role for ourselves in the future. Whilst hurtful, there was certainly some truth in this as far as I was concerned.

Despite the ambiguity of the governance structure in relation to BLB, by general consent the bid was professional and thorough. Following submission I also led the process of presenting the bid to the SBS/RGO/RDA Panel, writing all the presentations and coaching all who were to represent the Partnership at the presentation. Our main speakers apart from myself were George Patterson and Gordon Walsh, who were obviously tense not so much about the occasion, I thought, as being in a situation of fighting for the same side whilst harbouring very different views. The presentation and discussion with the Panel went off reasonably well. However I had a nagging doubt in my head following a discussion I had on the telephone with a senior RGO official the day before our presentation.

I rang him up just to check arrangements but also to fish for any clues about our chances. What he said was disturbing. Our bid was acknowledged as being very good and he told me that *'if this bid had been submitted in the first round it would have won'*. With the use of the past conditional tense it began to dawn on me that the decision had already been made...and we had already lost.

That was certainly the view of my TEC boss, Tom Wills, who when interviewed later thought that:

“...when the LEP bid went in, having gone through the Partnership process and with all the approvals, I thought it would have succeeded. Now I realise that the RGO was so anti-BLB that there was no way they were going to allow a situation where the existing BLB triumvirate of Martin Beamish, Betty Kitchener, and Gordon Walsh would be allowed to continue, even within the umbrella of the Partnership. The LEP’s bid was never going to be accepted, just as BLB’s wasn’t.”

“RGO knew that if locally the Local Authorities, BCCI and the TEC could do nothing to control BLB, then no one would be able to exercise any powers of restraint on BLB or persuade them to behave in a different way. No one in the Partnership was willing to, or had the authority, to say ‘No’. So I believe the RGO/SBS acted decisively to change the status quo.”

The Partnership Chairman, George Patterson saw it this way:

“Well, BLB’s was the second worst or even the worst bid in the country. BLB were in denial about it, but we knew clearly from the RDA and RGO that it was one of the worst. It was not all technicalities, but the manner of the bid and the manner of the presentation. They thought they had it in the bag and were arrogant about it. Of course this meant that by the time we made the second bid, it was already lost. The system had decided to do something else.”

My reflection on this part of the interview was as follows:

George is confirming the terrible impact on the LEP of the attitude of renegade Partners who wouldn’t listen either to other members of the Partnership, nor the Panel and RGO which assessed their bid. He is also illustrating the fact that the no-less arrogant and callous attitude of Government, which had already made up its mind on the local franchise before the Partnership bid was made. For all Government’s rhetoric on promoting partnership and fair dealings, this was a very top-down, ‘power over’ approach. Baby has been thrown out with the bathwater.

Sure enough, my worst fears were proved correct when a month later we were told that we had been ‘unsuccessful’ (that word rang in my ears for many months afterwards). Everything we had worked for over three months had

collapsed at a stroke on the basis of a political decision made even before we had been able to make our case. There was no particular criticism of our bid, just the view that a bid from outside the region, which was rumoured for some time to be the favoured approach of the SBS, was judged better to meet the requirements of the franchise.

Aftermath

Some months after the decision was made I asked George Patterson whether we had made the right decision to go for the franchise:

"I think we were still right to go for the franchise. We could have won it if we'd acted as a community. But Martin Beamish and the Business Link didn't want to work in partnership. They didn't ever think they needed to. The idea that Beamish could 'fix' the contract in Whitehall, no matter the quality of the bid, was a complete myth. But people locally, including Betty, Gordon and the Board of BLB, believed him. He came out and was extremely rude about me when he went to see Donald Unwin (Chief Executive of the SBS). He told Unwin that he hoped I would become grown up and mature! If we hadn't lost the bid before, we had when he made those remarks".

"There was also the issue of the personalities involved. There was no way they (RGO/RDA/SBS) wanted to see Martin and Betty resurrected in a different guise. They would not countenance any comeback. I know from feedback from our presentation that Brian Pennington of the RDA and others were positively taken aback and we very nearly changed their minds. But we couldn't overcome the stacking of the dice beforehand. If after the first bid BLB had responded positively and willingly to the clear message in the de-brief, they may have recovered the situation, instead of which they became aggressive. Our bid would have been transformational. It was a great disappointment. It upset the balance of what the Partnership could and should have been about".

My reflections were as follows:

George's comments on Martin Beamish illustrate the danger to partnerships of uncontrolled egos. Personalities are critical – and Beamish sacrificed the sub-region's ambitions to host its own business link services for the SBS on the altar of his own hubris. This 'talking behind teacher's back' was not only childish and disrespectful, but effectively sealed BLB's fate (and the LEP's second bid). What Donald Unwin and the senior civil servants must have

thought about the quality of partnership-working in the sub-region must have been damning. Yet, this squabbling between the titans did not reflect the relatively pragmatic collaboration below that level within the LEP.

In parallel with Partnership efforts to secure the SBS franchise for the sub-region, the Partnership and TEC Chairman, George Patterson, was actively promoting the idea of co-locating economic development officers from different agencies in the same building as the local RDA office. Here too the attitudes of BLB and BCCI sabotaged this idea which was supported by all the other Partners. George's recollection was as follows:

"A major turning point was the failure to co-locate... The initial idea, as you know, was to have all the enterprise and training operations sited at Merit House. But it didn't happen because BLB refused to co-locate, which meant that BCCI didn't want to re-locate either, and once it was decided that the LSC wanted to take over the TEC building that was the end of it. At the end of the day, it was RGO, or maybe Government, that let us down. It was a failure of the system because I believe co-location would have transformed the Partnership positioning in the sub-region, and I still believe that such an outcome is necessary even though it is currently unachievable."

And my reflection:

This was a good example of how local dissent from BLB/BCCI (related to their unwillingness to be tied into Partnership processes and culture) served to undermine Gordon's 'big idea' on Partnership co-location. It still might have happened without BCCI and BLB, but then Government at the eleventh hour failed to support the move. Ostensibly this was on financial grounds (even though it had been demonstrated that there would be no on-going financial penalty to the in-coming LSC). One suspects that the real reason was that, like the Partnership SBS bid saga, Government preferred to see its own centrally-driven institutions unencumbered by a potentially competing local power base. This raises the issue of whether the LEP will ever be able to maintain a local power base and role in the face of politically centralist Government policies.

However, not all Partners reflected that we were right to go for the SBS franchise. I asked one of my reflective mentors where all of this had left the Partnership:

"It has been a rocky ride, hasn't it? I still believe it has been generated and sustained largely by your own enthusiasm with your bringing people together. This got over some of those immediate problems of the difficult relationships between Partners. That is between the public and private sectors as they were not used to working together here, and also within the public sector of course. I think over time that we grew into a successful and effective Partnership. I think that recently we have had this decline which I think is a direct result of the Partnership making the SBS bid which was probably right at the time but became such an obsessive target both to the Board and to yourself that the broad functions of the Partnership got lost, for let's face it, 6 to 9 months really".

My interview with Colin revealed a perception among at least some Partners (particularly the local authorities within the county) that I had failed to engage with them sufficiently during the Board formation Phase. There was a feeling that I should have convened more Strategy Sub-Groups to discuss issues before Board meetings. I was perceived as acting as the Board's main executive advisor, and working in that context without proper dialogue and interaction with Partners. I was perhaps seen as 'too big for my boots', behaving too autocratically, almost as LEP's Chief Executive rather than manager.

My reflections on this view were as follows:

I have to acknowledge that since the formation of the Board, my role has changed to serving this Board above all else. The sheer number of meetings since the Board first met (10 between March and December) has been time consuming, especially given the concentrated period of work over the summer to prepare the SBS bid. I have found it hard to maintain the pre-Board Partnership network and the good will and learning that previously existed has partly turned into suspicion and doubt.

Inevitably, the creation of the Board had disenfranchised some members (in particular, the District Councils), who appeared to have lost some faith and trust as a result. The continuation of plenary meetings every three or four months was not seen as a substitute for their previous level of engagement with the Partnership. I had probably underestimated my own 'power' in convening the grassroots of the Partnership and had neglected network in favour of hierarchy.

Certainly, something had been gained and something lost from the creation of the Board, and the failure of the second SBS bid had left me and the Partnership in a position where we had to account for the opportunity cost of making the bid. I had to consider whether I had done the right thing in encouraging the Partnership to take this particular path and began to wonder if I had truly been fair and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple possibilities (Patton, 1987). Nevertheless, although it had been a risk going for the SBS franchise, I still felt the potential rewards made it a risk worth taking. Of course the risk of not making the bid would have left a gnawing 'if only we had' reflection.

Conclusion

Reaching the threshold of *Board formation* was a major step forward for the Partnership and counteracted the disappointment many Partners felt at the way in which the BLB SBS bid process had been conducted, i.e. in a way that demeaned the values the Partnership had demonstrated up to that point. First-person power through leadership charisma, and political agency were slowly giving way to a more structural form of leadership and power coupled with greater accountability and hierarchy. Second-person power was much in evidence in the form of intra-Partnership groupings, yet still laced with the impact of strong personalities and politically motivated behaviour. This activity manifested itself through the formation of clans and alliances within the Partnership that partly reflected sectoral loyalties but which was mainly built upon old animosities, particularly between the TEC/FSB and BLB/BCCI, and the conurbation versus county interests in local government. This form of power was the most pervading, tending to eclipse the first-person power which had been dissipated to some extent by the formation of the Board and the change of chair from someone strong on charisma to someone strong on governance and ethics. The Board was young and relationships and processes within it were insufficiently strong to assert a third-person power on behalf of the Partnership as a whole over the factions that had grown up as a defence mechanism to perceived threat to the old order.

Second-person power within the partnership was evidenced early in the process by a strong undercurrent of regime politics that particularly characterized the DWG period, forming a 'partnership within a partnership' where the self-styled key members recognized their mutual power in a way that was motivated initially by a desire to protect and preserve their interests, but which ironically created the basis for transformative developments to take place.

The development of structural, hierarchical power based on the legitimacy of an accountable Board eventually took decisive action on making the SBS bid, but in the end it could not quell or disarm disruptive second-person forces to its own and the area's detriment. In the background, outside the main field of conflict, and at lower levels within it, however, we witnessed good evidence for 'institutional isomorphism' (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983) as Partners adapted to each other as they learnt more about their colleagues through greater contact than had been experienced prior to the advent of the Partnership (see following chapter). This could be seen as an expression of third-person power on behalf of the Partnership, but was at too low a level in the political hierarchy to substantially alter the hegemony of a disruptive form of second-person power. It was difficult to discern a form of second-person power that could be said to be progressive and mould-breaking and seemed to confirm that power 'with' is much harder to obtain than 'power over', which is a feature of first-person and, depending on its form, third-person power.

As mentioned earlier, Flood and Romm (1996) distinguish between inter-subjective and structural power. The former relates to power derived, as its name suggests, from the process of political discourse (second-person power). The latter relates to power derived from status and legitimacy (third-person power). I perceived the loss of inter-subjective power to BLB over its manipulation of LEP support for its SBS bid, as balanced by the structural power invested in the LEP through the creation of a representative Board. The LEP may have lost the SBS battle, but it had won the war by carving out a superordinate role for itself that effectively brought the BCCI and BLB, however

sceptical they may have felt about the Partnership, under its legitimate umbrella, if not quite control.

I saw the design of the Board as being critical in creating and focusing collectivist, democratic third-person power in order to marginalise the sabotaging, reactionary behaviour of certain individuals, organisations and interdependent alliances within the Partnership. I saw these groups as seeking to exert 'power over' rather than 'power with', or trying to achieve a 'balance of power' rather than participating in a 'power of balance' (Torbert, 1991). The latter *'invites mutuality, empowers those who respond to this invitation with initiatives of their own, and generates both productivity and inquiry, both transformation and stability, both freedom and order as each is warranted'* (Romm, 1994, page 328).

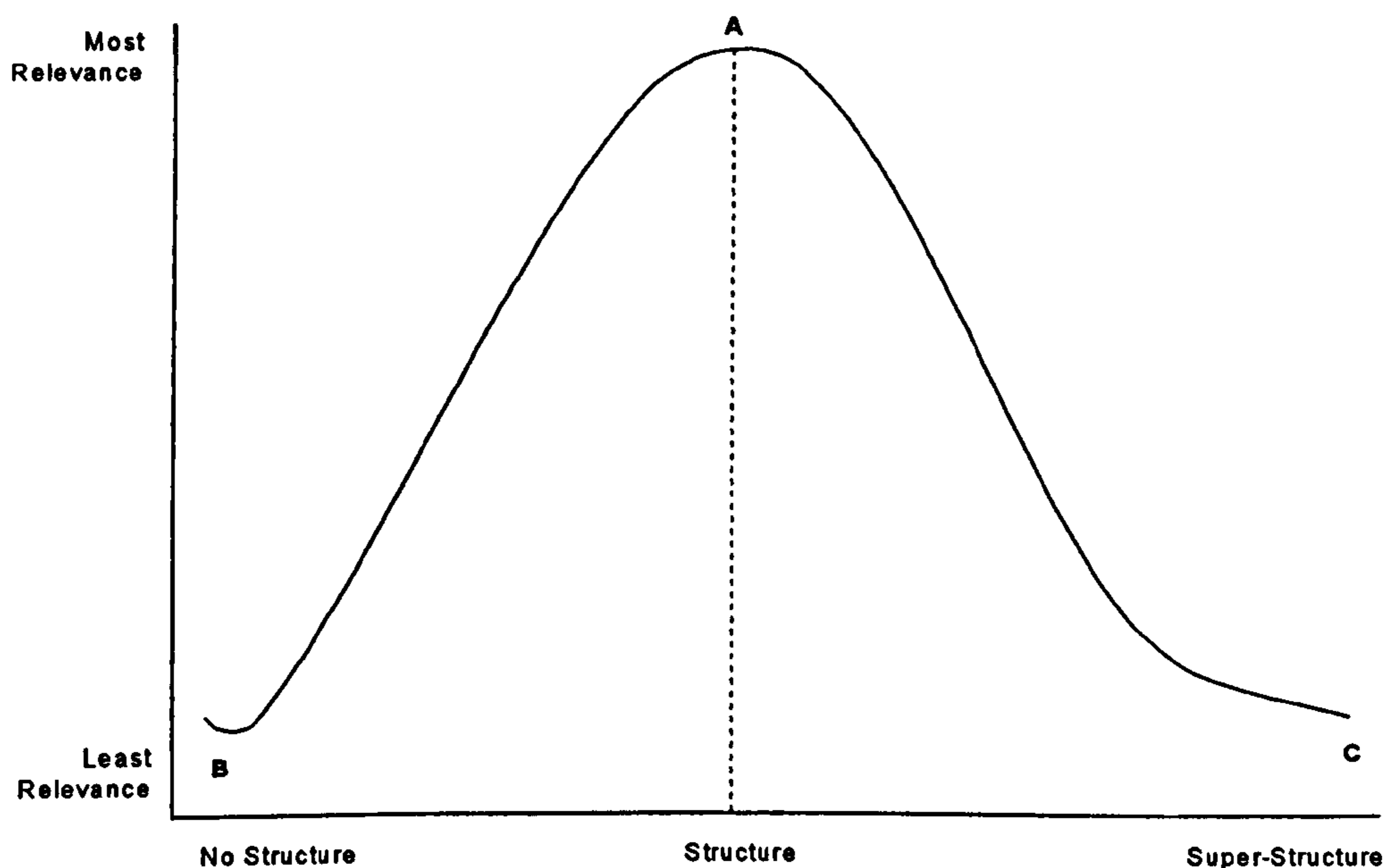
While there was only a politically weak network organisation there was a power vacuum that allowed groups and vested interests to exercise undemocratic, sometimes hostile 'power over' the Partnership, despite being 'Partners' themselves. Their agendas and instincts were clearly primarily about their own narrow interests rather than the best interests of the sub-region. So to what can we ascribe their power over the majority? My reflections were as follows:

Every small capitulation the Partnership makes fuels the belief of self interested 'Partners' in their ability to manipulate the Partnership. This provides them with the confidence to continue trying to shift the balance of power in their favour. The Partnership has allowed these forces to exercise undemocratic power, in much the same way as Brookshire TEC had done previously, in order to keep up an appearance of peace and harmony. There is a paradox here in that in order to improve democracy in the Partnership, a concentration of power in terms of the new LEP Board was necessary, even though this meant that the rather chaotic, creative but highly inclusive nature of previous Partnership discourse was compromised. In particular, it meant that certain active participants such as District Council executives, who were very much empowered by their involvement in the Partnership, had now to settle for a reduced ability, at least in theory, to influence events as their interests were now represented by the County Council on the Partnership Board. It is not fair.

Nonetheless, in response to this interpretation of events my aim was to work towards establishing a position akin to point 'A' in Figure 7 below (Flood and

Romm, op. cit., page 67) whereby a greater power of balance could be achieved within the Partnership that would enhance democracy overall and help to marginalize those particular cabalistic motivations that I and most of the other Partners found distasteful and damaging. The self-serving organisations and individuals sought to maintain the status quo via their exercise of inter-subjective power in the context of, effectively, an absence of structure in the way the Partnership had developed from informal roots and a loosely networked approach. This had been stimulating and exciting at first, and it had brought together a wide range of Partners for the first time. However, within this loosely networked approach lurked the seeds of cynicism and an opportunity for those so minded, to exploit the system's weaknesses to the benefit of their own narrow agendas.

Figure 7: Structural Power Possibilities
(Flood and Romm, 1994)



Point 'B' represents the previous situation, where, without a formal structure and a Board, it was possible for groups intent on serving solely their own interests to hold the Partnership to ransom. This was the case in the way BLB chose to behave in submitting its SBS bid. I hoped that the balance of power could be swung to the LEP's favour by moving from 'B' to 'A', from no structure

to structure. However, clearly in this case, structural power was insufficient to achieve a transformational outcome for the Partnership.

The danger of such a structural bias in the longer term was that LEP would become a controlling, unilateralist force through excessive application of its own rules and procedures (Point C in the diagram).

The LEP was a long way from 'C', and in fact there was no prospect of this happening as the Board was adamant that it did not want to add confusion to an already congested organisational landscape. Perhaps a position between 'A' and 'C' would have made a difference. All of this, of course, is context-specific and is my personal interpretation, yet I believe that this model helps to explicate the situation we experienced. Although the idea of a strategic, legitimised Board was a key ambition of many Partners going back to its early days, its fruition at this time also had a tactical significance in signalling a shift in the balance of power in the Partnership: from the exercise of non-responsible to responsible power (Vickers, 1970). As Torbert (1991, page 3) states: *'...seeking to exercise self-balancing power within an interdependent set of relationships is the most difficult and improbable aim we can set ourselves.'* Hence, it can be no surprise that partnership and collaboration are so difficult in practice and, why it is difficult often to elicit synergistic benefits and collaborative advantage (Huxham, 1996 a, b, c).

There would appear to be no easy solution to the issues that led the Partnership along a path to ultimate disappointment with regard to the SBS bid and the impact it had on the course of Partnership transformation. A successful bid would have potentially thrust the Partnership forward through its structural power and legitimacy and a confidence in its own ability. This would have strengthened third relative to second-person power. As it was, in failing, the LEP was enervated, undone by internal, long standing second-person power plays by factions of its members.

The diversity inherent in such a large multiorganizational Partnership made it difficult to go forward on a truly united basis, even though there were in reality

only seven or eight Partners that finally mattered in the power hierarchy. Ultimately, the Partnership could not resolve historically rooted, factionally motivated, dissent within its ranks and left Government with little choice but to orchestrate the process by which a lasting solution could be found. The state can clearly be ruthless in dealing with relationships that fail to meet its expectations or which threaten its interests (Jessop, 2002).

George Patterson reflected thus on our failure:

"The Board Members have not followed through on early promise. The local authorities too have taken different approaches. None of them have grown above their individual backgrounds. It hasn't jelled. The Partnership has not established itself with the primary agencies within Brookshire such as the Learning and Skills Council, NBL, and BCCI. But it has established itself with the RDA. Partnership takes time to get right but we need to increase our level of activity. However, people will say that they have to get on with their 'day jobs'. It is frustrating because if we could all work together we could act as a broker or a gateway to attract funds from Government, Europe and the RDA".

My reflections were as follows:

This is more than just a lack of synergy in the Partnership. It relates to the lack of a sub-regional frame of reference in partners' thinking. Essentially, they still only think about their patch and what the LEP can do for them, rather than what they can do for the sub-region. It certainly hasn't jelled, as George says. By not being able to deal with internal strife the Partnership has failed to take advantage of a unique opportunity to transform into the 'voice' of the sub-region in economic matters and my T₄ level of transformation. This may now take years, if ever, to achieve.

I feel there are two possible lessons to take from this. First the need to strengthen third-person power so that it can effectively ensure the power of balance and have processes strong enough to counter the negative second-person power of the clans. To some extent this needs time to develop and the Partnership was young and unable to harness the political energy available, which was high, but conflictual. Our network power remained effective but not powerful. Could we have tried to harness this more to create an upward well of influence to higher levels in the political strata? Secondly, could we have tried harder either to confront the clans or help them persuade them of a different viewpoint to the one they took? Alternatively, could we have created a more

positive form of second-person power to counter those bent on pursuing their own interests?

This chapter has considered the data I worked on in the form of a narrative that exposes the tensions between first-, second-, and third-person expressions of power and in particular the discordant voice of second-person disruptive factions holding on to the 'shadows of the past'. The following chapter now looks in detail at the third-person voice, adding a new layer of insight to add to the first and second voices I primarily consider in this chapter. In what follows I investigate the voice of the Partnership as an entity, reflecting on its own story via my interpretations of survey data it generated, and confirmed by it in the form of feedback I gave on the results.

Postscript

I had arranged an interview with Betty Kitchener but having first agreed to this request, she cancelled at the last minute. Our relationship was one which I valued highly as a means of 'limiting damage' and sorting out issues behind the scenes before they became serious. It was obvious that she was not happy about 'going on the record' in a formal interview and I was not prepared to compromise our relationship by pressing her. I had met with Betty throughout the period of my research at a professional level and she kept me in touch with the views of BLB/BCCI as their Chief Executive, which I have used to inform the narrative.

Through the long period of tension during this phase of the research it would have been impossible to interview Martin Beamish or Gordon Walsh, given my position as a TEC employee and an active player in the drama. Following the rejection of the BLB bid for the SBS franchise and prior to the presentation of the LEP bid to the Franchise Panel, Michael Beamish resigned from the Chairmanship of BLB on the grounds that he would not agree to BLB's having to be positioned within the Partnership if the LEP's bid was successful. I myself handed over the role of Partnership secretary soon after the LEP bid

failure in preparation for my transfer of employment to the new local Learning and Skills Council.

Chapter 5

The Partnership's Reflections

Introduction and methodological approach

Background

This chapter considers my efforts to construct the Partnership's third-person reflections on transformation and power. I attempt to extract and articulate the Partnership's voice as an entity and consider whether one could in fact be identified. My methodological challenge was to find a way to elicit data that could be said to represent the views of the Partnership in aggregate form. I would then test my interpretation of the data by feeding back to the Partnership the results of my analysis and seeking corroboration of my findings. In terms of my research this would give me the opportunity to test my understandings and interpretations following the largely second-person emphasis of the previous chapter and the following chapter which focuses on the first-person voice.

My first objective and priority, however, was practice-related: to test the state of the Partnership at the end of my research and my tenure as Secretary to LEP in order to gain a common understanding of where it needed to improve, what had worked and what had not, and to use the results as an informed, shared platform for the future trajectory of the Partnership. Thus, at the Board's instigation, I began to consider how we could assist Partners with the process of reflection following the eventful Board formation phase of the LEP's existence and the SBS bid failure described in the previous chapter and to take stock of the Partnership's state of health following an eventful

As I explained in Chapter 3 there were practice-academy issues in carrying out this task between my role as researcher and that of practitioner. The approach I took had to serve both purposes: on the one hand to fulfil my obligations to the Board and the Partnership as Partnership Manager, but also to serve my

particular research purpose to try to elicit the voice of the Partnership in order to triangulate between the other first and second voices.

For both practical and methodological reasons I decided to use a survey instrument as a means of obtaining data from the Partnership. For practice purposes this method allowed me to explore Partners' views across a number of 'health-related' criteria of interest to the Board and the Partners in order to capture and discern both appreciative as well as critical comment. For academic purposes my aim was to draw from the survey data generated those parts that might allow me to construct the Partnership's third voice based on the degree of alignment of responses across the various sectors represented in the LEP as well as the various factions.

Hence the questionnaire I used goes further in scope than I would have designed purely for my research purposes (Annex 1). However, this approach provided an added benefit as it generated copious rich data on collateral issues such as learning, which helped to draw conclusions about the valuable role the Partnership played, for example, in informing and empowering the network of professionals which underpinned the LEP. The main part of this chapter is devoted to interpreting the results from the survey in relation to my core themes, but I do not report on every question posed in the questionnaire, in order to maintain my focus on matters related to transformation and power. These other issues were, however, fed back to the Partnership in the form of a presentation.

Although such a method may be more associated with positivist approaches than interpretive, I neither designed the instrument nor utilised the data generated from it to infer any statistical or quantitative relationships. Rather I deployed it as a way of trying to generate data that would allow me both to highlight the positive and negative issues identified by Partners in their responses and to interpret the third-person voice of the Partnership as an entity in a form that could be verified by the Partnership. There were other methods I might have used for the same purpose such as focus groups. However, these would have been impractical to organise in a way that could be seen to give every member of the Partnership a chance to participate and would therefore

not have met my criterion of trying to elicit as close to a third-person Partnership reflection as I could. It would also have been impossible given the time pressures on all the actors to make extra time for a series of focus groups. It would also clearly have been impractical to conduct interviews with all the Partners. A questionnaire-based survey would also allow me to capture personal, honest and reflective comments from Partners without any group or interviewer bias effects, given that my presence at focus groups or interviews would in all likelihood had the effect of 'smoothing' responses, especially critical ones. I acknowledge in taking this approach that it also could be argued that using a questionnaire closed off opportunities for dialogue with partners and generating deeper insights from them. However, as I have argued this would have been impractical both in terms of cost and time. The choice of a survey-based approach was, therefore, largely made on practical grounds, accepting that the method was not ideal relative to the underpinning philosophy of my inquiry.

Thus, to sum up, the survey was primarily undertaken in order to explore Partners' perceptions of the Partnership and to seek insights into individual, organizational and interorganizational aspects of the LEP's development. However, the questionnaire was designed to allow me in addition to extract data that would allow me to attempt to construct a soundscape from the responses that could be interpreted as the third-person voice of the Partnership. I also hoped to foster a degree of reflection and learning within the Partnership that might help not only to assess progress to date, but also to set the scene for future debate about the role of the LEP and agenda for further action and transformation. In that sense the questionnaire was designed as a developmental tool as well as a reflective one.

Following my analysis of the survey results I presented my findings to a special meeting of the Partnership, which generally endorsed their validity from a practice-related point of view, albeit, as I will explain, it was harder to interpret the results as a way of eliciting the third person voice of the Partnership from an academic perspective.

Methodological Issues

Most of the Partners were aware of my using the data for research as well as professional purposes, particularly the Board and my reflective mentors, and as I have said were able to provide corroborative feedback on my interpretations when I presented the findings to the Partnership. However, I was uncomfortable about utilising the data generated for my own research as well as for practical operational purposes. This is not an untypical problem of insider research, which clearly raises ethical issues, but which I see as an inevitable result of the tensions between acting as researcher as well as practitioner in order to provide perspectives on phenomena such as partnerships in action that would normally be inaccessible to external researchers.

The questions were partly chosen to reflect the issues that had emerged during the study and matters of interest to the Board. The Board left it to me to design the questionnaire in the most appropriate way. I designed it myself with inputs from my PA and tested it on colleagues at the TEC to see whether it was clear and unambiguous. I made a number of relatively minor adjustments to the instrument in terms of language and tone and order of questions, but the main issue was the length of the questionnaire and therefore the time it would take to complete. There was also the related issue of trying to separate out individual from organizational responses, which was felt by some colleagues to add unnecessarily to the length of the instrument. They also felt that it could potentially cause confusion among those who completed the questionnaire as respondents would not necessarily be able to distinguish their own from their organization's views, or provide their own views as if they were those of the organization. An obvious difficulty of my attempts to elicit a third-person voice was simply the fact that entities do not have a voice. My proxy had to be the interpretation of real voices from individuals and from these to attempt to construct the voice of the Partnership.

Whilst accepting colleagues' points as valid, I nevertheless decided that to give a comprehensive 'state of the nation' report for the Board the coverage of the questionnaire was about right. I also wanted for research purposes to explore

whether any differences between personal and organizational views could be elicited, so I decided I would keep to my original conception of the questionnaire. In fact, as I will show, it may have been the case that the length of the questionnaire deterred responses and it was true that no discernible differences could be found between personal and organizational responses. Critics of the questionnaire were thus generally proved correct, although I would never have known and not learned the lessons had I not gone ahead with this approach.

I also deliberately designed the questionnaire as a developmental tool for the Partnership. It was meant to enable the members of the LEP to think and reflect about the Partnership as an entity, and was written in a way to be appreciative and nurturing rather than as a vehicle just to attract critical comment. Although reflective and backward looking I was hoping that arising out of this period of contemplation would emerge a new invigorated Partnership with a united approach, clear voice and sense of direction based on data that sought deliberately to extract a balance between the pluses and minuses of our experience to date.

The questionnaire was designed to be analysed qualitatively with the emphasis on open questions. I realised this would have an impact on response rates and degree of difficulty in interpreting the results, but the nature of my inquiry being emergent, I did not want to channel respondents' thoughts down tramlines that I had set out in advance. Hence I eschewed Likert scales and category questions. To have attempted to interview so many Partners would have been impractical, and I would not have been able to bring all the Partners together for the purpose of discussing the issues I wanted to explore. So, I provided plenty of space in the questionnaire to afford respondents the opportunity to articulate their personal and organizational responses. I made sense of the results through my personal reflections on the views expressed grounded in the rich data generated from the survey. What follows is my interpretation of the data based on my perceptions and perspectives. However, I was aided considerably with coding and sense-making from the responses we received and manual coding by my PA, who was also intimately involved with the administration of the

LEP and understood well the purpose of the survey and the Partners. I justify this approach as I too was a member of the Partnership and my first voice as a practitioner as well as a researcher is valid and because I sought verification of my findings through the feedback mechanism I mentioned above.

The data cannot be taken as representative in a statistically rigorous sense and this would not be appropriate for an essentially interpretive study. Rather it provides indications and insights about the state of learning and transformation within the Partnership, based on the perceptions of those Partners who responded. I acknowledge that there may be some bias between respondents and non-respondents. For example, the former group may have felt either strongly positive or strongly negative about the Partnership compared to the latter, thus motivating them to complete and return the questionnaire. Those with relatively neutral or no particular views may, therefore, be under-represented and therefore under-reported. Nevertheless, given the open-ended nature of my inquiry, and accepting these caveats, I believe the survey afforded worthwhile and valid insights into the Partnership's voice and whether one could be constructed.

I sent out 55 questionnaires to individuals represented on the Partnership at all levels. I distinguished personal from organizational responses in the questionnaire to check if there were any significant differences in the data. I left it to the recipients to decide whether they would speak for their organizations as well as themselves. In most cases I was aware that internal discussions (especially from those who were not sufficiently senior to speak for their organizations) generated the organizational response, but this was not universal. As predicted by colleagues who helped me pilot the questionnaire it turned out that there was little to choose between personal and organizational responses. This might have been as a result of individuals being unable or unwilling to distinguish their personal views from those of their organization or because any differences between the two were at the margin. I explore this aspect further in the following chapter.

The findings from the Survey were presented to a meeting of the Partnership where the results informed a lively debate that generally corroborated my findings and by doing so, verified them as being broadly shared by most of the Partners present. However, I acknowledge that this was just one meeting at a point in time and comprised an audience that was possibly not representative of the LEP as a whole, particularly as the private sector were not well represented. I come back to this presentation of findings in my conclusion to this chapter.

This chapter now presents the results of my findings firstly from a meta-level analysis and then looking in detail at the results from the questionnaire survey. I then go on to draw conclusions from the survey in terms of the nature of extracting the third-person nature of the Partnership and reflecting further on methodological issues in trying to elicit this voice using the methodology selected.

Meta-analysis

Disappointingly, considering the degree of involvement of potential respondents and relevance of the inquiry to them, and despite several e-mail reminders, only 11 questionnaires were returned (20% response rate). The distribution of returned questionnaires was significantly biased towards local authorities (Table 1).

I may have misjudged the patience and willingness of respondents to complete the form, which required a degree of effort beyond mere box ticking. It may also have reflected the aftermath of the failure of the Partnership's SBS bid and/or the significant strategic and administrative changes the Partnership was about to undergo (see previous chapter). However, the fact was this was a disappointing outcome given the internalised nature of the project and the importance placed on it by the Board. It seemed to suggest a degree of apathy and lack of commitment to the LEP, which I found surprising.

Table 1: Sectoral Breakdown of Sent/Returned Questionnaires

Sector	HE/FE ¹	LA ²	Private	Comm/Vol ³	TOTAL
No. sent	6	26	20	3	55
No. returned	2	5	2	2	11
Response rate	33.3%	19%	10%	66.6%	20%

Another explanation for the low response rate may have been that the questionnaire was to be returned to me personally at the TEC. I had possibly underestimated the impact that this would have on some respondents who, despite the assurance that all responses would be treated as confidential, may not have been willing to send the questionnaire to the TEC address. Furthermore, this factor may have influenced those Partners who did respond not to be fully frank in their responses lest they were 'passed on' by me to the TEC or indeed other Partners. There was no way I could check this for sure, but with hindsight I can see that it might have been better to employ a consultant to analyse the questionnaire and produce a report on the results. However, then I could not have claimed that this was my own work for the purpose of my academic inquiry. There was thus not only a form of schizophrenia between my role as a researcher and practitioner, but also between my TEC and Partnership personae. Partners perhaps did not differentiate the 'TEC me' from the 'Partnership me', and the TEC address to them may have been the 'give away'.

Significantly, only two members of the Board returned a completed questionnaire, suggesting either apathy or a reaction to its length and depth, which required time, thought and reflection to complete satisfactorily. Given its endorsement of the survey, however, it was surprising and disappointing to me that the leaders of the Partnership showed such a lack of trust or lack of interest in the very entity whose interests they represented. Furthermore, neither of the respondents was from the private sector, with one each from the HE/FE and the Comm/Vol sectors. It appeared that the four representatives from the private sector on the Board were apathetic to the survey and perhaps thereby even to

¹ Higher and Further Education

² Local Authority

³ Community and voluntary sector

the Partnership itself. They were senior business leaders and busy people, but their non-response was symptomatic of the way in which I had witnessed this sector's involvement in the Partnership to date. Their preference was not to involve themselves in the work of the Partnership, but rather to sit on Boards and Committees to make decisions, leaving it to the public sector Partners to undertake the business of actually running the Partnership. Two of the Board members were in the BLB/BCCI and two in the TEC clan. I might not have expected replies from the former, but it came as a disappointment not to obtain some kind of response from the latter. Not to participate in the survey seemed to show a lack of commitment to the task they had endorsed and perhaps demonstrated a lack of willingness to reveal themselves to me and a fear of possible disclosure to others.

The sectoral breakdown demonstrated the greater level of interest and participation by the local authorities in the Partnership compared to the other sectors. They comprised the most numerous target sector reflecting their status as the majority of participants in the Partnership, although even then its response rate was rather disappointing. Not only were their responses the most numerous, but they were also the most rich in content, demonstrating perhaps a greater degree of belief in the Partnership and a knowledge of and identification with it borne through active participation and involvement. The responses by the local authorities also interestingly demonstrated a greater appreciation of the complexity and ambiguity within the Partnership and of partnership-working in general. The responses showed an understanding and appreciation of the political context within which the Partnership operated and the importance of mediating and negotiating in a complex policy domain. They also showed a willingness to articulate their issues appreciating the challenges and uncertainties inherent within the Partnership and to reflect more deeply on the issues we faced in an open manner.

Since there were only two community and voluntary organizations in the Partnership, obtaining two responses was a good return, although both came

from an umbrella Community and Voluntary Group representing many smaller organizations.

The overall feeling for me as researcher and practitioner was one of bitter disappointment. The Partnership asked for feedback but was not willing to give it. I began to feel that the Partnership was a figment of my imagination, virtual rather than real. Distinctive voices could be heard but it was not a Partnership voice. Rather I heard the voices of the various factions within the Partnership. There was an obvious lack of coherence within the Partnership making it difficult to discern any semblance of a third-person entity. What I heard were the discordant voices of organizations and sectors operating in a virtual domain, striving for some form of unity and coherence, but only articulating their own organization-centric views. I was interested in developmental and transformational possibilities but the Partnership clearly was not. There was a mismatch between my first-person hopes and aspirations for the LEP and the voice of the Partnership insofar as one could be discerned.

There was no united voice or common motivation for sustaining the Partnership. In the absence of pressing need or crisis, it was easier to be complacent and treat the Partnership as a platform for discourse within an existing paradigm rather than treating it as a vehicle to create a new one. To contemplate transformation of the LEP would mean transformation of the constituent factions and sectors, and it was easier to maintain the status quo: to maintain the existing tension between factions that had endured over a long period. These tensions existed in a dysfunctional dynamic equilibrium that sought to maintain the paradigm that had governed inter-organizational relationships in the past and which served the purpose of sustaining existing power bases.

In the following pages I exemplify from the data I collected and interpreted why I reached these conclusions.

Detailed Analysis

As stated above, I have concentrated in this section of the chapter on issues particularly relevant to my inquiry and so have omitted analysis of some questions in the instrument, but which were obviously reported back to the Partnership for practice purposes. I have thus focused on those questions that produced data of interest to the core of my academic inquiry and which revealed aspects of the nature of the third-person voice I was attempting to construct. Following this detailed analysis I bring together the main conclusions that I have drawn from undertaking the survey. Although I present the data broken down by sector, the numbers are so small that I do not attempt to draw conclusions at that level unless there is a strong indication that there are significant differences between sectors. I also use direct quotes selectively from the returned forms to illustrate particular views and opinions. The tables contain a simple content analysis based on manual coding of the data and based on number of 'mentions' of particular points and grouped into themes. This technique provided a rough guide to the order of importance of the responses, but I also try to provide a qualitative interpretation on the data where numbers alone do not provide the full picture. The labels provided are my own, grounded in the data rather than on any pre-conceived classification.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the LEP

Strengths

There were five main themes emerging from the data:

- Networking/sharing information and resource
- Taking a co-ordinated approach
- A strong voice/leadership for the sub-region
- Inclusivity and wide-ranging approach
- Vehicle to connect with the RDA for funding

Other more minor themes mentioned included:

- Providing a forum for discussion and debate
- Engendering trust and mutual support
- The Partnership's style/administration

A simple content analysis of the data reveals the pattern of responses in detail by sector (Table 2).

Table 2: Mentions of Partnership Strengths

	HE/FE	LA	Private	Comm/Vol	TOTAL
Networking/Sharing Resources	1	3	1	2	7
Co-ordinated Approach	1	2	1	2	6
Leadership/'Voice'/ Power	-	4	1	1	6
Wide-ranging/ Inclusive	-	3	1	-	4
RDA Connection/Funding	-	2	1	1	4
Discussion/Debate/ Forum	1	1	-	-	2
Trust/Support	-	1	-	-	1
Style/Administration	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	3	17	5	6	31

The results suggest that there was a strong feeling within the Partnership that the networking opportunities were valued, together with a co-ordinated approach and projecting a single voice both in its internal workings and externally, especially in relation to the RDA. This was particularly felt by the local authorities compared to the other sectors, possibly reflecting their greater level of everyday involvement in the Partnership and a greater appreciation of the value to the area of projecting a single voice to important funding bodies even if the internal politics of the area were perhaps not quite so harmonious. One may infer that Partners felt there was value in the LEP's existence and that without the Partnership achieving these strengths would have been more difficult.

However, the points made in total for strengths (31) were lower than for weaknesses (39), and the Partnership's voice seemed shriller in terms of the latter than the former.

Weaknesses

The key weaknesses (Table 3) were seen as follows:

- Lack of action
- Focus too diffuse
- Lack of resource
- Variable Partner commitment
- Imbalance of power
- Tensions/political sensitivities
- Inability to engage all Partners
- Poor internal communications

Other weaknesses included:

- Lack of public profile
- Lack of vision
- Lack of accountability
- 'Inherent instability'

There were two broad themes. The first three seemed to relate to a perception that the Partnership had not done enough to justify the effort of sustaining itself. There seemed to be a need to concentrate on fewer particular areas of action, and focus resources on achieving results. This seemed very much a call for practical action so that the Partnership could point directly to achievements that would not have happened without its influence. This feeling seems to accord with the findings of other authors. For example, the term 'collaborative inertia' coined by Huxham (1996b) to describe the syndrome whereby partnerships set up with the best of goodwill encounter very slow progress towards aims, a sense of deep frustration and a general failure to live up to expectations

Table 3: Mentions of Partnership Weaknesses

	HE/FE	LA	Private	Comm/Vol	TOTAL
Lack of Action	3	2	-	-	5
Diffuse Focus	-	5	-	-	5
Lack of Resource	-	4	-	-	4
Variable Commitment	1	3	-	-	4
Tensions/Political Sensitivities	-	2	1	1	4
Imbalance of Power	-	1	1	1	3
Inability to Engage all Partners	1	1	-	1	3
Poor Internal Communications	-	3	-	-	3
Lack of Public Profile	-	2	-	-	2
Lack of Vision/Narrow Focus	-	1	-	1	2
Lack of Accountability	1	1	-	-	2
'Inherent Instability'	2	-	-	-	2
TOTAL	8	25	2	4	39

The second broad theme was about 'cultural' handicaps that might have hindered our ability to focus on 'deliverables', an issue also indicated by Goldsmith (1997) and Huxham and Vangen (1996 a, b). These concerned the attitudes and behaviours of Partners in relation to each other and the instability of the Partnership as an entity. It may also have concerned Partner *assumptions* and *perceptions* about attitudes and behaviour. Either way, in a socially constructed sense, they were real to those who observed them.

Some interesting and revealing quotes drawn from the forms submitted included the following:

"All partnerships struggle. The LEP is not unique"

[Local Authority]

"It is very hard work bringing different groups and individuals together"

[HE/FE Sector]

"A strong partnership can be effective, but it is a fragile entity and needs to be nurtured in order to work"

[Private Sector]

The secondary weaknesses all seemed to relate to a lack of 'publicness', perhaps a feeling that the Partnership was more virtual than real and not confident enough to have an identity and profile of its own with clear responsibilities and accountabilities, distinct from its constituent parts. The 'lack of vision' point also seemed to relate to this theme. The strategy for the sub-region contained a very clear vision, but the issue seemed again to reflect a feeling of 'collaboration inertia' and translating fine words into practical action which the Partners acknowledged and owned. The strategy seemed disconnected with action:

"We need to ensure that organizations buy into LEP action, even if this takes a long time to achieve"

[Local Authority]

Some respondents particularly mentioned the instability of the LEP, a feature not uncommon in partnerships (Inkpen and Beamish, 1997).

"There is always the threat of Denbury and Chilton breaking off"

[Voluntary Sector]

By comparison with the Partnership, the constituent partner organizations may have viewed themselves as 'stable' as they had their own 'official' identity, purpose and hierarchies. There appeared to be a degree of turbulence and uncertainty that is inherent within horizontal structures across organizations that causes discomfort to Partners (Bresser, 1988), which is ironic as one of the responses to environmental turbulence is to form partnerships (Emery and Trist, 1973). Yet Partners acknowledged that collaborative activity was essential if the complex and inter-related needs of the sub-region were to be addressed

properly. There was clearly a paradox here in that collaboration and partnership are seen as necessary to tackle interconnected issues across organizational domains, but in doing so even more complex issues seem to be thrown up which presented a barrier to tackling the original issues which triggered the setting up of the Partnership in the first place. So the Partnership voice here seems to be an ambiguous one. It seemed to be saying 'we like the idea of working together in partnership, but the weaknesses of doing so in practice maybe outweigh its strengths'.

Partnership Successes and Areas where the Partnership Could Have Done Better

Partnership Successes

These were seen as follows (Table 4):

- 'Drawing together interests'
- Raising our profile as an RDA sub-regional partnership
- Shared research and intelligence
- Workforce Development Programme
- Strategy

Other points mentioned included:

- SBS bid
- Working on a shared company database
- Funding
- Inward Investment Sub-Group
- Setting up a Social Inclusion Sub-Group
- Incorporation
- Administration/secretariat

Table 4: Mentions of Partnership Successes

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Keeping/Drawing Together Different Interests	1	3	2	-	6
SRP Role/Profile with the RDA	-	2	2	1	5
Research & Intelligence	-	3	1	1	5
Workforce Development	1	1	-	2	4
Strategy	1	1	-	-	2
SBS Bid	-	1	-	-	1
Company Database	-	1	-	-	1
Drawing in Funding	-	1	-	-	1
Inward Investment Sub-Group	-	1	-	-	1
Social Inclusion Group	-	-	-	1	1
Incorporation	-	-	1	-	1
Administration/ Secretariat	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	3	15	6	5	29

The principal successes reflected the Partnership's strengths, particularly in regard to its ability to bring Partners and their interests together, or as one Partner commented: *"keeping Denbury and Chilton involved"*. Another Partner tellingly summed up their perception of the principal success as follows:

"...that it is there at all! Partnerships take a long time to establish if they are to be strong, and this followed very quickly after local government re-organization"

Although this is representative only of what I call T₁ transformation: *Creation* and is perhaps scant achievement for nearly four years of nurture and development, I perceive this as a positive comment, acknowledging that sometimes the Partnership has had to run hard to stand still. This demonstrated an awareness of the benefits of having the Partnership machinery in place, as a forum for disparate interests to meet to discuss issues of shared concern, even though it

may take time for its full potential to be realized. This could be said to be the success of a network rather than a Partnership as such, but nevertheless important.

There was a perceived credibility in the LEP being recognized as the RDA's recognised sub-regional Partnership. However, this may also to some extent have reflected a lack of self-belief in that external recognition was deemed to be necessary and important to provide internal assurance and confidence.

The practical success of 'workforce development' and 'research and intelligence' programmes seemed to point to the kinds of activities of which Partners would like to see more focus, as also identified under 'weaknesses'. These were initiatives that were seen to have been generated by positive Partnership-working and seen to have added much practical value. Interestingly, however, the success of both could be put down to individual Partner initiative in taking the lead responsibility and seeking assistance from others rather than a Partnership success as such. Without the Partnership's existence, in providing a platform for interaction, it was doubtful whether these interactions would have occurred. However, this success cannot in truth be regarded as a result of the Partnership as an entity. This raises the idea that perhaps there was no partnership third voice, but that the LEP rather provided a context or platform for first and second voices to emerge, influence and act.

Perhaps as some time had passed since it was produced, the sub-regional strategy is mentioned only twice, and the ill-fated SBS bid only once. It is interesting to speculate how many more Partners would have regarded the bid as a success had we won the franchise. This impression was confirmed by considering Partners' views on areas where the LEP could have done better.

Areas where the Partnership could have done better

The areas where the Partnership was perceived to have failed to reach expectations can be summarised as follows (Table 5).

The main points made included:

- The LEP's SBS bid
- Securing resources, recognition and influence from the RDA
- Moving from policy formulation to implementation
- Reviewing/revising the vision and strategy
- Reducing confusion/duplication

Other areas mentioned once only are also set out in Table 5.

Table 5: Mentions of Areas where the Partnership Could Have Done Better

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
LEP SBS Bid	-	2	2	2	6
Securing Resources/ Recognition & Influence from the RDA	-	2	-	1	3
Moving from Policy Formulation to Implementation	1	2	-	-	3
Reviewing/Revising Vision and Strategy	-	3	-	-	3
Reducing Confusion/Duplication	-	-	-	2	2
Embedding the Vision	1	-	-	-	1
Recognising our own Worth	1	-	-	-	1
Strategy Consultation	-	-	-	1	1
Developing a Team Approach	-	1	-	-	1
Communication with Plenary Group	-	-	1	-	1
Achieving a Higher Profile	-	-	1	-	1
Ownership/ Management of the Business Database	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	3	11	4	6	24

The unsuccessful LEP SBS bid figures strongly in the responses. It was not clear from the comments whether this was because respondents did not like the

bid's contents; the process by which it was produced; making the bid in the first place; its unsuccessful outcome; the politics behind the decision; or the opportunity cost in making it. If the criticisms were based on the last three reasons then there would be some justification for these views. However, the Partners were able to comment on the content of the bid progressively as it was written via an extranet platform. They also had the opportunity to contribute to the process of producing the bid, and agreed the process itself at a special meeting I convened to consider the issue. Furthermore, the decision to make the bid was approved not only by the Board of the Partnership but also endorsed by the Plenary Group. It was, therefore, puzzling for me to understand why Partners seemed so dissatisfied with the bid and/or the bidding process.

On the other hand, the criticism may just have reflected a shared disappointment in the outcome and process of the bidding competition, which revealed itself through the response to this question. Although I, and most of the Partners, were aware or suspected that the decision not to award the SBS contract to the LEP was politically motivated, there perhaps remained a residual sense of collective guilt, and a loss of self-esteem. I reflected on this issue in my exchanges with one of my reflective mentors, Colin Powell, in Chapter 4. It would appear that some of the disappointment being expressed was directed at me for the way in which I was perceived to have concentrated too much on the SBS bid at the expense of other Partnership business.

Nonetheless, at least on the surface, some of the Partners seemed to display a degree of 'wisdom in hindsight' that was not apparent at the time we collectively decided to make the bid, nor during its development. This defensive posture illustrated the fact that we had failed to foster a sense of shared responsibility in the Partnership. It was further evidence that my T₄ aspirational transformation: *Identification* was far from being achieved.

It was interesting that '*securing resources/recognition and influence from the RDA*' as an area in which the LEP could have done better appears as a mirror image of some of the perceived successes of the Partnership. This seemed to

imply that whilst the Partnership had secured a valuable relationship with the RDA, it may have considered itself to have failed to capitalise enough on the available opportunities.

The lack of concerted action linked to the sub-regional strategy featured strongly, although this again was set against some practical successes such as the *'workforce development initiative'* and *'research and intelligence'* mentioned earlier.

'Reviewing/revising the vision and strategy' was likely to be a reflection of the frustration revealed in an interview with Colin Powell regarding the perceived loss of strategic focus in the Partnership as a direct result of the effort extending over 6 months to prepare for, write and deal with the aftermath of the failed SBS bid. He felt that I failed to use or sustain the Strategy Sub-Group while I was focused on writing the bid. Although this was probably fair comment, I felt I could not have handled both things simultaneously. I believed that if Partners wished to pursue a review of the vision and strategy they could and should have let that view be known to the Board, and taken responsibility for it if the Board had agreed. Furthermore, whilst my view was that I was left to manage the Partnership as well as the bidding process, certain other Partners' view was that I had become protective of my Partnership role and that their more proactive involvement might have been discouraged by me.

My enthusiasm for the Partnership and anxiety to make it succeed had indeed become a consuming passion for me, and my identification with the cause maybe had an exclusionary effect. I may unwittingly have erected an invisible barrier around me as I pursued what I admit had become a personal crusade. There was certainly some truth in this view and it is a salutary lesson that I, and perhaps other partnership managers, have to learn. I had identified myself with the LEP so much and felt so much responsibility for its success that others perhaps felt excluded from it as a result. Nissan and Burlingame (2003) and Waide (1999) say that successful collaborations call for driven leaders, but it can also be a double-edged sword if it leads to discord (Purdue and Razzaque,

1999). It may have been possible that my first-person voice had unwittingly muted the emergence of a more coherent Partnership voice.

A number of Partners mentioned 'Partnership cultural and behavioural' issues such as *'embedding our vision'*, *'recognising our own worth'* and issues to do with building a team approach and communications. These all seemed to imply a need for the Partnership to build these norms from within. However, when Partners are working across organizational boundaries, achieving a style and culture that transcends the individual organizations is difficult and takes time. My perception was that there was a good spirit of co-operation and excellent examples of networking within the Partnership, but this now needed to be sustained by developing shared values and behaviours that could support a shared vision and sustain effective Partnership processes (Beresford and Trevillion, 1995).

Lessons from the Partnership Experience

The personal lessons drawn from working in the Partnership tended to emphasize the rigours of partnership working (Huxham and Vangen, 2001).

"Partnership requires hard work and commitment not only at an officer level but at a senior organizational level as well"

[Local Authority]

"It is hard work just understanding the complexities involved"

[Voluntary Sector]

"It is very hard work to make people feel involved and valued"

[HE/FE Sector]

Divided loyalties between work for the partnership and Partners' institutional roles could lead to role ambiguity (Rawson, 1994).

"It is easy to become disconnected from the wider needs and aspirations of the Partnership"

[HE/FE Sector]

Although the rewards for collaboration were acknowledged there was an implicit question as to whether in fact the benefits were worth the costs.

“The commitment of resources to the operation of a successful sub-regional partnership is high and needs to be recognised and supported by the constituent partners”

[HE/FE Sector]

“...however desirable the principle of partnership may be, it is constantly in danger of being outweighed by the difficulty of achieving and maintaining the commitment and actual participation of a range of Partners whose priorities differ”

[Local Authority]

Working across organizational boundaries added significantly to stress as participants tried to extend their labours in a lateral direction in addition to their intra-organizational roles. The exposure to different organizations and personalities was seen to be positive and rewarding (Rowe and Devanney, 2003), but it was relatively easier to achieve single organizational goals than those requiring close working with other organizations with different cultures, priorities, and degrees of status.

Partners had learned personal lessons in the process of engagement through awareness of the importance of tact, diplomacy, and communication skills, especially in the context of increased exposure to interorganizational and interpersonal tensions and rivalries. These are essential reflection and change agency skills, which give hope that the Partnership experience has had real learning value even though collaboration was obviously difficult and frustrating (Hartley et al., 1997). They had increased their awareness of the strategic and political context in which they worked, which should stand the Partners in good stead in the further development of the Partnership.

"I have certainly gained insights and knowledge into the ways of working in the sub-region, and that effort is not output"

[Voluntary Sector]

Ways in which the Partnership has Influenced Partners as Individuals

This question generated 12 definitive points, half of which were related to the benefits of a greater awareness and understanding of the Partnership, Partners, and the sub-region. Four correspondents didn't answer the question, but none actually said they had not been influenced by the Partnership. Influencers mentioned included greater consciousness of the role, strategy, and operations of partner organizations; a greater political awareness; a feeling of being 'opened up' to new ideas and influences; a better knowledge of the sub-region; and a better awareness of funding opportunities and how to access them.

A representative of the voluntary sector summed up their reaction to the question as follows:

"Personally, it has provided a clearer understanding of the big picture (locally) and the importance of this awareness will influence future work... it has freed me up to work across boundaries and develop broader links... to think 'out of boxes'."

Other ways in which individuals said they had been influenced by the LEP were:

- A greater awareness of the effectiveness of partnership working
- A better understanding of the behaviour of 'certain factions' in the Partnership and observation of their 'tendency to try to dominate'
- Insight into the fragility of the Partnership
- How much time is needed to devote to maintaining relationships within the Partnership

The response to this question failed to generate a richness in respondents' experience of partnership working insofar as it had influenced them personally. The fact that four respondents failed to identify anything that influenced them

personally may be a manifestation of their lack of reflection, or a belief that their personal ability to be influenced (as opposed to influencing) is immaterial, e.g. a local authority representative commented:

"In my case, it's the other way round. I try to influence the Partnership's priorities/actions through the intelligence work."

This suggests transformation was largely unidirectional in nature (Hastings, 1996). Nevertheless, the Partnership has clearly influenced some of the Partners and for some quite deeply. There is evidence in particular of a broadening of minds and a greater sensitivity to receive as well as to broadcast messages. Knowing the individuals concerned, it is noticeable that those whom I would have considered 'open and motivated' to collaborate and learn, were the ones who had been most influenced. This suggests that whilst partnership-working can have the effect of widening participants' spheres of being influenced, they perhaps need to be attuned, trained and motivated by their host organizations in the skills and predispositions required to be 'inter-organizational learners' and influencers (Pettigrew, 2003).

Ways in which the Partnership has Influenced the Work of Partners' Organizations

There were 14 identifiable points emerging from the analysis of this question. Only one respondent failed to present an answer to the question. Two respondents said '*not much*' in answering the extent to which their organizations had been influenced by the LEP.

The most important theme reflects the previous question on personal influences, i.e. a heightened awareness of the 'value-added' of interacting with other Partners and organizations through greater awareness of and engagement with them. The ability of the Partnership to act as a framework within which information and intelligence is traded interpersonally was emphasised in the responses. A representative from the HE/FE sector thought that the main influence of the Partnership upon their organization was:

“Strengthening external awareness of our organization through a variety of routes, including being able to test and share our thinking with other Partners.”

For a representative from the private sector the main influence was:

“Improved knowledge of the working of other organizations.”

This contextualised learning seems to be valued by Partners for its own sake, but also as a test bed or touchstone for Partners’ ideas and understandings.

The second broad theme concerned strategic learning. This was partly in the sense of the LEP providing a funnel for ‘bottom-up’ ideas and views to coalesce and emerge within its policies and strategies. It was complemented by closer consideration of issues of subsidiarity in the relationship between Partners and the Partnership, and related constitutional/legal issues. It also included the notion of the LEP’s sifting and sharing priorities based on the needs of the sub-region, and thereby *“setting a context for [Partners’] strategies and actions”*.

Other points made included the following:

- Enabled working on a regional basis.
- Proved need for collaboration as *“imperative for future development”*.

And, at a more basic level,

- Providing a forum for common issues to be discussed.

Extent to which Partners' Views as Individuals and Organizations are Heard and Taken Account of in the Partnership

A simple numerical analysis of respondents' answers to this question is shown below (Tables 6 and 7):

Table 6: In Terms of Me as an Individual

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Yes	1	3	2	1	7
No/Little	1	-	-	-	1
No Response	-	2	-	1	3
TOTAL	2	5	2	2	11

Table 7: In Terms of My Organization

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Yes	2	3	2	1	8
No/Little	-	1	-	1	2
No Response	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	2	5	2	2	11

The results suggested a generally positive response to both questions. Most respondents and organizations felt their views were listened to within the Partnership. There appeared to be only minor discrepancies between the views of respondents as individuals and those made on behalf of their organizations, supporting the view I expressed at the beginning of this chapter that it is difficult to distinguish organizational from personal responses.

A representative from the voluntary sector commented:

"It [the Partnership] has improved... (but) my worry is that 'personalities' will dominate and inhibit progress. Voluntary sector representatives are not confident to challenge funders in all

situations and it will require a strong 'steer' to go forward positively and resist domination by personal crusades or local authorities."

This comment reflects concerns within the Partnership from certain sectors about other sectors, in this case the voluntary sector's suspicions of the local authorities, (interestingly for me, in this response, not the private sector interests). It also highlights again the important influence of personalities, which have a crucial, yet understated bearing on partnership relationships, as exemplified in a micro case study such as this. As Webb (1991) puts it:

'The public policy literatures operate at the level of whole organisations, professions and middle-range theory. Yet practitioners consistently highlight the level of interpersonal relations when discussing coordination and collaboration...What is needed is both theoretical explanation of collaborative behaviour at this level and a way of spanning the mezo and micro levels of explanation (Webb, 1991, page 237, author's emphasis).

This theme is further explored in Chapter 6.

The tensions within the two-tier County were also plainly evident. The district councils felt that their voices were muted within the Partnership because of the role of the County Council in simultaneously representing both the County's and Districts' views on the Partnership Board.

A District Council representative describes this frustration in the following terms:

"Particularly since the formation of the Board, we feel our views are very poorly represented or taken account of in the Partnership. We feel separate to the whole process. Attempts have been made to represent our views to the Board through our representatives and this has taken an inordinate amount of effort for very little return. As the work of the Partnership and the activities of the Board get increasingly irrelevant, less and less effort is made on our part to attend Partnership meetings. One attends because one thinks one should, not because the meetings are useful."

Another district council representative echoes this point:

"This District Council is not seen as one of the key Partners. Our views are expressed through the County Council, and often taken to be an extension of another district council's."

The tension between the Conurbation and County was evidenced by a Conurbation local authority's response, which admitted that the Council deliberately exploited its membership of the LEP and its oft-stated preference to be in a neighbouring region, to gain political concession and leverage in the sub-region. This 'semi-detached' position for such an important player consequently ensured that it was treated seriously within the Partnership:

"In general terms the Council's voice is listened to (possibly because of the need to keep us on board), but there is also a feeling that we are seen as having rather a negative attitude by elements of the private sector. There appears to be no recognition of the Council's legal and community responsibilities, both statutory and voluntary."

Not only did the local authority feel that its interests were not best served within the LEP, it also acknowledged tensions with the private sector, which found working within the rigours of the Council's statutory role and remit and time-consuming political and governance processes frustrating.

These were interesting vignettes illustrating the fact that the various interests in the Partnership took up very different stances and justified their behaviour with reference to their own felt 'peculiarities'. The issue was whether the various ambiguities and paradoxes could be managed to prevent them becoming conflicts that threatened the very existence of the Partnership. On the evidence of this data, the LEP will have to work continuously and diligently at relationship building, mending, and re-building, on a bi- and multi-lateral basis, in order to sustain itself, far less progress to higher levels of Partnership consciousness and transformation. This will take concerted effort and nurturing over time (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2000b). On this evidence, T₄: *Identification*, achieving primacy of sub-regional issues over parochial, defensive organizational perspectives, appeared a transformation too far at this stage for the LEP.

My reflection was that these differences in attitude and perspective between the Partners was being openly articulated, but in the process also being implicitly tolerated for the sake of continuity. This is an important learning point for partnerships – the fact that real and perceived differences, in some cases fundamental and politically rooted, were not seen as reasons to break away from the Partnership but rather a reason to stay within it. There were clear parallels with pacts and blocs in international politics, where the overriding concern to preserve peace amongst potentially fractious partners keep them within the grouping, despite often fundamental differences: the United Kingdom, NATO and the EU are obvious examples.

These inter-sectoral differences were both latent and passive, and responded to the changing relationships between Partners, and between Partners and the Partnership. Thus, we can discern the following arenas of sectoral tension (Rowe and Devanney, 2003) e.g.:

- Districts -v- County
- County -v- Conurbation
- Voluntary sector -v- Local Authorities
- Local Authorities -v- Private Sector

Mutual suspicion and mistrust are hard to avoid in partnerships (Huxham and Vangen, 2000a, 2001). Webb states that *'trust represents one estimation of the likelihood that things will not go wrong'* (page 238, author's emphasis). Yet the recognition that this is the nature of the Partnership beast seems to be growing, thus ameliorating to some extent the fragility of some relationships within the LEP. In other words the Partners (perhaps unlike the author!) did not have unrealistic expectations about working through the LEP or its ability to add value in the short term. This may be taken as evidence of a maturing process through heightened awareness stimulated by Partners' involvement in the partnership process. The fact that only one organization, the Brookshire Wildlife Trust, had left the Partnership since its inception (and not owing to any reasons of conflict) was testimony to some degree of current acceptance or future expectation among the Partners that they were better off within the LEP than outside. Partly

at least this might be because the risks were relatively low (Mayer et al., 1995). The irony was that their mutual mistrust – the fear of the ‘other side’ getting more airplay – appeared to keep them engaged. It might not have accentuated the positive aspects of Partnership working, but it seemed to reduce the negative.

Perception of Power Differentials within the Partnership

The precise question asked was related to the theme of the previous section, viz. *‘Do you feel that any individual or organization has a greater say/influence than any other individual/organization. (Please state whether this has a negative or positive impact in your view.)’*

The question was designed to tease out of respondents any concerns and perhaps fears about the dominance of any one particular organization or faction within the Partnership. This goes to the root of my study theme: do all Partners have an equal say in the running of a partnership, and should some Partners (be) more equal than others? If so, on what basis can/should ‘grades’ of Partnership membership be acknowledged and accepted – on the basis perhaps of budgets, financial stakes, political influence, reputation, personalities, etc? (e.g. French and Raven, 1960; Raven, 1965) The question of equality had a particular bearing on such an inclusive, multisectoral and diverse Partnership as the LEP and also the trajectory of equality issues through time (e.g. Gittel and Vidal, 1998; Hastings et al., 1996). The issue had also become more pointed since the establishment of the Partnership Board, which effectively focused power on particular interests and individuals, whilst attempting within the limits of a 12 person Board to represent as many of the key organizations and interests as possible. Effectively this move asserted a degree of hierarchy in the Partnership structure that focused power more closely on ‘key partners’ with the inevitable result that some Partners felt more marginalised than before when network was the primary mode of governance (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998).

The results (Table 8) were revealing, and confirm the tensions discussed in the previous section.

Table 8: Do You Feel that any Individual or Organization has a Greater Say/Influence than any other Individual/Organization?

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Yes	2	5	2	1	10
No/Little	-	-	-	-	-
No Response	-	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	2	5	2	2	11

All responses confirmed a perception that indeed power within the Partnership was skewed, but unsurprisingly not in favour of respondents' own interests. In other words, comments made about whom respondents felt had most power showed that every group seemed to think that another had more say/influence than they did. In a sense, from a *Partnership* perspective, this could be viewed as a far more positive result than from the viewpoint of any individual Partner. It showed a healthy (or perhaps not so healthy) suspicion that other Partners were perceived to wield relatively greater power, suggesting that power was perhaps more evenly distributed than different Partners individually realised.

The results seemed to imply that Partners each considered themselves relatively disempowered compared to others. It suggested that if they became more aware of the power that they already had or could acquire, and used it more effectively, then those with more power would have to take notice. This implies a view of power more as a variable than as a finite concept (Craig and Mayo, 1995; Mayo and Anastacio, 1999; Mayo and Taylor, 2001). If power is conceptualised in variable and fluid terms, then increased knowledge and critical understanding could enable Partners to acquire power, becoming more equal partners in the process (Healey, 1997; Rowe and Devanney, 2003). As with the complex area of trust it may be that power can be constantly reproduced through our day-to-day activities and interactions (Gambetta, 1988).

The strength of perceived feeling about issues of power inequalities can be gauged by the following direct quotes:

“Inter-faction squabbling is counter productive and positively damaging to our aims”

[Private Sector]

“I am more aware of the tendency of certain factions to try and dominate”

[Private Sector]

“Organizational tensions need to be resolved behind the scenes and not made public”

[Local Authority]

“Those who shout loudest are not necessarily right”

[Voluntary Sector]

“Control of the Partnership by a small group will not work”

[Local Authority]

“Making sure everyone has an equal voice is difficult... lines of communication are not clear”

[Local Authority]

“Papering over the cracks doesn’t work long term”

[Voluntary Sector]

“There is a tendency to concern ourselves with the structure and political balance and forget the raison d’etre...”

[Local Authority]

A representative from the private sector cited the TEC and me personally as having greater influence than other Partners, reflecting its convening role (Gray, 1989):

“This has been a function of the administrative realities but has not been negative.”

Two (separate) responses from the HE/FE sector pointed to the perceived power of the local authorities. One said:

"I believe that the local authorities have far more influence and certainly a far greater say than they should. This is achieved by their doubling their numbers at Board meetings through sending officials with their elected members, with highly negative effects."

This response echoed the views of George Patterson who in an interview responded as follows to the question of who had most power in the Partnership and why:

"The local authorities, because, principally, of the staff who are 'seconded'. The Partnership is just an extension of their day jobs. When it comes to strategic direction the business sector is quite powerful. They have to make decisions and get on with it whether they are good or bad. They don't deal in endless bureaucracies, whilst the local authorities are dominated by it. As for the voluntary sector they regard almost anything as an excuse to hold their hand out for money. You rarely hear impartial, strategic thinking from the voluntary sector. I think for the private sector it is early days in terms of their potential influence"

Clearly, the very practical issue of capacity to collaborate is critical and is one very good reason why some partners were able to influence and exert power more than others, in this case, particularly the local authorities (Lowndes et al., 1997; McArthur, 1995).

A voluntary sector Partner cited the domination of BCCI, its co-location and close links with BLB and 'big' business. As with George Patterson, she also believed that the local authorities were important arbiters of opinion, power and influence within the Partnership, because of the time and resource they were able to invest in it relative to other Partners whose resources were more constrained.

Local authorities themselves also acknowledged this point:

"The influence that individuals and organizations exert depends on the time they are prepared to commit to the LEP."

"I don't think it is so much about greater influence, but more about the ability to participate actively. This may give the impression that some organizations have more influence than those less able to participate."

A local authority (corporate response) seemed to emphasize the power of the private sector, rather than the 'power through resource allocation' of the public sector, and local authorities in particular:

"The private sector appears to have a major influence, which may be 'right'. However, there appears to be poor recognition of the local authorities' statutory or fiduciary constraints/responsibilities."

The response seemed to accept that there ought to be a 'balance of power', and that it may be right that this is located within the private sector. (This is reflected in the fact that the sub-region's most prominent businessman chaired the Partnership Board). However, a representative from the voluntary sector argued that: *"A true partnership recognises that it is the sum of its parts that is its strength"* suggesting a more egalitarian distribution of power should be an explicit aim of the Partnership.

As illustrated and referenced above, the tension of interorganizational mistrust is a classic fault-line in democratic structures of all kinds and produces 'power gradients' that are the root of most discontent and conflict. The democratic ideal is for all Partners to have an equal say and opportunity to influence (Hardy et al., 1992). In practice, people and organizations have unequal resources at their disposal: unequal skills and knowledge; unequal degrees of relevance to the core purpose of the Partnership domain; unequal degrees of vested authority; different degrees of spatial/functional responsibilities; and unequal power through personality, reputation, status, resource availability and dependence (Hastings et al., 1996; Vangen and Huxham, 2003a).

My own experience has been to move from a purist position of promoting equality of influence among the Partners, especially in the earlier phases of LEP's existence, to one where I have had to recognise, post the establishment of the LEP Board, that some individuals and organizations have to be

recognised as more equal than others. Working against this grain and this reality is counter-productive in the long run, and has convinced me that democracy in its purest sense cannot be made to fit an inherently unequal group of Partners who make up such a complex interorganizational partnership. Somewhere between one particular organization's or individual's domination and total equality there is an infinite combination of possible imbalances that can still possibly work, and these combinations of imbalances are blind and can change very quickly (Holland and Blackburn, 1998).

The challenge for the partnership manager is to recognise the reality and shifting nature of imbalance in order to mitigate the most damaging aspects of inequality or even iniquity, yet to avoid the tendency for tails to wag dogs. The latter tendency is particularly evident in the case of the district councils, which had a great say in Partnership affairs pre-Board, but a more limited role post-Board. Overall, I believe that this had actually helped the Partnership become more strategic, and countered the frustration of some organizations that the influence they had was without any accompanying responsibility for the matters they were attempting to influence. On the other hand, the shift in power away from the District Councils had left them feeling bruised and isolated (see previous section), which posed a threat to the future integrity of the LEP.

By far the most important lesson was the difficulty in overcoming perceived unequal distribution of power and influence (e.g. Hastings et al., 1996; Mayo, 1997), even in this strategic as opposed to a community-based partnership, where one would expect to see marked power differentials. This then reveals itself in further difficulties such as unequal commitment, varying and changing foci (or a general lack of focus), inertia because of the fear of change or putting at risk perceived power bases, and a lack of pooled resource. Most of the lessons were derived from negative experience, which was perhaps not surprising. However, some Partners took a philosophical approach to the Partnership, simply highlighting that it was hard work, but that they believed there were consequent benefits to be gained by working together. These lessons appeared to imply that the LEP needed to focus on power issues (Balloch and Taylor, 2001b) if it was truly to become a 'learning' Partnership, but

my feel for the tone of the comments suggested that they were written from a desire to be open and honest in order for learning and progress to take place rather than as a criticism.

The overwhelming feeling from the Partnership was that it had major concerns over the distribution of power and that it was a zero-sum game: 'the more you exert power, the less I have the opportunity to do so'. It revealed quite stark suspicions that 'others' within the Partnership set out to dominate it and these fears were as much intra-sectoral as inter-sectoral. The deployment of power was almost universally inferred more as a negative than as a positive energy. It was seen as something to be mistrusted more than celebrated, even if that power was not targeted against any other Partner, and even if the results of its deployment may have brought benefits to the Partnership. There was virtually no conception of power as a Partnership resource. It was rather seen as a feature of the various sectors, clans and factions within the Partnership acting out of their own self-interest. In other words the Partnership was playing back to me their first and second voices, not recognising the possibility of the third voice, that of the Partnership itself. The full power potential of the Partnership as an entity was hardly conceived of in any meaningful sense, reflecting the point made earlier that the LEP was, in contrast to my first voice, not seen as a vehicle for transformation, but merely as a platform to debate and co-ordinate within the existing paradigm defined by pre-existing power relations between the sectors, factions and organizations operating within the Partnership domain.

Extent to which Partners Derive Benefits from Being a Member of the Partnership

This was a two-part question asking respondents to identify any benefits from involvement with the Partnership as an individual as well as for their organizations. I was interested in the replies to both open questions in their own right, as well as to discern any differences between the answers from the different perspectives.

Table 9 summarises the numerical results for individuals in terms of mentions of reported benefits by each sector. Encouragingly, there was a rich response to the question with a total of 25 mentions of perceived benefits from the 8 respondents. There was a particularly strong response from the local authorities to this question. No respondent considered there had not been any benefits deriving from their participation in the Partnership.

The most frequently mentioned benefit identified by Partners concerned the opportunity to learn. This benefit was described both in terms of learning about other individuals, organizations, and providing a broader context within which Partners could define their own policies and actions (University of Warwick et al., 2003). The exchange of information was also cited and included in this category. This may be at the most simplistic end of the collaboration continuum (Himmelman, 1996) but is nevertheless fundamental to mutually beneficial networking.

Networking was the second most frequently mentioned benefit, which may also be considered a channel for learning, although the precise benefits were not articulated clearly.

Table 9: The Main Benefits of Being a Member of the Partnership for you

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Learning Channel	2	4	1	-	7
Networking	-	3	2	1	6
Collaboration	1	4	-	-	5
Access to funding	1	2	-	-	3
No Response	1	1	-	1	3
Access to THE RDA	-	1	-	-	1
None	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	5	15	3	2	25

Opportunities to go further than networking were separately identified in the Table, as efforts to work together with Partners on joint projects, and testing new ideas, collectively labelled 'collaboration'.

More pragmatic benefits included 'access to funding' and 'access to the RDA', which was probably also related to funding, as well as a powerful channel for influencing the RDA in policy terms. Resource dependency and getting closer to perceived sources of power were thus powerful motivators (Alter and Hage, 1993; Stewart, 1994).

The results from the second half of the question, regarding organizational benefits deriving from membership of the Partnership, showed a similar pattern of results to the previous question. Again there was a rich response. The 10 respondents elicited 26 mentions of benefits they felt their organizations had enjoyed through LEP membership (Table 10). The local authorities were the most 'vocal', and again there were no respondents who claimed there were no benefits.

Table 10: The Main Benefits of Being a Member of the Partnership for your Organization

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Learning Channel	2	3	2	2	9
Networking	1	3	1	1	6
Access to the RDA	-	4	-	-	4
Collaboration	1	3	-	-	4
Access to funding	1	1	-	-	2
No Response	-	1	-	-	1
None	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	5	15	3	3	26

The results again emphasised the learning benefits of membership, with access to information, intelligence and knowledge featuring strongly, as well as widening horizons and providing a sub-regional context within which individual

organizations could position themselves. This may be said to be related to the concept of building 'social capital' through widening networks (e.g. Davies, J. K., 2001; Gittel and Vidal, 1998).

Some selected quotes illustrate the point:

"Knowledge of key organizations and individuals within the sub-region"

[HE/FE Sector]

"We are better informed (at Board and organization level) of the potential that can be achieved through Partnership activities"

[Voluntary Sector]

"A wider strategic overview of the economic drivers that affect the District"

[Local Authority]

Networking again featured strongly in a variety of guises. A number of the responses included under this heading might be termed 'purposive networking' in the sense that some Partners were very keen to let their points of view be known to other Partners.

A few examples illustrate the point:

"Opportunities to influence the sub-region"

[Local Authority]

"Having the opportunity to put forward the small business perspective and vocalise the way issues affect the economic sector which is so important in the sub-region"

[Private Sector]

"It helps to demonstrate the contribution of the voluntary sector to the economic life of the area"

[Voluntary Sector]

“Increase in awareness and respect for a Partner’s capabilities”

[HE/FE Sector]

Despite the stated learning benefits from LEP membership, no responses to this question seemed to indicate a willingness to *be influenced*, as opposed to *influencing* others.⁴ This implies that Partners went into collaborative and networking activities with more of a will to promulgate their own points of view than to listen and learn from colleagues in partner organizations. This balance between influencing and being influenced may not be optimal for enhanced personal and partnership learning and transformation to take place and is illustrative of unidirectional rather than mutual transformation (Hastings, 1996).

The other results reflected those from the previous question, with collaborative activities, access to the RDA and access to funding featuring as benefits of Partnership membership and involvement.

Reflecting on the answers to both questions, I draw three tentative conclusions. Firstly, learning channels and opportunities represent the strongest perceived benefits of Partnership working. Even other categories of answer such as networking, access to the RDA and collaboration may be considered to be related closely to a desire and perceived benefit from knowing their fellow Partners better, both in personal and organizational terms. In fact learning in the Partnership to date, which had largely involved the sharing of information, knowledge and intelligence, and building a shared understanding of the local economy’s structure and dynamics, may be a necessary precursor to closer collaboration and joint policy-making and action in the future (Himmelman, *op. cit.*). Building personal and organizational networks has clearly been beneficial to Partners and the closer involvement between executives and organizations promises to reduce barriers to future understanding and co-operation and open the door to further transformation.

⁴ See for example ‘Ways in which the Partnership has influenced partners as individuals’ above.

Secondly, the similarities in the answers to the questions (e.g. three respondents offered the same answers to both questions) illustrate the close correspondence between individuals and individuals responding on behalf of their organizations. This suggests that organizational policies, cultures, strategies, etc, are not as important in understanding the transformational dynamics of partnerships as the views and personalities of particular individuals (Austin, 2000). This is not to say that their organizations have no effect on their views and attitudes, but it does suggest that building effective partnerships depends radically on the competencies and collaborative attitudes and leadership skills of those executives working across boundaries, and that these need to be nurtured and developed if the potential benefits from partnership working are to be fully realised (Chrislip and Larson, 1994; Hartley et al., 1997; Williams, 2002). I return to this point in my final chapter.

Finally, the answers again suggest that the engagement of Partners to date had failed to go beyond a relatively narrow perspective on the opportunities for inter-organizational co-operation that transcended the predilections of individual organizations. As I reflect above, respondents often viewed the Partnership as a vehicle to peddle their own issues and ideas, rather than to plan and work together about what might be best for the sub-region as a whole, exploiting the skills and resources of all the Partners rather than just satisfying each organization's individual objectives and priorities. The primacy of the individual organizational view was still very evident, and may have served to hinder higher order transformational change. In order to overcome these barriers, which may be as much self-imposed as organizationally motivated, I believe that new forms of partnership working need to be engendered with individuals empowered and trained to work on issues and opportunities outside of their narrow job confines, knowledge bases and professional associations (Pettigrew, 2003). The premium would be on people with competencies and capacities to work *meta-organizationally* as well as *inter-organizationally*.

Again, the strong message the Partnership was giving me was that the Partnership worked well as a network, but the benefits did not go much beyond that conception. A network did not need the kind of governance structure the

Partnership had put in place to guide its strategy and activities. There did not appear to be any ambitions expressed by the Partnership to function at any higher level than it was already operating at in terms of transformation of the Partnership into a powerful entity greater than the sum of its parts able to influence powerful organizations both within the LEP and externally.

Extent to which Partners Derive Disbenefits from Being a Member of the Partnership

This was again a double-headed question designed to elicit the extent to which the LEP had imposed disbenefits on members. The first question, as previously, dealt with disbenefits from respondents as individuals (Table 11), and the second focused on their organizations' perspectives (Table 12).

Both questions received a relatively poor response, which suggested that respondents perhaps perceived more benefits than disbenefits, although the survey did not elicit the relative strength of feeling behind the points mentioned. There were four non-responses to the first question, which again suggested that disbenefits of partnership working did not seem to figure in at least some individual perceptions. There were no real significant differences between the responses from an individual or organizational perspective, again reinforcing the idea that individuals and their organizations were not distinguishable.

Not surprisingly, time constraints and the danger of overload were by far the most commonly mentioned complaint (Nissan and Burlingame, 2003; Stewart, 2002). This issue included opportunity cost, and reflects the obvious fact that most partnership work was essentially additional to the normal workloads of public and voluntary sector personnel and business people (Selsky, 1991). The last named group often complained that they found it most difficult to give up the time for Partnership activities because their jobs often had little to do with the subject area, whereas for, say TEC and Local Authority executives, the intrinsic issues were more part and parcel of their everyday jobs. However, to tackle them in partnership still meant a huge extra commitment of these executives' time.

Table 11: The Main Disbenefits of being a Member of the Partnership for you

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Time/Workload	2	3	1	1	7
Complexities/Overlaps	1	-	-	1	2
Inefficiencies/Bureaucracy	1	-	-	1	2
None	-	-	-	-	-
No Response	-	2	1	1	4
TOTAL	4	5	2	4	15

Complexities and overlaps, and related points concerning overlaps with existing organizations and partnerships such as the Lifelong Learning Partnership⁵ also featured quite strongly.

Table 12: The Main Disbenefits of Being a Member of the Partnership for your Organization

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Time/Workload	2	1	1	3	7
Complexities/Overlaps	1	2	-	3	6
Inefficiencies/Bureaucracy	1	2	-	-	3
No Response	-	1	1	-	2
TOTAL	4	6	2	6	18

A selection of quotes point up the difficulties:

"The sub-regional tier is one of 7 levels of governance operating in Brookshire. For the County Council this creates issues of complexity, duplication and competing priorities.

⁵ The Lifelong Learning Partnership (LLP) had two main roles: to promote provider collaboration in support of lifelong learning and to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration.

For the public it is probably incomprehensible”

[Local Authority]

“There is a danger that the time required to play an active part is greater than any real benefit occurring....”

[HE/FE Sector]

“We need more resourcing and team building”

[Voluntary Sector]

“The main disbenefit is trying to match Chilton Council’s priorities with those of the LEP”

[Local Authority]

My overall reflection on these responses was that they reinforced the need to consider new forms of partnership interactions that allow executives and members the time and freedom to tackle closely inter-related issues in a concerted manner (Poxton, 1999; Williams, 2002). The fact that the work has to be done by executives on top of their current responsibilities, with little or no specific training or back-up, and often with one organizational hand tied behind their backs, illustrated the difficulty in making partnerships work. In this sense the complex organizational structure of the LEP, consisting of many varied, but essentially institutionalized, perspectives at various levels can be considered an inhibitor to progress (Osborn and Hagedoorn, 1997; Stewart, 2002). On the other hand, it might be that this is a price worth paying in order to maintain the richness and ‘natural’ complexity of the system, and to prevent the emergence of another super-bureaucracy at sub-regional level. This was something that George Patterson, Chairman of the Partnership, was very keen to avoid.

It was clear that the issue of resources, of people, skills, time and money inhibited the ability of the Partnership to function as an entity and to express its third voice. It is such an obvious issue with multiorganizational partnerships that it is almost taken for granted to be the ‘natural order’. However, its importance as a barrier to effective partnership-working cannot be overstated, especially as

'partnership' is so often projected by politicians and governments as a panacea for tackling complex societal and community issues.

Ideas on How the Administration, Chairmanship, or Facilitation of the Partnership could be Improved

This question was partly designed to allow us to understand how we could improve our leadership and administrative performance, to gauge Partners' thinking on how the LEP might develop and to elicit clues on the extent to which Partners still felt committed to the Partnership. For the purposes of the thesis I have decided to omit the detailed responses to this question because they are not relevant to my main focus.

If there was a theme in the comments about the administration of the Partnership it was that most respondents seem to value a strong, independent, and financially secure secretariat, and thereby one which all the Partners could trust (Spekman et al., 1996). This reflected the fact that the secretariat's host organizations, previously the TEC and subsequently BCCI, were also members of the LEP in their own right. Neither could be considered independent no matter how skilled, objective, or fastidiously the function was undertaken. Clearly Partners perceived ambiguities in the interventions of the secretariat if there was any doubt about the inherent motivations governing actions. The Board's desire not to create a separate Partnership bureaucracy was understandable, but there was clearly a strong desire for the LEP to have its own independent secretariat, a view shared by Carley (2000). The question was whether the Partners would be willing to show their commitment to this idea by financing it.

Comments on the functioning of the Partnership were harder to categorize, ranging from the perennial Partnership issue of fostering better communications (Nixon, 1980; Williamson, 2001), to more reflective points about the negative effects of game playing (Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Vangen and Huxham, 2003a) and the need to foster a greater capacity for self-criticism, and by

implication, greater openness and honesty about confronting some of the problems we faced (Hartley et al., 1997).

It was evident that some local authorities felt excluded from the agenda setting process and this was clearly causing frustration (Gaventa, 1991). As mentioned earlier, however, my perception was that Partners rarely provided me with agenda items for the Chairman to consider, so I took it upon myself to 'drive' the agenda with the Board. There was no bar to Partners contributing to agendas, although that was clearly a perception in some quarters. What I did not know and could not assess was whether this was a real perception or merely a convenient excuse not to have made an effort to contribute. I acknowledge that it probably suited me to control the Partnership Board agenda through setting the agendas of Board meetings and influencing what was communicated via carefully worded minutes that probably emphasized what I wanted Partners to understand in content and tone by the language that I used (Lawrence et al., 1999). I return to this point in Chapter 7.

Thus, a key conclusion would be that the Partnership could not develop its own identity and voice without an independent secretariat. My efforts to be impartial in my dealings with the Partnership were ultimately futile as I was identified with the TEC and the TEC faction in the Partnership, and that was how, on reflection, I viewed myself as I demonstrate in the following chapter.

The Major Issues the Partnership Now Needs to Tackle

The final question in the survey was designed to encourage the Partnership to articulate its priorities for future action, now that the SBS issue was resolved. There were no non-responses, and each response provided nearly four mentions of issues (on average) that Partners felt the LEP needed to tackle.

The results are summarised in Table 13. I have classified the comments broadly into the headings shown, and are explained below:

Table 13: Priorities for Partnership Action as Perceived by the Partners

	<i>HE/FE</i>	<i>LA</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Comm/Vol</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Substantive Activities	2	9	3	2	16
Constitution	-	5	-	2	7
Style and Behaviours	2	4	1	4	11
Relationships	-	3	3	-	6
No Response	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	4	21	7	8	40

Substantive Activities

These were practical tasks that respondents felt the Partnership should tackle, and represented the most numerous category. These were mainly concerned with revising/reviewing the sub-regional strategy and improving the 'visioning' capability of the Partnership. Local Authorities were responsible for more than half the mentions of this point, perhaps reflecting a heightened strategic awareness of the speed of change in Government-sponsored initiatives since the original strategy was written, e.g. the creation of the local LSC to replace the TEC; a new organization to replace BLB; new duties for local authorities to look after the social and economic well-being of their communities; and to foster strategic partnerships within communities. Other tasks mentioned included better efforts to raise the public profile of the LEP; to take up the opportunities coming out of the recent urban and rural White Papers and the creation of the LSC and SBS; and in gathering research and intelligence.

Styles and Behaviours

This was the second most often mentioned category of response. Half of the answers given concerned a desire for the LEP to become more action-oriented. The key phrases and words were '*work programmes*', '*action*', '*implementation*', '*funding and resources*', although interestingly and perhaps surprisingly the private sector respondents did not mention any of these points. This would

accord with my experience in working with the Board where the private sector representatives preferred to act in the role of strategic decision-makers at a high political level rather than in an operational capacity, which they were usually content to leave to Partners with the staff and resource capacity. Other behavioural comments made were a plea for “*more equitable participation*”, a clearer focus on cross-border issues in the Partnership’s deliberations, and a greater sense of ‘*focus*’, ‘*information flows*’ and ‘*more events to stimulate a feeling that the Partnership really exists*’. This oblique reference was interesting as it indicated that the Partnership did not seem real to some of its members. The feeling was that the Partnership existed in the ether rather than in conscious reality – hence perhaps many of the comments about getting down to task and process. On the other hand, these responses again indicated a limited conception of the transformational potential of the Partnership.

Constitutional Issues

These points were a concern principally for the local authorities and voluntary sector. The former group were particularly anxious that the structure of the LEP’s sub-groups should be revised. This response was probably closely related to the substantive issue of reviewing the sub-regional strategy, which was also principally a concern for the local authorities. Both groups were also keen that the Partnership addressed ‘*constitutional issues*’ (unspecified) and ‘*terms of reference*’, and one respondent from each of the local government and voluntary sectors respectively mentioned the need to address ‘*subsidiarity*’ and ‘*accountability*’ issues. Based on the evidence of the sample of respondents, these issues did not feature at all for the HE/FE and private sectors, reflecting again the substantially different approach adopted by the local authorities in the Partnership, with a much greater awareness of and concern for governance and strategic issues than the other sectors.

Relationships

The final category of ‘issue’ identified concerned the perceived need to foster close relationships with the new local LSC and NBL, to strengthen our influence

with the RDA by paying closer attention to communication channels with the agency, and to *'strengthen facilitation between partnerships'*. The last point was made by a private sector representative, and was probably a reference to a perceived need better to understand the roles and responsibilities of other partnerships operating in the area and the LEP's relationship with them. The proliferation of partnerships in response to uncoordinated Government exhortation had caused doubts about whether the LEP's work and concerns were being duplicated elsewhere (Stewart, 2002).

Generally, the substantive tasks suggested a strong partnership wish to take action at both strategic and operational levels. There was a long list of positive activities that respondents perceived would enhance the role of the LEP, and thereby the Partnership itself. Knowing what I know about the local authorities' views, I was not surprised that reviewing the strategy was seen as so important. Even though I authored the strategy (with Partner inputs) I never thought of it as being anything other than a manifesto of intent, rather than a blueprint. My own sympathies lay with those respondents and responses that emphasized the 'getting on with it' angle rather than the tiresome process of political negotiation over a new strategy, which would consume a lot of time and resource at a significant opportunity cost in terms of lost action. I firmly believed that the best strategy would be one that was kept under review in the light of our learning from action.

With regard to governance issues, as stated above these particularly exercised the local authorities. Many of the points made were generally headlines or slogans rather than evidence-based arguments, and hardly any solutions were offered – despite the fact that there was a whole A4 page provided for comments. This category seemed to generate a plethora of fairly poorly articulated criticisms of the Partnership's governance. This suggested a dilemma: would perceived 'better' governance produce a more confident, transformational Partnership, or would a more confident, transformational Partnership eclipse any concerns about governance? My own view was the latter, and I would not want to see scarce Board and executive resources tied up in the minutiae of administration, which is a potential political minefield in the

context of so many organizations making up the Partnership and who would need to be consulted. There was a real danger that the LEP would tie itself in knots over such issues and cause further frustration among those who wanted to see the Partnership carving out a clear unambiguous role for itself, and proactively tackling the issues identified in the sub-regional strategy.

The responses on relationships generally reflected the new institutional landscape. The RDA emerged as an important source of credibility for the LEP as its recognised sub-regional Partnership and a potential source of extra funding. The local LSC, having just taken over the functions of the TEC and the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), was also highlighted, alongside the NBL, which had by now replaced BLB as the sub-region's source of support for SMEs. It seemed right, therefore, in the light of dynamic membership that the Partnership should put effort into creating positive relationships with these bodies, both for the sake of clarity of responsibilities and coherence of effort (Lawrence et al., 1999).

The LEP could also have an important part to play in helping the RDA and the local LSC achieve their strategic objectives by mobilising local public, private and voluntary sector resources. This responsibility could generate additional funding for the Partnership, thus helping to sustain its resources to undertake future activities. In turn, the LEP could enhance its strategy-building capacity through conscious learning derived from operations.

However, I foresaw a danger that the LEP might struggle in the short-term to engage with and build clear relationships with the local LSC and NBL. These organizations would take time to become established in their new roles, and would determine for themselves their relationships with each other, their new stakeholders and the Partnership itself. The new LEP executive/secretariat would also need to prove to be a workable solution following the demise of the TEC, able to sustain the Partnership and provide sound advice for the Board.

Conclusion

I consider in this concluding section some of the most important findings and reflections deriving from the survey reported above in trying to elicit the Partnership's voice, followed by some final thoughts on the methodological issues that underpin this chapter.

Reflections on findings

Undertaking the Partnership Survey was an important stage of self assessment for the Partnership at a watershed in its existence and my close involvement with it. The TEC and BLB were about to be overtaken and I as Partnership Manager had already departed. The survey was my parting shot, and my presentation to the Partners of the results of the survey was a chance to look back on where we had come from and the new challenges the LEP now faced. This was a real survey for the Partnership as it endorsed my interpretations of their reflections and I have tried to draw out the salient points in terms of the focus of my thesis.

It was disappointing that the response rate was so low but it gave a good indication that, for a variety of reasons I suggest under the Meta-analysis section of this chapter, that there was little commitment to or identification with the Partnership. It was treated more as a virtual than real entity and there was little or no ambition for transformation as heard in the third voice, even at Board level. The Board's response to the survey which they had commissioned was effectively a lack of response. I fed back the results to a Partnership meeting in a balanced way so that the negatives were counter-balanced where possible with the positives reflecting the way in which the instrument was constructed. However, there was no doubting the degree of unsurprised resignation in the room about the lack of coherence within the Partnership, the mutual suspicions that existed within it, and the fact that that the LEP was characterized more as a network than a real partnership by its members.

I was also disappointed that having gone to such lengths to provide a survey instrument that was designed as a developmental tool with a lot of care in its construction was largely ignored or treated perfunctorily. I knew all of the Partners personally, so this was not like an externally administered instrument where you might expect a low and limited response. However, it was clear that whilst I was interested in transformational possibilities, reflected in the design of the questionnaire offering the opportunity for members to think, reflect and articulate a Partnership voice, the Partnership was not. This did not offend me so much as a researcher as it did as a practitioner and colleague of the many non-respondents. The lack of imagination, hope, faith, and expectation in regard to the Partnership was at odds with my conception of the possibilities, which I accept perhaps illustrates as much a naiveté on my part as a lack of ambition and imagination within the Partnership.

The different approaches and levels of interest and effort between sectors was also marked and remarked upon, with little evidence of a true third voice, that of the Partnership, but rather the second voices of the rival sectors and groups that made up the LEP. It was interesting that the Partnership meeting genuinely seemed to be disappointed that its voice as articulated through the survey failed to provide a more positive or optimistic conclusion, even though they provided the data that constructed their voice. The Partners seemed to consider the LEP as something they wanted to value in theory, but which they could or would not nurture in practice. In reality there was no Partnership discourse at a level above its constituent parts as reflected in the responses and quotes detailed in this chapter.

Disappointingly also, the survey results had shown little evidence of any interest or ambition for the Partnership to become anything more than a vehicle for coordinating existing effort and with a limited conception of how it might change and develop. Mutual transformation was still limited by most Partners who saw the Partnership as a way to access resources, 'have their say' and impart their views on others. There was some good evidence of mutual learning taking place, but it was not at the transformational level of partners' listening, learning and changing their positions and attitudes to the Partnership and Partners in

general. There was certainly no evidence of Partners' *Identification* with the Partnership as 'owners' of it, and far less committing to the LEP as the vehicle to transform the sub-region.

There was some frustration that the Partnership had not been more dynamic and successful, but paradoxically at the same time there was a desire to make the LEP work. There was no doubt that it had achieved a tremendous amount of interaction between organizations and individuals that had built up a degree of shared understanding, good-will and trust that hopefully would stand the Partnership in good stead for the future. Maybe nothing much had been achieved that could be said to have transformed the Partners, Partnership or sub-region, but perhaps it would take a few years or so of practical experience before the Partnership could go on to the next stage of transformation. Too many partnerships, especially those mandated by Government, are set up and expected to perform far too quickly before the time for relationship-building, and to a degree first of all relationship un-building, has had sufficient time to develop (Stewart, 2002).

Issues of power and influence were particularly poignant as each Partner considered that another had more power and influence than it enjoyed. This may have reflected some of the negative connotations that the word 'power' seems to convey. It is often viewed pejoratively and enviously as 'power over' rather than 'power with' and 'power to'. It may be just as likely that the organization or individual deemed as having power will feel those bestowing it on them actually possess more themselves. This leads to the idea that if we could somehow surface and celebrate the power of all the members of the Partnership, accepting its different forms and the inequalities, there would be a better chance of the Partnership recognizing and harnessing all its power resources and putting them to work better for the benefit of all. If power could be seen as renewable, a resource capable of generating further power, we could possibly accelerate trust and mutual transformation.

In addition, there was an identifiable tension and suspicion between sectors within the Partnership that underpinned Partners relationships and which limited

transformational capacity. There were also factions and partnerships within the Partnership based on historical loyalties and local factional rivalries that betrayed an enduring mutual suspicion and mistrust. In fact this insight defined the Partnership. Distinctive voices emerged from the Partnership but they were discordant: there was no coherent Partnership voice. It begged questions about the roles and attitudes of individuals vis-a-vis organizations as entities and the impact this had on transformational and power possibilities. I explore this key issue in the following chapter.

The results of the survey illustrate a Partnership that was still in its infancy, with few underpinning processes in place and little substantive track record of achievement that could not have been achieved had the LEP not existed. Its third-person identity, as was seen in the previous chapter as well as this, was based on strong relatively low level networking where Partners enjoyed working together and learned a lot from each other, and a nascent Board not sufficiently mature, stable, integrated or confident of acting decisively and with authority. As we saw from the previous chapter, this meant that the Partnership's ability to harness its potential power was overshadowed and undermined by the second voice power of the clans and sectors. So where did I stand in relation to these factions and how did my own practice and power as Partnership manager impact upon the Partnership and thereby colour my first-person interpretive voice? It is to this aspect of my thesis I turn in the following chapter.

Reflections on methodological issues

To what extent are my reflections on the survey's findings a function of the methodology I adopted?

I accept that the length and degree of openness of the questionnaire may have deterred Partners from responding. I may also have underestimated the risk that Partners may have felt in committing their thoughts to paper if there was any risk that these would subsequently, inadvertently be disclosed and attributed in a public domain. This felt risk may also have related to the ambiguity of my own role as practitioner as well as researcher. Could potential

respondents have been deterred from participating in the survey by this complicating factor? They may, for example, have been willing to respond for the purposes of Partnership development, but not to contribute to a personal research project utilising their voices.

A further limiting consideration may have been the further ambiguity between my role as a TEC Director vis-à-vis my role as Partnership Manager. Certain factions and members of factions hostile to the TEC may well have decided not to participate in the survey rather than run the risk of 'showing their hand' to the TEC in written form, the better part of valour being seen as a discretion. I had probably also underestimated both my own felt identity (and others' perceptions of me) was first and foremost as a 'TEC person' rather than as a neutral or 'Partnership person'. I explore this aspect further in the following chapter as I attempt to elicit my first-person voice.

On the other hand, as I explained at the start of this chapter, the alternative methodological approaches open to me would have been impractical and too much focused on respondents' first-person (interview) or second-person (focus groups) reflections. It seemed obvious to me that a survey instrument would best afford the opportunity to tune into the Partnership's third-person voice – even though in the end what I heard were still just first-, and second-person voices.

Nevertheless, I was uncomfortable about using a method which seemed at odds with my philosophical, in-depth, insider, engaged and involved approach rooted in a qualitative/interpretive research paradigm. Partly I was influenced by the pragmatic considerations of having to undertake some form of Partnership survey for professional practice purposes and the obvious attraction of piggy-backing on this approach for the purpose of my academic inquiry. Yet, whilst not ideally suited to the spirit and philosophy of my inquiry, I believe that this seeming mismatch could not easily be circumvented. Furthermore, I have tried to use the data as a means of interpreting the survey responses in a qualitative way without claiming any statistical validity.

It was also slightly ironic that, having adopted an underpinning critical realist philosophy for my inquiry as explained in Chapter 3 based on its facility to allow me to reify the Partnership as an entity to expose it to investigation as if it existed in reality, that I failed to achieve this objective. It is a moot philosophical point whether this was in fact related to inherent ontological dissonance, i.e. a mistaken assumption that a social construction could ever be viewed as having a separate reality and identity from those constructed by individuals and groups. Alternatively, the lack of a Partnership voice being elicited may have been related to my methodology or simply the fact that whatever methodology was constructed to elicit the Partnership voice, no evidence of its existence could be found.

So, whilst not ideal, I would claim on reflection that the approach I took is not unreasonable in the circumstances in a far from ideal world where it is often impossible to obviate uncertainty and ambiguity in a research process that simply reflects the uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity of the world under investigation. These issues can thus be seen as part and parcel of the difficulty of undertaking a live action inquiry process, whose exposure without clear resolution simply reflects the 'wickedness' of the genre. Finding the Partnership voice was clearly problematic, but I still believe that the conclusions I draw are valid notwithstanding philosophical and methodological considerations. Furthermore, I conclude that there was no other more viable method open to me that might have moved me closer to obtaining the elusive Partnership voice, which I still maintain did not exist to be elicited. I believe that even if alternative approaches were less impractical, it would simply have amplified the first-, and second-person voices. I thus claim that the methodology I chose was not second best but the best I could do and justified in the circumstances in which it was used.

Having considered the difficulties, methodological and substantively, of eliciting a Partnership voice in this chapter, I now move on to ways of considering how to elicit the first-person voice of me as practitioner/researcher, how I related to the various clans and factions in the LEP and how this impacted on the Partnership.

Annex 1: Partnership Questionnaire

Local Economic Partnership

PARTNERSHIP REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

- January -

Important Note to Partners:

Following its meeting on 7th December the LEP has reached a watershed resulting in the Board's re-appraisal of the purpose and role of the Partnership.

This seems an opportune time, therefore, to take stock of Partners' views on the stage we have reached from a development viewpoint. We thought that it would be sensible to use the same format as for the survey we undertook two years ago.

Please be open and honest when completing this questionnaire: it provides an ideal opportunity to say what you REALLY think!

Responses will be treated in strict confidence;
individuals will not be identified.

Feedback will be arranged at a future Partnership Meeting.

SECTION 1

Name

Organization

Please indicate (✓) which group(s) you are a member of:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Board | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Plenary (Full) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Economic Intelligence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| External Funding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inward Investment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Key Sites | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strategy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Workforce Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other (please state)

For how long (approx) have:

(a) You been involved in our Partnership?

(b) Your organization been involved in our Partnership?

SECTION 2

In your opinion, what are our Partnership's:

(a) Strengths?

(b) Weaknesses?

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

In your opinion, name three successes that our Partnership has achieved (with any reasons)

1.

2.

3.

In your opinion, name three areas in which our Partnership could have done better (with any reasons)

1.

2.

3.

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

In your opinion, what lessons have been learned by our Partnership experience to date?

What have you personally learned from your experience in our Partnership to date?

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

In what ways has our Partnership influenced:

(a) You?

(b) The work of your organization?

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

To what extent do you feel:

(a) Your views are heard and taken account of in our Partnership?

(b) Your organization's views are heard and taken account of in our Partnership?

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

Do you feel that any individual or organization has a greater say/influence than any other individual or organization? (Please state whether this has a negative or positive impact in your view.)

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

What are the main benefits of being a member of our Partnership for:

(a) You?

(b) Your organization?

SECTION 2 (Cont/d)

What, if any, are the main disbenefits of being a member of our Partnership for:

(a) You?

(b) Your organization?

SECTION 3

Can you suggest any ideas as to how the administration, chairmanship, or facilitation of our Partnership could be improved?

SECTION 4

In your opinion, what are the major issues our Partnership now needs to tackle?

Thank you for your time.

**Please return your completed questionnaire to the
Training and Enterprise Council.**

Chapter 6

Clans and Constructs: A Reflexive Analysis of the Individual and Organizational Actors in the Partnership

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the Partnership from a third-person perspective in an attempt to understand the LEP's perspective on the issues we faced. I used this 'for real' survey as part of my own research to provide me with insights regarding the Partnership's views and reflections on the stage we had reached as a Partnership as well as a kind of 'stock take' so it could move on from some of the traumas it had faced in the previous 12 months. This work was undertaken at the end of my tenure as Partnership Manager. Following my departure from the Partnership I stopped collecting data and was considering how I should approach the complex task of writing my thesis. This led me to consider the research I had undertaken thus far, my real time reflections which were part of my data and the need I felt to contemplate these reflections. This chapter, therefore, can be considered a meta-reflection on the issues I faced as Partnership Manager and trying with hindsight to make sense of the primarily second- and third-person voices (albeit elicited through my own interpretive lens as an instrument of the research) I describe in the previous chapters.

A theme running through my research was the impact of factions or clans within the Partnership, a phenomenon I describe in detail in Chapter 4, and which also emerged from the previous chapter, in terms primarily of second-person voices including my own. Following the completion of this work I began to understand that in telling the Partnership's story I was also a key actor within the narrative and played a powerful role within the Partnership as its manager. The fact that I was conducting action research at the same time gave me a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility that my own attitudes and behaviours, skills and competences, had a significant effect on how the

Partnership was perceived and the positions it took. I felt a strong sense of identity with the well-being of the Partnership and a responsibility not to abuse the privilege I enjoyed in terms of access and data gathering opportunities for my research. My personal influence, backed by a powerful organization (the TEC), was greater than I had originally imagined. This chapter, therefore, takes a first-person self-reflexive look at these issues using a technique called repertory grid analysis as a tool to explore my own views and attitudes to this phenomenon of clan formation and behaviour. It is written purely from a personal point of view in hindsight based on the passage of time (some 6-12 months) after I left the Partnership. These are, therefore, deep and mature reflections from the perspective of my role as researcher, which took some time to develop and which I trust will add an interesting dimension to my work.

The more I became involved in working in a multi-organizational context, the more I became intrigued by the influence of organizations vis-à-vis individuals. We often talk about organizations and ascribe them labels in the same way as people. We think of them as entities rather than a complex compendium of different entities interacting both systemically and chaotically, internally and externally through time. Yet, to the observer, this 'noise' has to be simplified in order to make sense of organizations. We perceive them as behaving as if they had a 'personality' in order to make sense of them. In a very real sense multiorganizational partnerships are perceived both as organizations and people and it is sometimes hard to separate the two. When, for example, is an organizational view being expressed and when a personal one from the individual member of a partnership? This difference is not usually made explicit through the course of partnership dialogue. As we saw in the previous chapter they are closely intertwined and hard to differentiate.

Yet, this distinction is important in order to understand the underlying interaction within partnerships, transformational dynamics and the elicitation of power relations. I had become intrigued by the relationships between individuals and organizations in the development of the Partnership and my own perception of these actors according to the degrees of positive and negative influence I felt they had on the Partnership. I certainly was aware that

there were those partners (organizations and individuals) on whom (which) I could rely and trust to varying degrees, and those whom (which) I did not trust and whom I saw as threats to the LEP. I wanted to find a way of exploring how I perceived the various factions or 'clans' that operated within the Partnership in order to understand how I inter-related with them as I was aware that I was identified, and identified myself, as part of one of the clans. My perceptions of others could never be objective, yet I had to be seen to be acting neutrally, fairly and inclusively even if others were apparently not.

Clearly, this was, and had to be, a very personal reflexive exploration, but I thought it might shed some light on my own perceptions and attitudes as a Partnership Manager and assist me and hopefully others in reflecting on how I had handled the change process interactively. As I progressed my thinking through the research I became much more aware of the extent to which I tended to differentiate between individuals and the organizations they represented. If in fact there is little distinction, the influence of personalities and their learning and aptitudes becomes the critical factor to be managed in pursuit of transformation, and partnership transformation becomes a function of the key influencers and their attendant personalities and behaviours.

Methodology and Method

I decided to use a repertory grid application called Enquire Within (EW), a method ideally suited to exploring and reflecting on one's personal constructs on a matter of which one has knowledge or experience. EW is a windows-based interactive software application which operationalises Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955). It enables one to develop a complete rigorous map of one's own or others' perceptions and judgements about a topic or issue. Its strength is that it is mathematically rigorous, hard to fake, eliminates observer bias and produces verifiable personal constructs relating to a specific line of enquiry. Unlike other psychological methods, Kelly's did not rely on fitting people into a particular psychological theory (e.g. Freudian or Jungian) but relied instead on what people actually said themselves, in their own words, about their feelings and judgements on a topic of concern and mapped how

they themselves viewed the problem exposing the constructs they use to frame and understand the world.

I had previously used the technique in the first phase of my research (which I have not written up for this thesis) when interviewing my three reflective mentors to gain a better understanding of how, in the early days of the LEP, they viewed the Partnership in terms of its past, present and future, mapped against other partnerships they had worked in and eliciting the constructs they used in making these judgements. In undertaking this work I gained significant experience and expertise in mapping interviewees' understanding of their interpretations of partnerships, clarifying their thoughts and perceptions, and producing verifiable personal constructs. Unfortunately, I found that to undertake an EW session properly was taking 3 hours minimum, and decided that this was causing such interviewee fatigue and stress as to outweigh the benefits, that I decided to abort the process. In the application described below I conducted the repertory grid interview on myself, and was thus able to devote as much time and reflection on the process as was necessary to provide insights into the purpose of my exploration.

It is inappropriate to explain in detail the way that repertory grid interviewing and in particular, Enquire Within, works here. A full explanation can be obtained from <http://www.enquirewithin.co.nz/>. However, basically the interviewee (in this case me) decides on the basis of triadic comparisons of 'elements', the substance of the enquiry, ways in which any two elements are similar or different from a third based on a bipolar comparison that they describe in their own words. This is the way that constructs are elicited, mapping the way in which an individual views relationships in a topic of enquiry, judging any two elements to be different from a third because of some perceived difference drawing from their experience and knowledge of the subject stored as constructs in one's mind. Once all the constructs have been elicited, the interviewee then 'rates' (usually on a 1-5 scale) all the elements on the basis of the constructs produced, which then allows a dendritic diagram to be produced, based on multiple correlations between the ratings given by the interviewee, mapping families of elements and constructs that the interviewee

sees in some way as being similar. The technique has no natural end and in theory can go on forever until every last nuance of one's knowledge of a subject has been exhausted. There are opportunities to differentiate or merge closely correlated elements and to 'ladder up' where the object is to gain access to the interviewee's core constructs or 'ladder down' where the purpose is to understand the ways in which these constructs are enacted in practice.

There is not one 'right' way to analyse an EW session, but the number and type of constructs produced, analysis of the content of constructs, and interpreting the clusters of constructs and elements in the dendritic diagram the software produces, allows informed judgements to be made about how the interviewee construes a particular topic or issue based on relationships between elements and constructs. The main point is, however, that any conclusions that may be drawn are verifiable on the part of the interviewee. The interviewer merely sets the area for inquiry and operates the software. All the input and output is driven by the interviewee and he/she can verify at any stage the accuracy of the constructs and mental map produced.

This is a very basic description but is sufficient I hope to explain what follows in terms of the way in which I used the technique to explore my own judgements about the relationships within the LEP between organizations and individuals, and the basis on which I perceived them acting in clans within the LEP.

Strictly speaking, the elements in the grid should be distinct and not overlap. Clearly, in mixing individuals and organizations as elements, I have ostensibly failed to adhere to this rule. I have rationalized this in my own mind because I knew the organizations and individuals well, so I could make distinctions between them. In addition, I need to have both individuals and organizations identified as elements in order to pursue the purpose of the exploration. Nevertheless, I am aware that in the analysis there is a danger that my perception of an individual as a symbol of his/her organization may be less accurate than I imagine. This is because I will be prone to assuming the person I know is the organization since I may not know its other senior representatives at all or as well, and in any case it is problematic to

characterize an organization as if it had the traits of an individual. With these caveats, I nevertheless believe that the session has afforded me some useful insights about my own stance within the LEP as a supposedly neutral Partnership executive and change agent.

Elements

My elements are the organizations and individuals which/who in my view have been the powerful forces within the Partnership determining its agendas, behaviours, and political positions. There have been, in my experience, negative and positive forces for Partnership transformation, and these have tended to form into groups of discernible individuals and organizations that have shaped opinions and formed distinct clans.

I have restricted my analysis to the perceived dynamics of the key players within or affecting the Partnership because of their obvious impact, but I am aware that this abstracts from a myriad of external influences that have also shaped the LEP's fortunes.

The key players I have identified are a mixture of organizations and individuals which/whom I consider to have been the principal actors in the development of the Partnership, both for good and ill in terms of transformational possibilities.

My chosen elements are:

1. Brookshire County Council (BCC)
2. Chilton Borough Council (CBC)
3. Denbury Borough Council (DBC)
4. Brookshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI)
5. Business Link Brookshire (BLB)
6. Brookshire Training and Enterprise Council (BTEC)
7. Betty Kitchener (BLB and BCCI)
8. Jonathan Ball (Chief Executive, DBC)
9. David Norton (Chief Executive, CBC)

10. Gordon Walsh (BCCI Council Member and Deputy Chairman, BLB)
11. George Patterson (Brookshire TEC Chairman and Chair of LEP from March 2000)
12. John Piper (Brookshire TEC Board Member and Chair of LEP to March 2000)
13. Gary Yeading (Brookshire TEC Board Member)
14. Paul Pettigrew (Brookshire TEC Executive Director and Secretary to the LEP)
15. Dai Jones (Chief Executive, Brookshire County Council)
16. Tom Wills (Chief Executive, Brookshire TEC)
17. Martin Beamish (Chairman, BLB)
18. Chris Evans (Head of Economic Development and Policy, DBC)
19. Colin Powell (Head of Policy, Environmental Services, BCC)
20. RDA
21. RGO
22. Paul Pettigrew as he would like to be

From the mind map below (Figure 8), I distinguish three broad 'clans', each with progressively less cohesion.

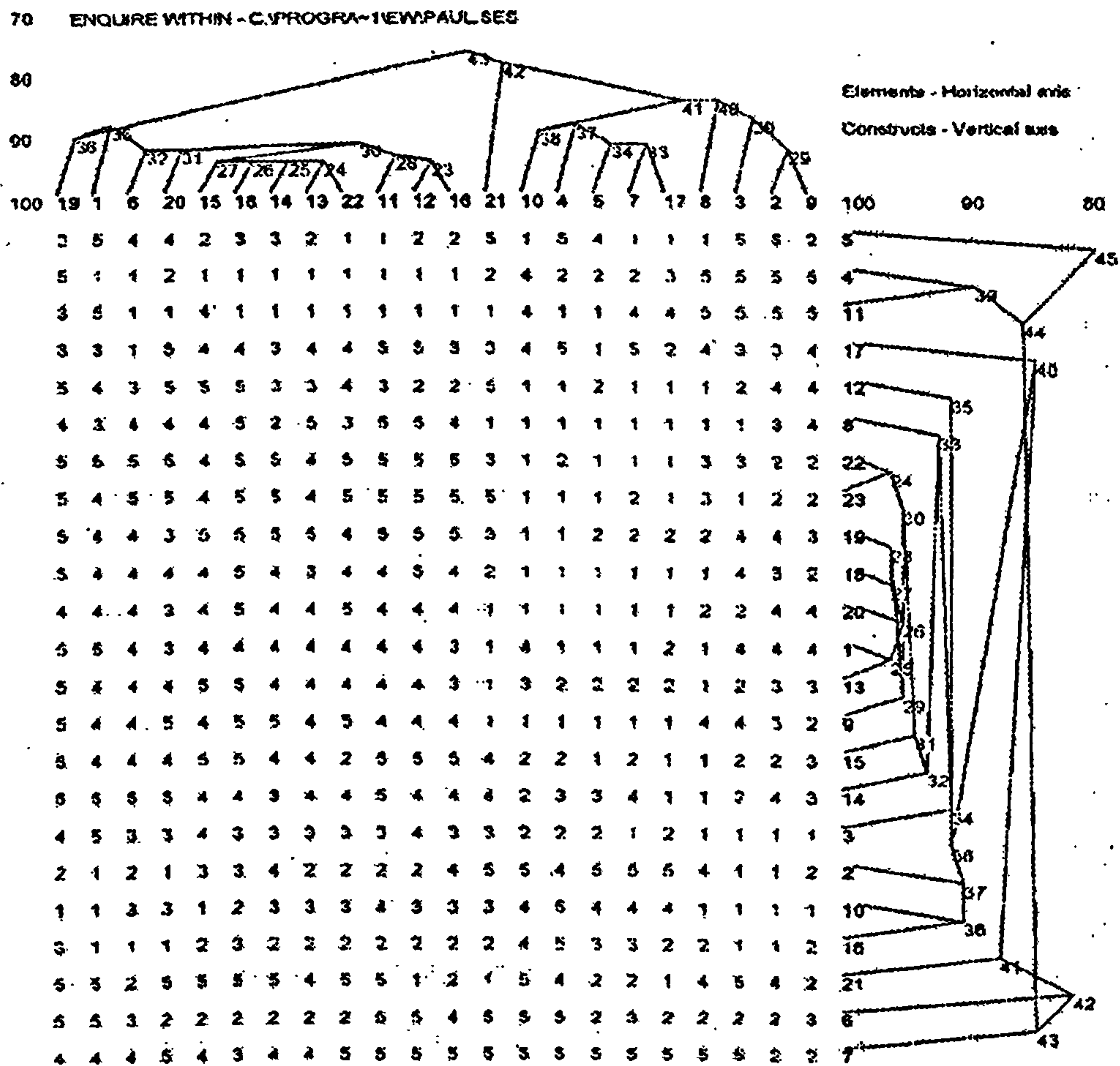
Clans and reflections

In the *first clan* all elements are correlated together at least around the 95% confidence level. This group represents largely the 'Brookshire TEC clan', with support from Brookshire County Council (BCC), and a senior Denbury Borough Council (DBC) officer. These are:

- RDA (20)
- Brookshire TEC (6)
- John Piper (12)
- George Patterson (11)
- Tom Wills (16)
- Gary Yeading (13)
- Paul Pettigrew as he would like to be (22)

- Paul Pettigrew (14)
- Chris Evans (18)
- Dai Jones (15)
- Brookshire County Council (1)
- Colin Powell (19)

Figure 8: Enquire Within Session: Clans and Constructs



Within this cluster, George Patterson, Gary Yeading, John Piper and Tom Wills are very closely aligned in my perception. This group comprises the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Senior Board Member, and Chief Executive of the TEC. Not surprisingly Brookshire TEC as an organization and I (both as I was and would like to be) are also closely correlated, suggesting that I perceived no difference between my own view and those of my employing organization. Perhaps surprising to me on first sight is the inclusion of BCC, Dai Jones and Colin Powell within this cluster, albeit BCC and Colin Powell are rather more detached from the main group than Dai Jones. Perhaps, the TEC has retained its pre-local government re-organization links with the County and has failed to make the same links with the two Unitary Authorities. Or perhaps, BCC, emasculated following the loss of Chilton and Denbury, has found an ally in the TEC, particularly in terms of the TEC's wider, sub-regional view. Perhaps also, my relationship with Colin Powell, one of my reflective mentors for much of the research, has helped in constructing a broadly shared view of the sub-region and the part the County plays within it.

Interestingly, Chris Evans appears closely aligned with Dai Jones within the cluster. They both represent a proactive, partnership-minded, intellectually robust approach within the Partnership. Chris's involvement and commitment, in particular, had been exemplary both in terms of energy, intellectual rigour and quality. However, he is not part of the cluster containing DBC and its Chief Executive, Jonathan Ball. Chris seems firmly, at least in my mind, in the Partnership core clan compared to his boss, who is more of a politician than Chris. Finally, I see the RDA as a close ally to this group, largely through the influence of John Piper, former Chairman of the LEP and now an RDA Board Member. I am probably also sympathetic to the RDA as I was involved in setting the organization up in its early days on secondment to the RGO and my personal background was in regional development.

The significance of this group is that it has been the cohesive, consistent and strong force behind the development and promotion of the Partnership as a powerful new voice for the sub-region. It is obvious that it is very much TEC-related. However, the TEC's support, largely invested by its discretionary

resources, my time and commitment, John's and George's Chairmanship, and Tom's and Gary's back-up, pre-dated news of its demise. There was no question, as was being mooted at the time by the conurbation LAs' chief executives, of the LEP's becoming 'TEC 2' – a jibe that was particularly hurtful at that time... as if all of our efforts were purely based on our own self-preservation.

The *second clan* is characterised by a group which is correlated at around the 90% level, which appears as quite distinct from the first camp. It comprises the following players:

- Gordon Walsh (10)
- Brookshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (4)
- Business Link Brookshire (5)
- Betty Kitchener (7)
- Martin Beamish (17)

I consider this group as a distinct clan within the Partnership. All the players are powerful politically in the sub-region, although the basis of their power is not obvious in terms of political clout or resources. They could be said to represent a regime within the Partnership, the business voice of the sub-region, although they are not representative geographically as their power base resides in the conurbation rather than the county. This might account for the positioning of County in the first cluster.

Their power is self conceived rather than based on any resource, referent or rational/bureaucratic position. Rather I perceive their power stemming firstly from the powerful personalities of Martin Beamish, Gordon Walsh and Betty Kitchener who behave in a way that demands one respects their power in a first-person way. Others' perception of power in these people then generates a second-person reciprocal power relationship between them so they become mutually accepting of each group's power. In other words it seemed to me that this second clan asserted their power on no strong basis, but because the first clan tacitly acknowledged this asserted power, it was treated seriously by them

and they acted as if the second clan actually possessed power. Real power and perceived power were thus always in tension in the Partnership. Not surprisingly, members of the second clan were not seen as natural partnership animals by other members of the LEP. They seemed most concerned about maintaining their own identity and independence than contributing to the LEP's vision and interests. The LEP was seen more as a threat than a potentially powerful sub-regional ally to promote the interests of all the Partners.

I came to regard the Brookshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) as the political wing of Business Link Brookshire (BLB), united through a shared Chief Executive, and a Chairman and Deputy Chairman who had resented the TEC and challenged it for many years... long before I arrived on the scene. Was their distrust of the LEP because they considered it as 'TEC 2', and/or was the developing power within the Partnership ('power of balance')¹ being construed as a serious threat to their ability to act independently as a bloc without reference to wider LEP interests? I thought my relative freshness on the Brookshire scene might have absolved me from associations with the past, but by joining the TEC I unwittingly became identified as a potential enemy.

As a private sector dominated clan this group made it clear that their values were related to achieving as much independence as possible to run the Business Link without external interference. There had been a history of discontent within BLB over its funding being channelled by Government through the TEC and being contract-managed by the TEC, which was one of my responsibilities in my role as an executive director of the TEC. This focus on the power relationships rather than business delivery dominated the relationship between TEC and BLB. This seething discontent was then apparent in aggressive behaviours and an intolerance of any form of perceived bureaucracy that challenged their own power to make decisions. This led me to reflect that behaviours conducive to good partnership-working are not necessarily those practised by senior business representatives in the sub-region. These skills need to be learned, and are radically different from the methods practised in their own domains that may have brought them business

¹ Torbert (1991)

success. Transformation of their behaviours might have speeded up the process of transformation of the Partnership, and further, might have been a sine qua non of its accelerated transformation. However, the protagonists within this clan tended to reinforce their sceptical and self interested positions to form a distinctive culture, which valued their own 'successes' and 'achievements', but which scorned those of others. It became very hard, therefore, for them to change, learn, and transform themselves using the Partnership as a touchstone. The debacle of BLB's SBS bid illustrated starkly the consequences of 'group think', where powerful forces convince themselves of the propriety of their positions without properly evaluating the pros and cons of all the options.

This may be a harsh conclusion to draw, but it is my honest, if not objective, view borne of experience. I had no personal axe to grind whatsoever, but the behaviour of this clan as a whole, challenged the integrity of the Partnership throughout my tenure as its manager. Their self-preserving politically based behaviours reduced significantly opportunities for the Partnership to draw on their experience and for BLB to learn and benefit from the LEP. Ultimately, the nadir of the failed SBS bids described in Chapter 4 signed their own death warrant, prevented the generation of an internal sub-regional solution, and curtailed the Partnership's transformational trajectory.

I cannot pretend that, acting as a change agent, I did not have my own agenda and preferences, yet I still felt uncomfortable about not being able to be as even-handed as I would have liked with all factions within the LEP. As Partnership Manager this might have been expected of me: the neutral, bureaucratic, unbiased, cautious administrator. Although I tried to demonstrate I was all of these things, I recognized that I had my own agenda too. My own agenda was for the LEP to grow in recognition and influence and to present a strong external image as a model multiorganizational partnership. I wanted to help build a reputation for excellence in partnership-working in the sub-region, and to be personally associated with a success story.

The *third clan* was a group of conurbation local authorities (LAs) and their Chief Executives represented as follows:

- Jonathan Ball (8)
- Denbury Borough Council (3)
- Chilton Borough Council (2)
- David Norton (9)

On many occasions the Partnership had to dance around this group, who/which I see as being very similar with no distinction between the two chief executives and their councils. They had been 'difficult to convince', and inconstant in their support for and involvement with the Partnership. They had also been inclined to 'take or leave the LEP' on the basis that their preference would have been to go into a neighbouring region and enter into partnerships there, especially with similar Unitary Authorities, which were also urban in nature and politically relatively 'unconservative' compared to Brookshire.

Both Councils had consistently worked together, and represented each other, as if it was a single Council (despite their then contrasting Political identities, one Tory, the other, Lib-Dems). Their unity seemed to be based on being anti-Brookshire, and pro a neighbouring region, than on any substantive shared political outlook. Their position had been that they would prefer to be included in a neighbouring region or part of a newly created region, rather than the one they are in, even though there was no chance politically of this being achieved. They, therefore, believed that working in a Partnership in a region with which they did not identify was a second or even third-best option for them. Their position was that they would work within the LEP, principally as it offered a channel into the RDA and thereby access to influence and resources. They had thus fostered a position of semi-detachment, a lukewarm and rather less than passionate endorsement of the LEP.

In Chilton's case, this had tended to manifest itself in a detachment, punctuated from time to time by bursts of quite useful and productive involvement, especially on the part of its Chief Executive. However, this was

not consistent or sustained, and often counterbalanced by periods of non-involvement or hostility. I personally, however, had much more involvement with DBC and Jonathan Ball, its Chief Executive. Here, there was a sharp contrast between rhetoric and reality in the way the Council worked within the Partnership. This was especially true in the early years of the LEP, when the Council's executives (particularly Alan Fairgrieve and Chris Evans) were very active in developing sub-regional working, at the same time as their Chief Executive was telling me (forcibly!) on the 'phone that *'there is no Partnership'* as far as he and his Council were concerned. Despite comments like this, like his counterpart at CBC, he would blow hot and cold about his attitude towards the Partnership to the point I was unsure what their 'real' positions were.

This was an interesting and paradoxical phenomenon to observe, and very difficult to handle. When I was speaking with DBC's senior executives I patently wasn't speaking with the Council! It was, therefore, unclear if they were in or out of the Partnership depending on who you were speaking to and at what time. In a way, Jonathan did have a point – the LEP at that time was a fairly loose network of officers working with good will across geographical and professional barriers. I shared his desire to see a *'strong Partnership'*: it was just that I wanted to build on what we had created to date (which he clearly did not know much about or value), while he seemed to prefer starting again from the top down rather than from the bottom up. Each approach could potentially have produced a 'strong partnership', but in whose judgement and for whose benefit?

An important and interesting outlier in Figure 8 is the RGO, which I don't see as belonging to any of the other families. This element correlates poorly relative to the others, reflecting my view perhaps that the RGO was detached and ultimately let the Partnership down. When the BLB bid for the SBS franchise failed they were at that point very keen to support the Partnership make a bid.

All the signals were positive, until the last few days when clearly they had pre-ordained, in association with the SBS, that the logic and coherence of an in-region operator linked to a strategic Partnership was not after all what they

required. I felt I had been led up the hill only to be marched down again, and when the bid inevitably failed, after so much co-operative effort from most of the key members of the Partnership, I was drained and angry. Although there was no proof, the signs were, as explained in Chapter 4, that a conspiracy was indeed at work and that the rival bidder would have had to have performed really badly in its presentation to the Panel not to have been awarded the franchise.

There may have been another reason too: that the LEP was a voluntary, sub-regional Partnership rather than one mandated and controlled by Government. Was there a sense, therefore, that the RGO saw the LEP as a Partnership they would find hard to control as an SBS franchise holder, a platform for 'difficult' personalities, a continuation of old clan rivalries and a potential thorn in their side? It is difficult to say, but all the indications are that this indeed was the case, and it is a moot point whether they did the LEP a favour or a disservice in taking the decision to award the franchise to an external bidder. Nonetheless, in the EW analysis the RGO sticks out like a sore thumb in my mind as not relating to any camp. Maybe that is how it would like to be seen or should be seen, but I have no doubt that the decision they made stifled the confidence and potential transformation of the Partnership from which it still suffers.

The Enquire Within (EW) session confirmed, in a structured way, my perceptions of the key power bases and cultures operating within the Partnership and my relationship with them. No partnership of this size and diversity can operate on the basis of consensus. There are clearly different agendas and interests operating within the Partnership and clans take shape, driven by some superordinate objective that they share. This may have little or nothing to do with the Partnership as some members are only there for their own benefit or to obtain information on possible threats to their status or even existence. The Partnership can probably best be seen as a means by which these beliefs and interests can be understood, reading between the lines, as these motivations are rarely made explicit. In theory it would be nice to think that sane, rational adults (organizations) could behave in a more transparent manner, surfacing and sharing assumptions, rather than saying one thing and

doing another, which is the essence of the action science approach (Argyris and Schön, 1974). In normal interorganizational partnership practice there is rarely the opportunity for this approach to be explored in mainstream activity. All partnership participants make assumptions about other players, as I have done too, and act on them either to thwart perceived threats or defend their positions. The Partnership may be seen as a hive of complex human and organizational interaction driven by power games and the interwoven interests of its participants. As with complex organizations it is hard to describe the Partnership as an entity without seeing it essentially as a sum of its disparate parts.

It is this myriad of interactions that I think has been critical for the Partnership to remain in existence and the base from which it can develop. Its prime success has been to foster productive and valued interactions as a functioning network within a form of hierarchical governance. This is confirmed by the Survey of Partners (see previous chapter). This feature is valued by the Partners although some might say that the achievement of this benefit does not necessarily require a Partnership to be in place in terms of governance structures and processes. Although the course of the LEP has been messy and difficult, as Rhodes (1997b, page xv) notes: *'messy problems demand messy solutions'* and so lateral, diagonal and vertical relationships have developed in a chaotic, unknowable way, but which I believe would not have happened without the LEP creating the opportunity and legitimacy for interaction. Kickert (1993, page 201) views these issues not so much as *'problems and difficulties that have to be mastered, but as sources of innovation'*. The innovation has come in the form of a reframing and shared understanding of issues and opportunities and slowly developing trust and collaboration. Although the various clans sometimes resorted to defensive tactics, for the most part at a non-political level there was a great deal of useful co-operation and collaboration upon which the Partnership can grow in the future.

Constructs

Eliciting constructs by comparing ways in which any two elements are different from a third (generated randomly) allowed me to explore the characteristics I regarded as important in differentiating people and organizations in the Partnership. This would help me understand in a reflexive sense the issues I regarded as important, reflect on why I perceived them as such and to understand how my perceptions impacted on the Partnership.

I set out below in Figure 9 a list of the bipolar constructs I elicited during my reflexive EW session along with some 'laddering up' searching for my 'core' constructs by a process of asking 'why' until I can go no further. These set out the way in which I made sense of and judged Partnership relationships:

Figure 9: Constructs and Ladders

	Similar Pole	Contrast Pole	Laddering Up
C1	Is untrustworthy	Can be taken at face value	Level 1: Partnership working depends on a degree of trust.
C2	Represents wide bodies of opinion	Has his own views	Level 1: Partnership working is a super-ordinate activity: all for one and one for all. Level 2: Because we all need to take a strategic rather than a myopic view if we are to do the best we can for the sub-region.
C3	Is concerned with rural interests	Is concerned with conurbation interests	Level 1: Because it demonstrates insularity and a misunderstanding of the symbiosis between urban and rural.
C4	Look West and East	Tends to look East	Level 1: Some organizations seem to think the grass is greener to the East than the West rather than take the best of both. Level 2: Because I think one should take a pragmatic rather than a geopolitical view of the world.
C5	Are powerful individuals	Is a powerful organization	Level 1: Because I wonder whether the power of organizations is equivalent to the power of their leaders. Level 2: Because I feel that personalities are more important in determining the nature of the power wielded by organizations than is revealed by the literature.

			Level 3: Essentially I am dealing with the egos of the leaders. Their organizations sometimes seem irrelevant other than providing their power bases.
C6	Represent the local establishment	Is a relative new-comer	
C7	Active politically	Tends to be apathetic	Level 1: Because the active people are the ones that carry or mediate influence. They are the movers and shakers: the ones you have to watch. Level 2: Because ultimately it is all about the power that individuals wield, and that can be for good or bad depending on the perspective and objective of the viewer.
C8	Have vested interests they want to protect	Doesn't seem to think its interests are vulnerable	
C9	Tends to work in partnership	Prefers to work alone	Level 1: Because some organizations really want to work together whilst others do it if at all under sufferance. Level 2: Because the ones that feel pressured into working in partnership are the ones most likely to destroy it.
C10	Is or represents LAs	Is or represents business organizations	Level 1: Because generally the LAs take a wide view of economic development to include social and environmental concerns, while the business organizations are more concerned with developing successful businesses. Level 2: Because the distinction makes it more natural for LAs to take a strategic view of the world and follow through all the ramifications of a situation. The business interests are more interested in quick fixes and rapid decisions. Level 3: Because I think we need both cultures operating through a clear dialogue within the Partnership.
C11	Represents part of the area	Represents the whole area	Level 1: Because it frames the milieu within which individuals and organizations make judgements about events.
C12	Are political animals	Works in a political system	Level 1: Some people like to or can only work in a political way. They create politics even if there is no great difference in view between protagonists. Others accept that they are working in a political environment, but do not seek to stir up trouble. Level 2: Because I believe there are people whose only real skill is to politic and plot rather than work in harmony, so that its what they do. It is a personal political motivation and this can debilitate and destabilise partnerships.

C13	Are logical and reasonable	Complex and contradictory	<p>Level 1: Because people who think logically and reasonably are more likely to be receptive to a shared construct of reality. This notion accepts complexity. But this is different from obfuscation masquerading as complexity.</p> <p>Level 2: Because complexity and ambiguity is real. The challenge is to make sense of it rather than to be perplexed by it, or worse try to solve it like an equation.</p> <p>Level 3: Because there is a difference between accepting that we all work in a political environment and working through the maze to influence and achieve objectives for the greater good. It is another thing to abuse power through using politics to feed a vested interest, often at the cost of the greater good.</p>
C14	Are temperate	Can throw Teddy out of the cot	<p>Level 1: Because you have to listen and take on board views different from your own. To do this you have to park your own views and assumptions and not believe you are necessarily 'right'. Those who don't do this become emotional when they are challenged.</p> <p>Level 2: Because emotion is okay when it is based on knowledge and belief, but not when it is predicated on the basis that the person cannot believe he or she can be wrong, ie a personal certainty.</p> <p>Level 3: I believe in intellectual passion, not emotional passion. They are different. Believing you are 'right' is the first mistake many people make.</p>
C15	Seek compromise	Exposes ambiguities and contradictions	<p>Level 1: People who seek compromise should also seek to do the opposite first, i.e. expose issues and arguments. Sometimes these are considered opposite positions when in effect they are sequential.</p> <p>Level 2: Because it is important in partnership working to have an honest intellectually passionate dialogue first before deciding on a compromise or other course of action which may mean having to give up something that is valued to get something else that may be more valued by the other party than you. Jumping to conclusions based on one's own beliefs or interpretations can be disastrous.</p>
C16	Is able to supply or	Cannot supply or	<p>Level 1: Because resources to some</p>

	influence considerable resources	influence considerable resources	extent reflect the power bases within the Partnership. Not always, eg BCCI, but it is a strong factor in determining the relative positions of Partners. Level 2: Because not all Partners are equal. They may have an equal say, but the extent to which they are heard depends on the extent to which they are listened to.
C17	Deliver things	Represents members	Level 1: Because delivery is often seen as a strategy-free zone, when in effect it is just the flip side of strategy, a double-learning loop (Garratt, 2000)
C18	Are paranoid about external threats	Seeks out external partners	Level 1: Because certain Partners' first response to an external intervention is to employ defensive routines to prevent the intervention from taking place. It is called 'skilled incompetence' (Argyris and Schön, 1978) Level 2: Because defensive politics prevent change and is a barrier to double-loop learning and transformation.
C19	Are driven by assumptions more than facts	Works on an evidence basis	Level 1: Because some partners will deliberately ignore the evidence supporting a different approach to a problem by assuming that there is no other way than their own, whether that works or not. It is often too unsettling to consider anything else.
C20	Are more concerned about their own organizations	Is more concerned with doing the best for their customers	Level 1: Because some Partners cannot get beyond their own narrow organizational perspective and therefore take their eyes off the needs of customers or constituents.
C21	Actively holds office in the Partnership	Has no office in the Partnership	
C22	Pays lip service to the Partnership	Is committed to the Partnership	Level 1: Because there are some organizations in the Partnership who support it because they need to be seen to support it for their own reasons. Level 2: Because those people and organizations who actively and honestly question the Partnership are more committed than those who seem committed, but who are just paying lip service.
C23	Takes a strategic view	Takes a narrow vested view	Level 1: Because a narrow view is just an adaptive mechanism, which may or may not improve matters. What we need is a strategic Partnership view that transcends the constituent bodies if true transformation is to take place.

Construct Analysis

Construct 5 distinguished powerful people from powerful organizations. Would it make any difference if the power resided in organizations or individuals? Because of its low explanatory power, being relatively uncorrelated to other constructs, I considered deleting it from the analysis. However, on reflection, it shows I think that the distinction is immaterial relative to the other constructs. Power is power, and is indivisible. This is also reflected in the grouping of elements where there is, perhaps not surprisingly, a strong correlation between organizations and their leaders.

Construct 6 can also be seen as an outlier, not closely correlated with the other constructs. It distinguishes those people/organizations who/which I see as established players as opposed to new people/organizations that perhaps are not so terrorised by the 'shadows of the past'. It is an important construct for me as I feel that the newer forces in the Partnership have less potentially to lose than the established ones. It cuts across the Elements distinguishing established interests with ones yet to be established, which I see as more likely to instigate transformation.

Construct 7 polarised elements I saw to be active politically from those that were apathetic. This construct also seems relatively unrelated to the others. It relates to my perception of those Partners who were politically motivated for their own ends, pursuing their own agendas from those whom I perceived as spectators watching the games being played but not participating.

Constructs 4 and 11 are correlated at just under the 90% level. These relate to 'look West and East' – 'tends to look East' and 'represents the whole area' and 'represents part of the area'. These are indeed closely related but are not the same, so are not differentiated. The insights here are about the geopolitical 'frames of reference' of Partners. They are not all the same. Some have a remit for only part of the area, e.g. the local authorities, and this appears to be related to 'looking East'. Others have a sub-regional remit for the whole of the Partnership area, and therefore take a more strategic view, reflecting

Brookshire's position on the edge of two regions. Obviously this distinction also reflects in my mind the continuing dichotomy within the sub-region between conurbation-focused organizations and those that take a wider view.

Construct 17 tends to stand alone also and distinguishes organizations that exist to deliver things as opposed to those that are member representative organizations. I see the latter possibly as more likely to act in a politically motivated way, but my ratings range across the Element set and do not correlate highly with the other constructs. This may be because paradoxically the most politically motivated organization, BLB, was in fact a delivery organization. *Construct 21* is loosely associated with this theme but I consider in a slightly different sense. It distinguishes those organizations and people I see as being active in the Partnership from those who are inactive. There is a connection in my mind between organizations which are at the delivery-end of the spectrum and their degree of activity within the Partnership.

There is then a host of constructs comprising all but one on the list that are very closely related at the 95% level.

The highest correlation *Constructs* are 22 and 23 which are almost inseparable. These are both related to Partnership behaviours, which I see as closely related, but not the same. I see a distinction between those individuals and organizations who/which just pay lip service to the Partnership, putting in as little as possible, and who also take a narrow, vested-view of their roles; with those who are committed to the Partnership and who take a strategic view. This accords very much with my experience of some Partners who went along for the ride, but which were there to protect their own interests rather than to promote those of the Partnership. Others were able to transcend a narrow organizational perspective and engage with other parties to find common ground, and work together on a broader canvas. My experience was also that those in the latter group who put in the most took the least out. The reverse was true of the former group.

This difference is partly to do, I believe, with organizational/personal perspective and attitude, the 'What's in it for me' question. But at the root I think it is a matter of faith and belief. It may not be 'rational' in a conventional sense to 'take a leap of faith' and say 'well, I don't know what I'm getting into here, but it looks as though it just could be fun, exciting, liberating, and powerful'. But in essence, I believe T_4 transformation – *identification* – will not be achieved without organizations taking decisions based on a credo, or tenet of belief in the inherent merit of working in partnership for its own sake, as a means of transcending adaptive, single-loop learning, rather than a rational perspective on unidirectional gain possibilities. I am reminded of historical connections between faith and power, whether one looks at Christianity, Islam, Marxism, etc, their strong power-bases have had some basis of fact and theory, but it was a 'leap of faith' that created their global power. The paradox is that you need faith to generate the power for transformation, but power, in human hands, is easily corrupted if it falls into the hands of the few. That does not damn power itself, however, only its misuse and misappropriation. Does trust have to be built step by step as some authors claim (e.g. Vangen & Huxham, 2003b) or can (should) it be combined with a degree of faith to accelerate transformation?

Constructs 1, 9, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22 and 23 are also highly correlated with '22' and '23' above. These connect together those elements who/which expose ambiguities and contradictions, and who/which are complex and contradictory; with those who/which seek compromise and are logical/reasonable. At first sight I am surprised that I associate myself with the latter construct. Partnership working surely is complex and contradictory, and you need to expose ambiguities, assumptions and contradictions to be a skilled partnership professional. This would be the view of those writers who promote organizational learning, such as Argyris and Schön (1974) and Senge (1990). However (and perhaps this is an insider's view), challenging behaviours associated with these objectives can often be interpreted as disruptive and counter-productive. It takes great skill for individuals in an inherently political situation and acting as players rather than commentators, to expose

weaknesses or ambiguities in others, without this leading to debilitating and negative tit for tat conflict.

What I witnessed was that the Partnership proceeded by not fully exposing contradictions, assumptions and uncertainties. It was not that the Board and key players were unaware of them, but often it was better for Partners to temporarily ignore or reserve judgement on deeply unresolved differences and conflicts between the Partners in order to avoid open conflict. Fudge, rather than clarity, can sometimes sustain relationships that could otherwise become fraught and negative if the 'action science' method were to be applied. Thus, for purely pragmatic reasons, from the perspective of Partnership Manager, I was keen, rightly or wrongly, to promote the development of the LEP rather than to deal with its possible disintegration by becoming bogged down in endless conflict resolution.

Could it be that, contrary to the accepted wisdom of the key writers on organizational learning, that too much pursuit of rationality may be counter-productive to driving partnerships forward and creating the emotional basis for transformation to take place? This suggestion points to forms of leadership (see Chapter 2) which emphasize emotional intelligence and relational, distributed leadership styles.

Constructs 9 and 19 are also centrally related to my core virtual construct, emphasising not unnaturally how I value those who/which work in partnership rather than working alone. I relate the former to those people or organizations who/which go out of their way to establish a shared view of the world, as opposed to those who/which simply proceed on the basis of their own frame without adjustment (Schön, 1994).

Constructs 2, 3, 8, 12 and 14 are also relatively closely related to each other, and also this central 'virtual' cluster. They set apart those who have vested interests and who are primarily concerned with their own organizations, from those who are not so concerned with what they might lose and who are more externally focused on customers (defined in its widest sense). These are

related to the meaning ascribed to *Constructs '22' and '23'*, but with an emphasis here on the distinction between an inward and an outward perspective. The 'similar' poles of *Constructs '8' and '20'* are virtually the same, but their 'contrast' poles are slightly different. One reflects an insouciance about one's own or organization's vulnerability in the political jungle, the other a more positive, proactive, external focus. Either way, it is the 'contrast pole' players whom I see as contributing to Partnership transformation. Those with an inward, organizational focus I see as holding back progression and transformation.

My mind map associates this inward focus as being 'untrustworthy' while those who/which are externally focused I see as being able to be 'taken at face value' (*Construct '1'*). This is perhaps related to my being able to deal more easily with individuals and organizations who demonstrate a genuine desire and commitment to partnership and who want to engage positively as a matter of faith and belief, from those who/which have an inward, often narrow, organizational focus. This again relates closely to *Construct '18'*, where I contrast those who positively seek out external partners from those who/which seem paranoiac about external threats, whether perceived or real.

Construct 12, 'are political animals' – 'tends to work in a political system', is a distinction that I seem to make that is also highly correlated to all that has gone before. There are those who/which enjoy and play politics, and for whom playing games is the main purpose of their engagement with the LEP. There are others who/which I see as recognising the inherent political nature of the Partnership, and who play a political role within it, but who do not indulge in 'political sport'. I have nothing much against the former group. I do not think one is 'good' and the other 'bad'. The important thing is that those who enjoy the political game can be influenced to direct their attention and often political and leadership skill toward accepted Partnership objectives.

Perhaps, in a nutshell, that is the role of the partnership manager: informing and influencing those with political clout to believe in and identify with a shared vision of the Partnership. Again, I am drawn to the idea that faith, belief and a

proselytising approach are key to foster transformation. *Construct 2* 'represents wide bodies of opinion' – 'has his own views' is another one which is related to the core construct. This is a distinction related to all the other constructs, emphasising a strategic, participative, proactive stance, against those who don't want to learn and would rather force their own views on others.

Constructs 10 and 16 are closely related, and represent a distinction that is obvious in an eclectic, public/private partnership. Both constructs are central to my core perception. That is the difference I see between Local Authorities and their ability to influence or supply resources, and the business organizations which tend not to offer much by way of resources, but who nevertheless exert a strong influence on the Partnership. This was also a conclusion I drew from the Partnership survey reported in the previous chapter. The wide-ranging role of local authorities and the fact they employ staff with the skills to devise and take forward strategies and to influence their politicians and the LEP Board is significant. The business organizations by and large often cannot or, in some cases, will not, put much into the Partnership's work. They will attend when there are important decisions to be made, especially when they fundamentally affect their interests, but generally do not contribute much in terms of time or money for less glamorous processual aspects of partnership work. This can often be frustrating for the proactive Partners, who have worked hard to create and share a knowledge base for decision-making to which private sector Partners have not contributed and which they do not necessarily recognize.

Conclusion

This self-reflexive analysis helps to confirm some of the issues and dilemmas I faced as a multisectoral Partnership Manager conducting insider research. The sheer size and diversity of the LEP, as in any human society, leads to perceived factions, clans or cliques that exist in the mind of the change agent as much as any other participant. What turns these perceptions into a shared form of second-person reality is their resonance with my reflective mentors and informal discussion within the Partnership. These reflections on how I conceptualized the Partnership have crystallized my core perceptions and

provided me with insights into my own attitudes and predilections based on the constructs I use to differentiate partners, whether organizational or individual.

The central core of highly related constructs suggests that I have a bundle of central constructs that have developed over time, and which frame the way I perceive the Partnership, and which influence my judgements and actions for better or worse. Given the power ascribed to partnership managers generally² it is obviously important that they are aware of how their constructs influence their action and discourse.

The polarising nature of construct elicitation perhaps has caused me to emphasize or exaggerate differences between the elements. However, through this process and the evidence in preceding chapters it is again clear that clan mentality has a major bearing on the course of transformative and power relations. These groups have different agendas, values and visions within the Partnership, suggesting that there needs to be a process of sustained interaction and dialogue before a shared vision can emerge. Senge (1990) says: *'few, if any, forces in human affairs are as powerful as a shared vision'* (page 206) and other authors from the collaboration literature agree, such as Gray (1985) and Winer and Ray (1994) despite the difficulties putting this into practice (e.g. Eden and Huxham, 2001; Huxham, 1996b; Huxham and Vangen, 2001). The last named authors sum the problem up thus:

'Potentially huge differences between the collaborating organisations in terms of aims, organisational (and sometimes ethnic) culture, structures, procedures, use of language, power and accountabilities, together with the sheer time required to manage the logistics of communication, all mitigate against success (page 3).

So before a shared vision is possible it seems to me that Partners need somehow to sign up to the hope that this might happen, in other words indulge in a 'leap of faith' without any guarantee that it will be rewarded. It is ironic that faith and trust are the human resources probably most lacking in the post-modern world, yet postmodernism depends on the idea of marrying a rational,

² See following chapter

scientific epistemology of the world with a view that we can create our own world according to our shared values and ambitions.

Whilst these reflections may seem very personal, my experience in the Partnership suggests to me that this is far from the case. I do not think that my perceptions will necessarily be shared fully, but certainly I believe that those in my clan would identify with the picture I have drawn, and be able to draw up their own clans in much the same way, and I suspect with not dissimilar clans emerging³. It would have been fascinating to have done this by doing EW sessions with my reflective mentors and with my Chairmen (George Patterson and John Piper). However, the subject matter was clearly politically sensitive and could have caused the subjects to question the 'real' purpose of my research beyond that which was immediately and properly relevant to the practical functioning of the Partnership.

I believed that tact was the better part of discretion in this case, even if I had been able to secure interviewee time for these EW sessions. This is a real difficulty in undertaking action research in real-world settings with real people and real emotions. There is only so far you can go in terms of depth before raw nerves are exposed. My overriding aim was not to prejudice any of the Partners or the functioning of the Partnership because of my in-depth interest in it as a subject for my research, which meant that absolute openness and transparency with Partners and the Partnership was a very difficult, if not impossible, ideal to achieve. For this reason, it was also impossible to interview members of the second clan, especially after being refused an interview by the person I was closest to in this clan, Betty Kitchener, which was very embarrassing. It illustrated clearly the problems of role ambiguity in undertaking insider action research (Adler and Adler, 1987).

The EW session has convinced me that by and large people are their organizations and vice versa, particularly at the senior level at which I had been working. Organizations seem to be defined by the personality, attitudes and

³ For example, see excerpts from my interviews with Tom Wills and George Patterson reported in Chapter 4.

beliefs of their senior representatives, who may or may not be considered or consider themselves as 'leaders'. People issues tend to be overlooked in the literature on partnership and collaboration generated from outsider and historical perspectives in contrast to the approach I have taken, researching from the inside as an active powerful player in my own right and in 'real time'. As Sink (1996) claims, peoples' idiosyncrasies, egos, and personal agendas have a huge effect on the direction and way in which collaboration takes place in practice: *'people sit down together, not organizations'* (page 106).

Only in one or two cases are individuals not closely correlated with their organizations in my mind. This leads me to wonder if organizational transformation exists in reality beyond individual learning and transformation, and whether the former is dependent on the latter. If it is, the emphasis on creating transformational change shifts from an interorganizational or organizational to an individual or group focus. In this case the competencies and aptitudes of key partnership actors to learn through interactive practice and to embrace the possibility of transformational change become paramount.

Perhaps to secure transformational change in the LEP, therefore, the focus of interactions needs to shift from an inter-organizational basis to one where key individuals are empowered, trained and nurtured to work beyond organizational and perhaps unconsciously self-imposed constraints, to tackle shared issues in new ways. This tentative conclusion accords with my conclusions from the findings reported in the previous two chapters.

As Bryant (2003) and Ridley (1996) point out humans are tribal animals who will collaborate but only because ultimately it will serve their own selfish interest. People will simultaneously attempt to manipulate social relationships to their own advantage and in doing so will seek out allies to achieve their goals. This process of clan formation seems basic to human (and indeed primate) nature and certainly was instrumental in determining Partner relations, interactions and Partnership performance. It led to some Partners' paying lip service to the partnership ethic and exposed the tension between individual and collective rationality. Olsen (1971) argued that individual members lack incentives to a shared interest, yet as non-contributors they will still be able to

benefit from the fruits of collective effort if they cannot be excluded from the collaborative group. Yet, the more non-contributors there are, the less the aggregate benefit that will in theory be generated for both contributing and non-contributing partners.

There may be good reasons why Partners limit their inputs. It may be that the potential benefits of partnership-working are judged to be disproportionate to the resources some Partners are expected to invest, which then leads to a reappraisal of the resources to be invested (Huxham & Vangen 2000a). This is an enduring paradox of social relations with an obvious resonance for those who are experienced in understanding and dealing with the problems of working in multiorganizational partnerships. Hence, we often see in partnerships the familiar refrain that those who seem to get most out of partnership and collaboration on a cost/benefit basis are those who put least in. This point was made forcibly by one of my key interviewees, Tom Wills Chief Executive of the TEC.

This first-person account of a reflexive Enquire Within session has reaffirmed the importance at this micro scale of insider analysis the influence of individual and clan power (Giddens, 1984; Stake, 1995). The political agency effect of individuals and regimes or clans determined the course of transformation of the Partnership. In this view, the Partner organizations acted largely as power bases for the enactment of individual and group political stratagems. They could not be separated from their leaders in any meaningful sense. Organizations have no ability to think, plan, politick or negotiate, but individuals can and do. Some views of leadership in Partnership (see Chapter 2 and Armistead et al (2004)) suggest that leadership is not just about people but also occurs through collaborative structures and processes (Bennett et al., 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2000c). Certainly, this may be the case but it would be a mistake in my view to underestimate the impact of first- and second-person power and leadership influences in multiorganizational partnerships, especially as perceived by partnership practitioners themselves (Armistead et al (2004)). This may especially apply when the partnership is immature, without established structures, processes and forms of sophisticated governance. In

fact, one could argue that the very ambiguity and uncertainty of working in collaborative structures opens the door to political activity of the kind I have described in this thesis. That is not to say that this need be considered negative or damaging in itself, but it can be unless recognised and handled within shared partnership goals, beliefs and values.

Having surveyed in previous chapters the complex interplay between the three voices I now continue to use this metaphor in my final chapter to draw together my final reflections and conclusions from my case study inquiry into transformation and change in a multiorganizational Partnership.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Reflections

Introduction

In this thesis I have tried to respond to pleas by various authors for more research effort into studies that consider partnership and collaboration at a micro scale, longitudinally, emergently, and from an 'inside-out' rather than an 'outside-in' perspective (e.g. Austrom and Lad, 1989; Eisenhardt, 1989; Giddens, 1984; Hartley et al., 1997; Hastings, 1999; Huxham and Vangen, 2001; Pettigrew, 1990; Stake, 1995). I have also tried to address a gap in the literature by providing '*a critical engagement with the day-to-day practicalities of partnership working*' (Stuart, 2002, page 43). Furthermore I have tried to provide a rich account of a partnership in the process of transformation from a power perspective, a gap identified by Hastings (1999), taking account of the fact that rarely are questions of power relations and participation between groups and organisations fully examined (Martin, 1999). In fact Huxham and Vangen (2005) assert that '*there is no coherent body of literature on power in collaborative settings*' (page 174), possibly related to a common assumption that partnership studies should naturally focus on co-operation rather than conflict (Hardy et al., 1998).

The study was conducted using a form of action research that I describe in Chapter 3, which has tried to provide a reflective, unexpurgated account of a very real experience of a particular Partnership from a first-, second-, and third-person perspective (e.g. Fisher and Torbert, 1995; Mangham, 1993; Reason, 1993; Reason and Torbert, 2001). I do not class the action research I undertook as participative in the pure sense of being emancipatory or even empowering (Elden and Levin, 1991; Reason, 1994a; Whyte, 1991) although I hope that the work I undertook perhaps laid the foundations for more radical future transformations along these lines set out in Figure 12 later in this chapter (page 281). Presented as a case study, this contribution has all the strengths and limitations of the genre as

described by Stake (1995) and which I describe fully in Chapter 3 and in outline briefly below.

As Stewart (2002) concludes, working in partnership is dependent on the history, geography and identity of an area. The history and context of an intervention are critical to the validity and applicability of the research (Pettigrew, 1985). My study is very much situated in space, time and context with the consequent benefits of realism and a claim to validity through feedback derived from my reflective mentors, key Partner interviewees and the Partnership itself. This of course does not deny the fact that I largely used myself and thus my cognitive and affective filters as the first-person instrument of the research. This generates consequent limitations based on my particular interpretation of events, although I have tried throughout the study to seek the participation and corroboration of others both formally and informally in generating insights into a Partnership at a particular stage of transformation. I therefore do claim that my results are *partially* representative of the situation in which they were generated as I could never be able to say 100% that they represent every Partner's views or in some abstract sense those of the Partnership.

I do not claim, as a case study and by definition that my findings are necessarily generalizable and I can make no claim to replicability in the sense of other researchers detecting the same emergent theories as me from the data I collected. This is in part due to the different standpoints of other researchers, the fact that they could not possibly have lived the same experience, and the fact that the data I was dealing with was all-encompassing and not limited to definable data collection methods (Huxham, 2003a). However, in the sense that the development of local theory is a valid outcome of the research, i.e. applicable in the specific context of the case (e.g. Elden, 1979), I believe my findings are valid. The key then is to transfer knowledge from one context to another so that it '*relies on understanding the contextual factors in the situation where the inquiry took place, judging the new context where the knowledge is supposed to be applied and making a critical assessment of whether the two contexts have sufficient processes in common to make it worthwhile to link them*' (Greenwood and Levin, 1998, page 79).

I understand that this may fall short of the ideals for 'good' action research suggested by Eden and Huxham (1996), although I would argue that these shortcomings are endemic in qualitative research in general and case study action research in particular. Nevertheless, any conclusions I draw have to be interpreted with these methodological caveats, which I freely acknowledge.

Finally, as a powerful player in the narrative in my own right as Partnership Manager, I had to be careful not to confuse my very real responsibilities within the practical day to day management of the LEP with my research and create ambiguities in the minds of collaborators as to my true motives (Adler and Adler, 1987). My first priority was to serve the Partnership. This meant at times having to play down the fact that I was also conducting research without hiding the fact, and not to press too hard for contributions from some key players who were unwilling to participate or who were unapproachable given the political context relative to my own position. Despite these limitations, I would claim that the degree of deep engagement with the Partnership and my reflections over a long period lend my study credibility. In addition I have tried honestly to capture the emergent 'theories in use' (Argyris and Schön, 1991) that I witnessed as a participant in the action to inform my conclusions.

At the beginning of my journey I set out in Chapter 1 to pursue the following broad research questions listed below. I now provide a strategic summary of the conclusions I have drawn from my research before going on to discuss some specific contributions I claim to have made to the literature on collaboration and partnerships, with particular reference to transformation and power. It is difficult to interpret a complex, uncertain, ambiguous entity like a multiorganizational partnership and come up with simple, bold, unambiguous 'answers'. However, I provide below my distilled reflections drawn from the research, which have undergone a maturation process through time and through drafting and redrafting my thesis:

1. To understand better how issues of transformation and power arise emergently and shape partnership dynamics
2. To analyse power relations through inquiring into first-, second -, and third-person perspectives
3. To reflect on emergent issues and to draw conclusions that contribute to a better understanding of transformation and power in multiorganizational partnerships

To understand better how issues of transformation and power arise emergently and shape partnership dynamics

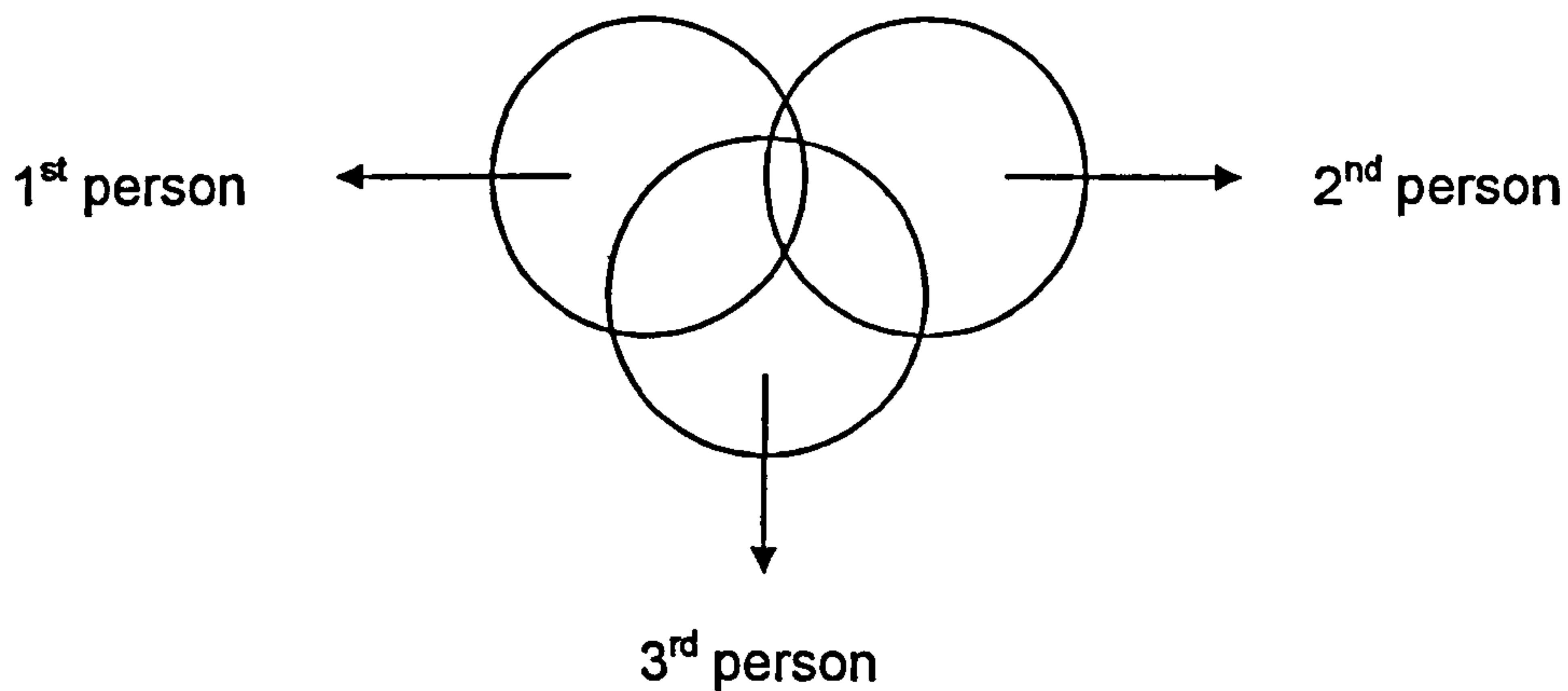
My thesis has illustrated clearly how issues of transformation and power underpinned the dynamics of a particular Partnership considered in the context of a case study. Through a variety of methods based on my syntactical methodological strategy, it can be seen that the trajectory of the LEP was influenced at various times by a variety of internal and external pressures. I have emphasized the importance of the exercise of individual and clan power, sometimes overt and obvious, but also and perhaps more often covert and subtle. This micro scale insight drawn from an insider perspective simultaneously as practitioner and researcher adds a deeper dimension to the literature on partnership and collaboration. As well as highlighting the role of sub-partnership units and power bases, it reveals the highly influential role of the Partnership Manager in the ways in which the control of agendas is achieved. Even more importantly it also illustrates how he can control the content and tone of the debate around which agendas are set and the high-level 'magical' skills, as Fisher and Torbert (1995) argue, that are required to undertake this role effectively. Based on my experience I am writing a paper for publication based on a new genre of practitioner I foresee will be needed in the future: the New Partnership Professional, to build on my reflections as a change agent undertaking practitioner-based research on the Partnership (Pettigrew, 2003).

The related issue of transformation in my thesis defined the inter-personal and inter-factional dynamics of Partnership which can either generate or consume power. My experience, analysis and reflection lead me to the conclusion that there was little evidence of mutual transformation leading to a greater degree of power generation, sharing and emancipation. Rather, transformational dynamics were unidirectional and tended if not to consume power, to treat it as a zero sum. My speculation would be that this may not be untypical of other complex multiorganizational partnerships. The sheer complexity and shifting sands of partnership, power-motivated and power-seeking activities within the Partnership and attendant uncertainty and ambiguity makes it difficult to generate a genuine, discernible synergy – a generational power based on mutual transformation. Yet, I believe, hard as it may be to perceive, identify or sustain, this must be the challenge for partnerships and partnership professionals in the future.

To analyse power relations through inquiring into first-, second -, and third-person perspectives

These broad conclusions have been reached following three years' close observation, participation, research and analysis of a partnership undergoing change in response to both internal and external pressures and opportunities. My methodological strategy which has been based on developing first- second- and third person syntactical perspectives, has sought to detect and articulate these differentiated perspectives on power and transformation in a multiorganizational partnership. This strategy has in turn suggested particular analytical approaches designed to triangulate between these different perspectives in order to provide a three dimensional soundscape of voices describing the partnership each 'voice' could hear and articulate. This is illustrated in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: A Three-dimensional Methodological Soundscape



There was a clear overlap and interaction between the three voices, although it was not my intention at the outset to seek to demonstrate a single neat unambiguous alignment of findings as a result of triangulation – and that is not what I am suggesting in this thesis. However, I do propose that from these different perspectives emerges a primary finding from my work, and my contribution to the literature on partnership and collaboration, that partnership should be defined principally as a second-person entity rather than in the third person. In other words, the Partnership was composed of power-competing and power-sharing factions or clans, protecting their shared domains and socially constructed identities and mores derived historically, rather than as a functioning reified entity. This conclusion was drawn and reinforced by my first-, second-, and third-person analyses. When authors talk about partnership as an entity, therefore, this needs to be treated with caution as it may not easily be described in the third person as such. This misleading description of partnership can be seen as a direct result of research that is externally applied (frequently evaluation and post-hoc) rather than insider-based, emergent and longitudinal. My research shows clearly that studied at micro-political level, identifying a third-person partnership voice was practically problematic, but also *theoretically* questionable. In fact in my case study it would not be an exaggeration to question whether the Partnership actually existed, an insight I claim has significant implications for further research on multiorganizational partnerships.

This conclusion has implications for my original definition of *partnership* (Chapter 2, page 44) as opposed to simply collaboration, which was based inter alia on the former having some form of recognizable governance as well as longer term aspirations and strategic focus beyond the project level. My critical realist ontology (Chapter 3, page 91) is thus also called into question as its seeming aptness to allow me to research a 'partnership' as an entity now seems less appropriate taking account of this main finding. My research suggests that, given the theoretical and practical issues of detecting the third-person voice, partnership may better be understood and researched as a second-person, socially constructed, phenomenon composed of multiple, partially shared conceptions of existence rather than a single reality.

To reflect on emergent issues and to draw conclusions that contribute to a better understanding of transformation and power in multiorganizational partnerships

My inquiry is a case-study and the emergent insights I have offered above stem from a lengthy period of analysis and reflection. My practitioner status and deep involvement with the Partnership has added to the confidence in which I make my conclusions, surrounded as I was by myriad naturally occurring data as well as having undertaken extensive analyses based on a range of research interventions. I expect that some aspects of my inquiry may be particular to the case in question. However, my professional involvement with a number of partnerships and partnership practitioners leads me to believe that the issues of transformation and power described above is likely also to be of direct relevance to complex multi-organizational partnerships in general.

The remainder of this final Chapter now focuses on the particular insights I have drawn from my research that I would wish to highlight based on my methodological metaphor of first-, second-, and third-person voices (Figure 11). These are related but additional to the more methodological and philosophical argument developed above, but which have theoretical and practical significance for researchers, practitioners and researcher/practitioners. The *principal findings* illustrated in

Figure 11 thus form the central structure of this chapter and are designed to speak simultaneously to academe and practice. These are discussed in turn according to their principal derivation, viz. from first-, second-, and third-person inquiry. For the convenience of the reader and in order to provide a succinct summary of my findings and contribution to the literature I relate these principal findings to the main methods, data and techniques I have used to elicit these conclusions.

Figure 11: Contributions to Partnership Literature from my Inquiry

	First Person Conclusions and Reflections	Second Person Conclusions and Reflections	Third Person Conclusions and Reflections
<i>Method</i>	Personal Reflection	Narrative	Partnership Survey
<i>Data/Technique</i>		Interpretation of Documents Interviews Observation Naturally Occurring Data Personal Reflection	Questionnaire Analysis and Reflection
<i>Principal Findings</i>	<i>Personal Convening Power</i> <i>Role and Skills of Partnership Manager</i>	<i>Individual/Clan Power</i> <i>Acknowledging and dealing with Power Tensions</i>	<i>Shadows of the Past</i> <i>Resourcing Partnerships</i> <i>Government Power</i>

Although my enquiry has been eclectic in nature, looking at all relevant aspects of transformation and power in a multiorganizational partnership including aspects of leadership and learning, I see my contribution to knowledge as being related to the

multifaceted and complex aspects of the partnership and collaboration literature. Given the extensive nature of the literature on each of the above elements I argue that it would not be credible to claim, for example, a major contribution to the literature on transformation, power, leadership or learning. However, in the context of partnership and collaboration, I do claim to have added to knowledge and insight, particularly in the first two aspects, through the medium of my case study. It would be a bonus for me if my findings are of value to these other extensive and well-established literatures.

In what follows I draw together the voices that have emerged and reinforced each other based on each of the preceding chapters. I considered trying to achieve this on the basis of drawing a distinction between theoretical and practical considerations. However, having tried this approach I have come to the conclusion that such a strategy fails to provide sufficient discrimination and in fact is a false dichotomy in the context of the way I have researched and written my thesis and understand my conclusions. I have decided that it is meaningless, therefore, to pretend that I can sensibly separate these two perspectives. To do so would be to apply an artificial device on my findings and possibly to conflict with a strong theme of my research in which theory and practice are interwoven to such an extent that there is little useful distinction between them.

I have chosen instead to maintain my syntactical metaphor of first-, second-, and third-person voices as an epistemological framework to draw together my final conclusions and reflections in the form of a 'metahermeneutic' – an overview and integration of these different interpretive perspectives. In doing so my intention is to maintain continuity with previous chapters and to seek an integrative 'theory as practice' and 'practice as theory' that transcends both and which rejects a reductionist approach which would have been antithetical to the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of my research strategy. In employing this approach I am able to provide some new (and reinforce or challenge previous) insights on transformation and power in multiorganizational partnerships that should be of equal value from the point of view of practitioners as well as theorists. This approach can be seen then effectively to mirror my own position as

researcher/practitioner attempting to contribute to knowledge in this complex and under-researched field. As I have emphasized in this thesis the syntactic categories are useful and insightful, but not necessarily always discrete, so the reader should allow some flexibility in how the typology is interpreted as there will be overlaps between the three voices.

Then, in my **Final Conclusions and Reflections** I discuss how the methodological aspects of my inquiry resonate with 'deep learning' (Brown, 2000) that has the potential to reframe 'action-logics' (Hartwell and Torbert, 1999) or 'mental models' (Senge, 1990) for first-, second-, and third-person voices, i.e. at the level of the individual, the group, and the entity. I suggest that such a triadic approach has more general epistemological applicability in striving for validity in the study of complex social phenomena, of which multiorganizational partnerships are good examples, and in striving towards a practice-academy nexus, which lies at the core of the DBA.

First-Person Conclusions and Reflections

In undertaking the research my own power to convene the Partnership and influence its transformation became more and more apparent. In a reflective study such as this, it is perhaps dangerous to ascribe too much power on oneself as the author, but I try in what follows to focus on my personal convening role as Partnership Manager and then to reflect more generally on the key importance of this role and the demanding competencies required relating back to the literature where it helps in explaining and supporting my key conclusions.

Personal/Convening power

One of the key areas of insight was regarding the power the TEC enjoyed, acknowledged in the Partnership Survey described in Chapter 5, as the convenor of the Partnership. The TEC was careful not to use the emotive word 'leader' publicly, but as convenor of the Partnership it was still effectively the lead organization. This was reflected in the fact that both chairs of the LEP were appointed from the TEC

powerbase and I was a senior TEC employee. The TEC was strong because of the discretionary resources it had freedom to apply locally for economic development purposes; because it received direct state funding to provide work-based learning; and because it was a company limited by guarantee run on business lines by a private-sector led Board. The more subtle and important reasons for its power, however, lay in the high level representative composition of its Board, the simple fact that its geography covered the whole of the sub-region, and the weakness of the local authorities, split between county and conurbation. This power was manifest by and mediated through tacit acceptance of its legitimacy to self appoint to the leadership of the Partnership. Although this was not overtly contested it was not necessarily accepted by all the other Partners as it was clearly undemocratic and smacked of a 'Godfather' approach (Mayo, 1997).

I was aware that although not one of the recognized top political players I was personally influential in the Partnership at all levels and was uniquely placed at the information hub of the Partnership. All 'official' business was handled through my office and I had access to and generated more information than any other member of the Partnership. Through being in contact with so many people in many organizations I was able to influence them both consciously and unconsciously through the information I chose to impart and receive and know that this information would be passed 'up the line' in Partners' organizations including my own. Vangen and Huxham (2003a) point to a paradox of collaboration whereby partnership managers often seem to have a clearer sense of the issues pertaining to the collaborative agenda than do any of the members. One of their leadership roles, therefore, involves facilitating progress despite partners' lack of understanding of issues and trying to minimize differences between Partners by finding ways to keep them better informed.

Although this may seem an obvious and relatively mundane part of my role, it allowed me through the everyday communication within the LEP to influence subtly what was being discussed in the Partnership and crucially the tone of the debate (Lawrence et al., 1999). I was aware of trying to keep up a positive, optimistic tenor and sometimes by so doing to 'paper over the cracks' both between Partners and in

telling the Partnership story. One of my reflective mentors called this a '*triumph of style over substance*'. The opportunity and ability to portray the characters, interpret the unfolding plot and make and communicate meaning became a critical part of my change agency. Furthermore, I played out my role both formally and informally, consciously and unconsciously moving in and out of research and practitioner modes of acting. I communicated with a wide range of partners at different levels providing appropriately nuanced versions of 'the story' that reflected my understanding and meaning-making derived from the information at my disposal (Wieck, 1995), directed at particular audiences.

Thus, increasingly I became a powerful player in the Partnership through convenorship and personal agency from my position as Partnership Manager rather than as a member (Huxham and Vangen, 2000c)¹. I was the only real full time (more or less) professional resource for the Partnership and this served to emphasize the importance of my personal facilitation and interpretation as well as shaping of events, both up front and through 'backstaging' (Buchanan and Badham, 1999).

My values, beliefs and constructs – and my own personal transformation in trying to become more of a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983) through deepening my own learning and ability to reflect in action (Fisher and Torbert, 1995) - had an effect in driving the Partnership and shaping its transformational trajectory, as of course did my intense research interest in the LEP. I was thus neither an objective nor neutral observer of events but rather an active participant, both as researcher and practitioner. As Chapter 6 illustrates I was also part of a faction, through association with the TEC and its clan, and with concomitant negative assumptions and views about the motivations of rival clans through this social identity. I was not intentionally manipulative to suit my own personal or narrow organizational ends but any communications channeled through me were obviously coloured by my own mental models (Senge, 1990), and resultant interpretations and style of communication. In this way, through formal communications as well as subtle

¹ Although this masks a personal vulnerability in the role (See Chapter 3 and Pettigrew (2003))

nuances, I played a significant, but largely, hidden part in shaping a common interpretation of the 'story to date'. I acted as a lever to influence inter-subjective, intra-partnership dialogue as well as the Partnership as a whole, pointing the way to the next development in the unfolding plot.

As explained in Chapter 4 I also gained substantial influence through being active in facilitation. I used these skills, for example, to lead the production of the sub-regional economic strategy and the SBS bidding process. Critically, although prosaically, I had a strong personal influence on the eventual composition of the putative LEP Board and the debate on the options for the Partnership after BLB's SBS bid failed, through taking control of these explorations (see Chapter 4). It was about knowing when and how to intervene in critical situations and how to reflect in action to mediate between Partners and gain consensus. The ability to facilitate and encourage the co-creation of policy and strategy working with diverse opinion and political stance as an apparent 'honest broker' was a powerful aspect of my agency. This is not to boast about my personal skills, but rather to illustrate the profound impact a partnership manager can have on the direction of even a large complex multiorganizational partnership influencing critical decisions at points of power (Huxham and Beech, 2002).

In addition, I played an important role in shaping the agendas for the Board and influencing the shape and tenor of its discussions through supplying most of the documentation. I wrote strategic papers, often in 'option' form, which allowed the Board discussion to be built around scenarios outlining the pros and cons of different courses of action. In so doing I was able to define the parameters of the debate and point towards what I considered the best option by the way in which these likely pros and cons were described and to some extent on the order in which they were presented. Thus, much power and influence was exercised on the direction of the collaboration through definition of issues and creation and dissemination of text (Lawrence, Phillips and Hardy, 1999). Inevitably, therefore, partnership managers will influence the way in which issues come to the fore, the way in which they are articulated and the parameters within which they are discussed.

Thus, the debate was defined not only by what I chose to put to the Board and in what form, but also by what I chose to leave out (Lukes, 1974). One of my reflective mentors was unhappy at my 'domination' over providing material for the Board as I describe in Chapter 4. At the time I was defensive about this criticism as I felt I provided all the material because no one else offered. However, on reflection I recognize that this probably suited my purposes and I did not proactively go out of my way to solicit contributions from other Partners for the Board meetings. So despite not having a position in the hierarchy that allowed me equal status to the more powerful Partnership players, an issue I explore in Pettigrew (2003) (Pettigrew, 2003), my personal agency effect was significant, more so than I had imagined it would be when I first became Partnership Manager, and was purposeful.

I believe this is an important contribution to the literature, as it suggests that one of the reasons for a general dissatisfaction with the efficiency and effectiveness of multiorganizational partnerships may lie in an underestimation of the powerful role of partnership managers as political players in their own right. Other authors have also suggested that this may be the case (see e.g. Huxham and Vangen, 2000c; Stewart, 2002) but I believe that my experience of actually undertaking the partnership manager role and through the process of my inquiry has significantly strengthened this view. Critics may say that there is nothing particular to partnerships about this finding. However, the key point is that in a complex multiorganizational partnership as opposed to a single organization, the person authorized or entrusted with a facilitation, managerial and communication role is uniquely placed to influence and be influenced by many organizations simultaneously. This represents a powerful source of leverage that is easy to overlook or underestimate unless one is reflecting from first hand experience. It also clearly carries with it much responsibility on the part of the partnership manager.

This strategic influencing is partly achieved through having unique access to all levels in the partnership, particularly of course in this case to the leaders of key LEP members and the chair and board of the Partnership. It is also achieved through the

framing and reframing of the Partnership story and subtle suggestions regarding future transformational trajectories. As most multiorganizational partnerships operate with very few staff dedicated purely to manage the partnership function compared to a partner organization, their skills, competences, attitude, values and personality can play an enormous part in how the partnership views itself as well as external perceptions.²

Furthermore, there is rarely close day to day line management of the partnership manager. He or she creates the basis for a shared understanding of the partnership's identity and focuses this view through his or her personal conceptual lens. This situation arises partly also as a result of the fact that members of partnerships have priorities other than the partnerships in which they are engaged, not least issues within and concerning their own organizations. They also only have a partial understanding of the dynamics of partnership issues and processes and inevitably have to leave it to the partnership manager to deal with them. Thus, power is conferred on the partnership manager because he or she typically has the major role of defining and building a shared understanding of what the partnership stands for and framing its evolving narrative. It is no exaggeration to say that he or she is the architect and site foreman of the constructed reality that is a multiorganizational partnership.

Role and Skills of the Partnership Manager

This first-person reflection on undertaking the role of the partnership manager leads me to the conclusion that this role is little understood or appreciated both in the literature and I would suggest in practice. The literature on collaboration provides insufficient guidance on the nature of the challenges he or she faces in undertaking this complex role (e.g. Cummings, 1984; Gray, 1985; Selsky 1991). There is now a growing contribution thanks to Huxham and her colleagues (see References) about the practice of partnership through working and learning with practitioners, but there

² See next section

is relatively little on the practical problems faced by managers, boundary spanners and change agents (but see Pettigrew, 2003; Williams, 2002).

Over the three years I performed the role of Partnership Manager I found it an incredibly demanding role. Although I was an experienced senior executive with the TEC and having led two organizations previously, these roles did not entirely prepare me for the rigours of being a Partnership Manager, which is a crucial position especially as in most partnerships there are few staff solely dedicated to this function. Yet, as has been demonstrated above, this position is critical to effective partnership functioning and development, placing a premium on expert judgment and communications (Northmore, 2001).

Arising from my personal experience as a Partnership Manager and researcher I believe that new forms of partnership working need to be engendered with individuals empowered and trained to work on issues and opportunities outside of their narrow job confines, knowledge bases and professional associations (Pettigrew, 2003 attached as Pettigrew (2003)). The premium would be on people with competencies and capacities to work *meta-organizationally* as well as *inter-organizationally*. Of course, first there would have to be a will within the partner organizations to recognize this need, and an appreciation that complex strategic and operational issues need to be tackled in this concerted fashion if they are to be successful.

As explained above, partnership managers are often in powerful positions both in and between formal meetings because often they are the only people employed by the partnership and hence the only people who have its agenda as their main concern (Huxham 2003b). Their power and ability to shape partnership agendas and discourses comes with a responsibility to transact business in such a way as to understand and be alive to the sometimes hair-pin sensibilities of powerful individual partners and clans and without causing discontent or a feeling of exclusion among the more disempowered members. Achieving this 'power of balance' (Torbert, 1991) or even just managing the 'balance of power' requires exceptional talent, and I have honestly tried to recount in this thesis and in Pettigrew (2003), that I found myself at times falling short of the ideal. On the other

hand, the discomfort of personal exposure presented an opportunity for personal learning and transformation that the DBA has helped me to exploit to the full. It is acknowledged in the learning literature that challenging situations can be rich sources of learning (e.g. Kleiner and Roth, 1997) and that such an experience can be transformational (Appelbaum and Goransson, 1997). I reflect further on the deep learning aspects arising from my inquiry at the end of this chapter.

As in my own case these challenges are multiplied if the partnership manager is actually employed by one of the key partners, and whose motivations may thus be considered at best ambiguous and at worst prejudiced, despite a strong desire and belief that one is acting disinterestedly. Even if one succeeds in being neutral (which is doubtful in my view) it might not be perceived by others as such (Pettigrew, 2003). This inherently risky and lonely situation forces one to reflect on one's own ambitions and values relative to others in the same or different clans and what these mean for Partnership transformation. As I expose in Chapter 4 and Pettigrew (2003), quite often I found myself facing personal dilemmas and crises that, given the importance of the role, could have been detrimental to the Partnership, although ultimately I had the unstinting support both of the TEC Chief Executive and the TEC/LEP Chairman.

Thus, a key conclusion from my study is the importance of the partnership manager being independent of any of the constituent members. No matter how hard I tried other partners were unsure whether I was acting in the interest of the TEC or the Partnership, and on reflection they were probably at least partly right, although I denied this to myself at the time and for a long period afterwards. I was not briefed by anyone at any time to act for the TEC, but inevitably I was part of and seen to be part of that particular culture and clan, even though I was relatively new in the area and to the organization. The other advantage of an independent manager is that it becomes more possible to confer senior status on the individual to be on a par with organizational member chief officers. Even in this case parity may not be achieved, but it is nevertheless vital in my view.

In my own case I did not have equal status to the leaders of the partnership's constituent members. In fact the power gradient was very steep which caused me distress on a number of occasions when senior figures vented their spleens on me personally, as I was the individual they associated with the 'personality' of the Partnership. Generally, we tend to '*apply to organizations many of the terms we also apply to individuals*' (Argyris and Schön, 1978, page 11), a phenomenon I explored self-reflexively in Chapter 6. The partnership manager must, therefore, be empowered to be able to play with equal status in the political game in order to maximize the innovative potential of this activity, reduce the stress of the role and to minimize the tyranny of vested interests.

It follows, therefore, that partnership managers should not be left to grapple with these complex issues on their own. They need good support mechanisms and bestowed power in order to reduce their personal vulnerability and to meet the many, complex challenges they face. This is even more important if the partnership manager is expected or expects not just to manage but to drive the partnership. We therefore need to know more about how the partnership manager, especially acting as an internal change agent, can be effectively supported, especially in complex multi-layered systems typical of multiorganizational partnerships (Pettigrew, 2003). Are good partnership managers and change agents born or can they be trained? My own experience, in support of Spekman et al. (1996), suggests that the lessons of life's experience are critical, but that learning can be accelerated through encouraging the extension of action-oriented reflective learning for key individuals whose main purpose is to make partnership work. A 'partnership: exchange' set up by a local university partly through my own interest and work in this field, is actively exploring whether such approaches, including mentoring, coaching and the production of learning materials for continuing professional development, can provide an effective response to the obvious need for better support for partnership professionals in general and change agents in particular. I say a little more on this later.

This raises the question of what types of power can be harnessed by the partnership manager or change agent to become more effective at managing partnerships. Traditional forms of power such as force, coercion or other forms of power based on hierarchy are not open to the partnership manager. This is partly a result of working in the partnership genre but also related to the fact, as explained above, that the partnership manager typically lacks the status of organizational heads. Such forms of power are in any case likely to lead to conformity, dependency or resistance rather than transformation (Fisher and Torbert, 1995). Transforming power is using one's role as partnership manager to facilitate mutual, rather than just unidirectional, transformation (Hastings, 1996). This is difficult because it requires partners to make themselves amenable to others' views and vulnerable to change, seek ambiguity and contradiction rather than resist it, and encourage exploration rather than jumping to solutions. However, the partnership manager also needs to be able to act as political entrepreneur (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Laver, 1997) and sometimes suspend his or her own personal values in order to 'play the partnership game'. This may sound slightly immoral, but as I found to my cost imposing my own values on political situations though a 'natural' tendency was ultimately counterproductive and placed me in an even more vulnerable position than the role demanded (Pettigrew, 2003). This was a key aspect of my own heightened learning and personal transformation through reflecting on the dilemmas I faced and how I handled them.³

There is no doubt that the power of being a partnership manager as described in the first section of these first-person reflections comes into play strongly, in terms of control of communications, agendas and backstaging activity (Buchanan and Boddy, *op. cit.*). The partnership manager in effect writes and controls the partnership story, communicating the main characters, plots, sub-plots and eventual denouement. He or she is probably the only person in the partnership with access to all or most information and controls what is disseminated. This is probably acceptable as the partnership manager has a clearer idea of the key issues than other partnership members and thus a responsibility to ensure that they are kept

³ See final section of this chapter

informed (Vangen and Huxham, 2003a) with a clear rationale for positions taken on issues.

However, given the major challenges of acting on behalf of a range of diverse interests pleasing all of the people all of the time, or even some of the time, will be problematic. Rarely will they have the luxury of working on behalf of a united partnership in strategy, policy or culture. Thus, with a high level of diversity satisfactorily resolving interorganizational, inter-factional and interpersonal conflicts and controversies (Schön and Rein, 1994) can be very complex and difficult. Many actors can potentially become involved and they will use their referent, resource, formal authority or special knowledge/expertise power to block, retard or sabotage decisions they see as detrimental to their interests, thus adding to the stress of the Partnership Manager's role. I say more on this theme in the third-person conclusions and reflections section later in this chapter.

Appropriate skills and competences are thus critical for partnerships, and particularly, given the power he or she wields, for partnership managers. These go beyond even those ideal attributes as heroic business athlete identified by Kanter (1989) and Hutton (1994) which emphasize substantive skills such as observation and listening, negotiation, judging personalities and interests etc; personal attributes such as the ability to work independently, self confidence tempered with humility; and abilities such as being able to handle organizational politics and key political operators and opinion formers. Spekman et al. (1996) emphasize the ability to move easily between operational, strategic and policy levels. The ideal partnership manager would indeed fulfill this demanding specification.

Yet there is more to being an effective partnership professional than even these qualities. I suggest that the management of interdependencies is a key competence, relying on relational and interpersonal attributes. He/she needs to be able to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity; build trusting cultures; and be able to operate effectively within hierarchies as well as networks (Williams, 2002). It is in itself paradoxical and counter-intuitive that the skills and competences of an individual can be so crucial to the success of multiorganizational partnerships. Yet

the efforts and creativity of such people – what Bardach (1998) calls *'purposeful practitioners'* (page 6) – are clearly an essential ingredient. Also key is the partnership manager's ability to act as broker of information, narrator and *'human catalyst'* (Ebers, 1997, page 31), or what Fisher and Torbert (1995) call the *'magician/witch/clown frame'* (page 175), which involves:

'Disintegration of ego identity, near-death experience; seeks participation in historical/spiritual transformations; creator of mythical events that reframe situations; anchoring in inclusive present, seeing light and dark, order and mess; blends opposites, creating 'positive-sum' games; exercises own attention, researches interplay of intuition, thought, action, and effects on outside world; treats time and events as symbolic, analogical, metaphorical (not merely linear, digital, literal)',
(page 62).

This human catalyst role and the characteristics described by Fisher and Torbert seem to me to be the closest description of what I consider to be the most helpful and insightful attributes of the ideal partnership manager. They go well beyond the technical and strategic competencies which are usually ascribed to these roles. My insight has been that it is in the process of self-reflection and deep learning that one can acquire at least some progress towards this ideal. The game and survival is everything and as I state above there is little place for reliance on personal value systems. Automatic responses are far from helpful to the role. This is akin to the Mode 1 and Mode 2 behaviours suggested by Argyris and Schön (1974), emphasizing the paradigmatic difference between thinking and acting within one's own preset assumptions as opposed to being prepared to accept multiple logics and frames of reference respectively. Mode 2 thinking and reflection is essential for partnership managers, and for me this ability to shift cognitive gears (Louis and Sutton, 1991) from automatic mode to reflective was effected through a process of maturation through successive cycles of reflection, evaluation and re-assessment. This process can itself be conceived of as almost successive personal action research cycles in which the meaning attributed to events and feelings undergoing transformations as one questions one's own judgments, interventions and

evaluations. The process of writing and re-writing this thesis over a long period of time can be considered part of these cycles of reflection.

The nature of my micro-scale case study and my central position within it as researcher and practitioner has perhaps emphasized more strongly than is common in the literature the challenges and role of the partnership manager. My research illustrates that the successful partnership manager requires the skills of the political entrepreneur as well as those of the reflective practitioner and that it takes time to build a repertoire of skills and experiences of value to the individual and the partnership (Spekman et al., 1996). By responding to this gap in the literature I hope to have redressed the balance towards a greater appreciation of this critical partnership role which I have as far as I am aware uniquely voiced from a first-person perspective.

Second-Person Conclusions and Reflections

I have used this voice to explain the forms of transformation and power enacted between individuals and groups within the Partnership. This is distinct from my first-person voice as researcher and practitioner and the third-person voice of the Partnership as a whole. Yet, even focusing on this second-person voice, there is a first-person influence through my interpretations and attempts to make meaning from the data, not all of which could be corroborated at a co-operative inter-subjective level.

I concentrate below on what I regard as an important contribution to the literature which, as in my first-person conclusions and reflections, is partly the result of my insider perspective and the micro-scale of my inquiry. It regards the important dynamics of intra-partnership power relations recognizing the diversity, plurality and interdependence that characterizes multiorganizational partnerships. In particular I consider the nature and impact of alliances within the Partnership which conspired ultimately to decelerate the Partnership's transformation. I consider these issues in detail below in terms of understanding the power invested in these alliances or clans and then go on to discuss how these intra-partnership tensions may be

handled as a means of minimizing their more negative consequences. In doing so, I emphasize that I do not claim that such alliances are necessarily disruptive or pathological. However, in the context of my case study it was the more negative aspects of clan behaviour that had a significant impact on partnership transformation.

Individual/Clan Power

Most studies of partnership and collaboration tend to talk about them as holistic, as if they have an identity of themselves in an abstract sense. This is useful shorthand when trying to theorize about partnership, for example when the purpose is to construct models of partnership and collaboration (e.g. Das and Teng, 1998; Mariotti, 1996; Mattesich and Monsey, 1992). My inquiry, on the other hand, exposes the fact that the LEP, and I suspect others, was actually made up of strategic alliances, led by power wielding and broking personalities, which had a much greater influence on the direction of the LEP than is obvious from studying the literature⁴. This is probably at least partly a direct result of the nature of my micro-scale inquiry and as an insider observing at close quarters the behaviour of key players, but is nevertheless an important finding that is often under-reported in studies of collaboration and partnership compared to attempts to elicit a more systemic, distributed conceptualization of power (e.g. Huxham and Vangen, 2000c).

These latter forms of network power (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001), which are also related to notions of distributed leadership (Bennett et al., 2003; Spillane, 2004) are interesting and important, and instinctively one would feel that they would be important aspects of power in partnerships, but that was not generally the case in my case study. This finding may be related to the type of Partnership under investigation, strategic rather than operational, voluntary rather than mandated, and possibly dependent on the stage in its lifecycle. It may be, however, that it is also related to the level in the partnership hierarchy of power in which one is operating. In accordance with Bryman (1996) my experience was that there was a greater

⁴ Although there are notable exceptions, e.g. Eden and Huxham, 2001; Selsky, 1991; Stuart, 2002.

degree of cooperation, distributed power and leadership at the lower levels in the Partnership hierarchy than above this level. At the higher, more political levels the experience was certainly much more hierarchical incorporating both individual political behaviour and faction clashes (Ambrose, 2001). This may be seen as a desire to perpetuate narrow, single organization or faction perspectives as a defence against perceived threat from change (Martin and Oztel, 1996).

It seemed that the creation and existence of the LEP, even though it could hardly be said to exist as a partnership according to my definition of the term in Chapter 2, provided a frame and a stimulus for otherwise non- or minimally-interacting organizations to consider and debate new economic possibilities for the sub-region, that did not exist before. Although it was really more of a network than a Partnership even after the formation of the Partnership Board, the fact that its members thought of themselves as part of a Partnership through the naming of the LEP, made it a Partnership in the perception of its members. Thus, the very act of naming the Partnership as such had a significant effect on the way in which its members related to it (Huxham and Beech, 2002). This is akin to Trist's (1983) domain formation whereby the members of the LEP carved out a common but ill-defined virtual space within which to interact. There was, therefore, an excitement and a strong interest and stimulus within the members of the Partnership to become active within this newly formed domain to contribute to shaping the character of the Partnership and thereby the economic future of the area.

However, being literally a network with only a minimal degree of structure and with little in the way of bureaucratic mandated or established process and protocols, the Partnership offered new possibilities for organizations to work together seriously for the first time across a broad spectrum of interests. In so doing it created a new confidence among some members of the LEP that together they could plan and shape the economic future of our area. There was a noticeable increase in the energy and optimism of participants, particularly at officer level. They clearly enjoyed the interaction of working together and were stimulated by the learning opportunities engagement with the Partnership afforded them (see Chapters 5 and 6).

With this learning came a degree of empowerment and upward influence from 'officer' to member level. One could see, for example, clear indications of local authority officers rising to the challenge and 'stepping forward' out of their organizational roles to exert a strong influence on the way the Partnership began to generate a shared conception of the issues, problems and possible solutions to the economic needs of the area. At this level, therefore, one could ascertain an embryonic form of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), even at this early stage of the Partnership's existence, as the various Partners became used to working together at closer quarters. I associate this form of inter-agency dynamics, however, with Mackintosh's (1992) limited theory of transformation, which is unidirectional in nature, with partners attempting to influence each other and the idea of adaptive rather than generational learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974). This was the evidence elicited from the Partnership survey described in Chapter 5. It also resonates with the idea of a collegial/consensual form of power described by Greiner and Schein (1988).⁵

However, as the Partnership reached the *Recognition* threshold, when players and organizations at a higher level began to take a greater interest, it was noticeable that 'power of balance' was progressively replaced by a 'balance of power' (Torbert, 1991) as historic factional interests reasserted their hierarchical power based on well established precedent. This phase had much to do with a form of regime politics (e.g. Elkin, 1987; Harding, 2000) whereby blocs of alliances came together to articulate a vision for the future role of the Partnership. These blocs were very much based on the public (mainly LA) sector and the private sector, with other interests effectively marginalized. There was an almost predictable tension between these blocs based on assumptions of bureaucracy by the latter on the part of the former and lack of accountability by the former on the part of the latter. However, there were also bitter rivalries within these blocs.

⁵ See Chapter 2.

It was these tensions, in particular, based on what I have called the 'shadows of the past', that proved the most powerful determinants of the trajectory of the Partnership. In addition, the influence of powerful personalities was instrumental in driving these clans based on private interests and historic conflict: a form of political power (Gray and Wood, 1981). These were very much traditional hierarchical rather than network 'leaders' and their power was not based on predictable sources. Thus the leaders of the BLB/BCCI clan had no local political, and certainly no democratic, mandate or access to major resource, but the behaviour of individuals asserting their personal 'power over' rather than 'power with' others, generated a corresponding credibility and acceptance among those they sought to influence. This gives meaning to the conception of power as a second-person phenomenon, whereby the 'assertee' through his/her compliance confers power to the 'asserter' (French and Raven, 1960) which then defines the course of future interactions and the relationship between the parties.⁶ It can also be seen in terms of the power transmitted through shared norms of belief and behaviour within a group interacting over time – a feature of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

It was through first- and second-person power, therefore, that the transformational dynamics of the Partnership at the top was mediated, culminating in the establishment of the Board, which was an embodiment of a structural approach to representation and an injection of hierarchy into a previously networked form of governance (Ouchi, 1991). This was not necessarily a backward step as this new level in the power hierarchy filled a gap that all the officers at my tier had argued for in order to provide ourselves with a mandate and legitimacy to act for the Partnership on behalf of our employing organizations. Network power still operated under the surface in a positive, liberating and creative way (Rhodes, 1996), but would always be limited without hierarchical empowerment at this stage in the Partnership's life cycle (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998).

The balance of power within the Board structure worked reasonably well in the sense that it survived without challenge for a long time despite the fact that some

⁶ Although the criteria French and Raven suggest (Chapter 2, Figure 5) as bases for second-person power were not really reflected in this specific case.

members felt relatively disempowered by it, particularly the District Councils and the voluntary sector. There was a tacit recognition that certain Partners were more equal than others based on perceived power and influence. The Board functioned well based on normal day to day business. However, its strength was found wanting when the BLB/BCCI clan seriously undermined Partnership unity as described in Chapter 4. Despite the fact that the Board was a legitimate and hierarchical form of governance it was still unable to stop a powerful faction from usurping the prevailing Government mantra on partnership working. The BLB/BCCI alliance resolutely went its own way by eschewing the Partnership umbrella and support. In so doing this clan not only signed its own death warrant but damaged the Partnership when their involvement in a subsequent LEP bid (which the Partnership could not avoid) caused that bid also to fail (see Chapter 4). It served to thwart an important chance for the Partnership to achieve further recognition and transformation through greater functionality and double loop learning by having the operational capacity to deliver strategy within the LEP structure (Garratt, 2000).

Thus, a key insight from the research and contribution to knowledge is that it may be wrong to think about partnerships as representing a new form of social organization at least in terms of the ways in which power manifests itself (Powell and Exworthy, 2002; Rowe and Devanney, 2003). Whilst 'partnership' was the name of the game the underlying tensions were more hierarchical than reticulated in nature, and driven by powerful personalities in alliances that were rooted in historical precedent. It would appear that, at least at this stage in the LEP's development, it presented a heightened awareness of political opportunities and threats for clans and individuals in the context of external politico-institutional change described in Chapters 1 and 4. This in turn had then stimulated both generative and degenerative power plays at different levels in the power hierarchy. The transformational possibilities remained firmly unidirectional and it was clear that any network power based on aspirational mutual transformation (Hastings, 1996) or the more ambitious synergistic possibilities I suggest in Figure 12 were unattainable or at least remained aspirational. Further work on other multiorganizational partnerships would be helpful in suggesting whether this would be a typical finding.

Figure 12: A Typology of Partnership Transformation

Type	Title	Description
1	Unidirectional	"I want to influence you"
2	Mutual	"I want to influence you and I am open to be influenced"
3	Synergistic internal	"I want to influence you; I am open to be influenced and we both are creating and working towards a shared vision that is more than the sum of the parts"
4	Synergistic external	"I want to influence you; I am open to be influenced; we both are creating and working towards a shared vision that is more than the sum of the parts; and we are influencing others on a wider scale."

Acknowledging and dealing with power tensions

As this study has demonstrated tensions of power are palpable within partnerships, especially as viewed from the inside whence the actions of players are uniquely visible to the researcher. Argyris' and Schön's (1974; 1978) famous dichotomy between 'espoused theory' and 'theory in action' is especially applicable in partnership contexts. This is because to be seen to be anti-partnership is so unpolitically correct as to warrant political suicide. Thus, for partners to espouse collaborative working, while elsewhere behaving in contrary ways, presents real problems especially for the partnership's internal leadership. Whilst some members might expect greater behavioural consistency or at least some isomorphic adjustment as partners learn to work together through time, other partners understand partnership as a pragmatic necessity that does not imply any need for behavioural change.

My experience was that the Partnership could do little to stop those members motivated to use the Partnership as a vehicle for achieving their own agendas and to maintain their power bases. That is not to say that there was no collaborative learning advantage arising from partnership working as this was amply demonstrated in my survey of members (see Chapter 5). However, neither this form of network power nor the Partnership governance structure could limit or control the way in which power plays detrimentally affected the Partnership as well as its internal and external reputation.

Partly this can be explained by the fact that for Partnership members it was only a second or lesser interest and that their main concern was to maintain their own organization's power base within the Partnership context rather than fuel the power of the Partnership itself. Furthermore, partnership members are often accountable to the organization they represent and perhaps its main stakeholders, as for example voluntary sector representatives (Huxham and Vangen, 1996b). Behaviours, therefore, mostly related historically, as Rowe and Devanney (2003) suggest, to markets and hierarchies rather than partnerships. This has

'implications for their motivation, objectives and behaviour in any partnership context. Divorcing partnerships and members of them from the contexts within which they work is to fail to grasp some key influences and challenges to new ways of problem solving and working', page 378).

Clearly this then leads to the Mackintosh (1992) view of partnership as a 'mutual struggle for transformation' whereby each partner tries to convert others to their way of thinking rather than to seek mutual goal alignment (Hastings, 1996).

The response of the LEP in general was to walk on eggshells, maintaining diplomatic relations publicly while privately seething with resentment at this un-partnership like behaviour. In other words partnership life continued without proper challenge to self- and clan-motivated behaviour that Partners knew was undermining all that we had striven to create. As was shown in Chapter 5 this may have reflected a feeling of relative powerlessness among Partners, who felt that they were somehow disadvantaged in the power stakes with other organizations having more of a say than they did. Although the Partnership continued to move on it was a fudge in terms of any asserted voicing of concern from those who knew the damage being caused but who chose to keep quiet (Vickers, 1983). Even more obvious members of the Partnership who were deemed powerful by others did not stand up to these pressures. The latter were talked about within the safety of their own factions or to me as interlocutor but not openly in Partnership forums, which emphasizes my conception of the LEP as an agglomeration of pluralistic

alliances rather than a single coherent Partnership. There was thus no method to promote open dialogue so that undiscussable elements of Partner relationships such as the shadows of the past and aspects of power could be surfaced.

One of the effects of the Partnership was to bring partners into closer contact and as we have seen this had both positive and negative effects on the LEP. In a sense the Partnership acted as catalyst to foster increased political activity both to increase the level of interorganizational co-operation in areas of shared concern, as well as to awaken past smouldering rivalries. It is ironic that partnership is usually promoted as a solution to decrease complexity and to allow agencies to operate together in a newly framed domain better able to tackle 'wicked' issues (Rittel and Weber, 1973). Yet in this case at least the effect seemed to increase rather than decrease complexity and certainly increased uncertainty and turbulence in the Partnership environment (Bresser, 1988). It is this vacuum that seemed to attract political activity of all kinds, potentially both for good and bad.

Axelrod's (1984) 'prisoner's dilemma' perhaps provides some clues as to the ways in which partnerships can seek to minimize disruptive political activity. He suggests the following 'guides' to increase favourable outcomes in competitive and conflict situations:

- Increase the durability and frequency of interaction in order to heighten awareness of the present value of future co-operation (i.e. enlarge the shadow of the future)
- Change the pay-offs, also in order to increase the present importance of future co-operative options
- Teach people to care about each other
- Teach reciprocity
- Improve the ability of individuals to recognise the strategy and to change the strategy

Axelrod advocates 'conditional co-operation' in which 'one good turn deserves another' as a way through time of building co-operation based on self interest rather

than altruism. This may be a rather hard hearted way of considering human co-operation but his research shows generally that a 'tit for tat' strategy is most likely to achieve successful co-operation for all parties in an interdependent relationship without central authority, which is highly relevant to most multiorganizational partnership situations. If central authority is taken to mean hierarchy, then partnership probably sits between hierarchy and market or more laissez-faire forms of social organization.

In working with partnership practitioners to explore their issues on partnerships with colleagues at a local University we used exercises based on the prisoner's dilemma and found it to be a useful metaphor for real life issues regarding relationships in partnerships. It also seemed to accord with my emerging views on how partnerships might better handle political conflict. Axelrod's ideas suggest that the frequency of interaction coupled with an anticipated long period of interaction is important for building more trusting relationships. This suggests that partnerships are likely to be more successful in managing conflict by having just a few frequently interacting partners, meaning a reduction in diversity, rather than the 'cast of thousands' often encountered in complex multiorganizational partnerships. It also points, emphasizing the recommendation in this chapter, to the potential benefits of giving partnerships time to build up predictability in the outcome of multilateral exchanges between its members. Thus, it is unlikely that a partnership format will work if short term results are required in a complex policy domain. Furthermore the theory suggests that having created the partnership it might pay to keep new members to a minimum as new entrants are bound in the short term at least to reduce the sum of positive interactions. Thus, it may be necessary to sacrifice inclusivity for more effective and beneficial relationships.

All of this, of course, assumes positive 'tit for tat' relationships, but what happens when this strategy becomes destructive and negative? We probably see forms of 'terrorist' activity in which atrocity succeeds atrocity as we have seen in Ireland and the Middle East. This might explain the formation of factions as described above in terms of the shadow of the past. In order to embark on a positive degree of initial collaboration it may well be necessary first of all to take steps to acknowledge the

historic power legacy and take remedial steps to surface and resolve past controversies that may well threaten partnership-working in the future. This will not be easy to achieve in practice, but as Balloch and Taylor (2001a) suggest, some form of dialogical process would seem a sensible approach to avoid interpersonal and inter-factional rivalries that if left unchecked would remain undiscussed, undiscussable and which might poison relationships in a new partnership era. As I argue in Chapter 6 we have to acknowledge that partnerships cannot stand still for long enough to examine every issue and controversy – fudge and faith are necessary, unavoidable and possibly beneficial factors in allowing partnerships to go forward. However, my inquiry has shown that it is very important for partnerships to take active steps to deal with the ‘shadows of the past’ as early as possible in their life cycles so that they can start off on the basis of good will and desire to collaborate rather than one based on settling old scores or maintaining past suspicions and rivalries.

So, it is important that the initial interactions are positive and if so Axelrod predicts that a small body of co-operators can infiltrate a large population of ‘meanies’. Thus, if there are enough powerful people of good will at the core of a partnership, the chances of ultimate success may be improved. In my inquiry’s timeframe, there were not enough like-minded individuals and organizations with enough of an identity with the Partnership and willing to engage in mutual as opposed to unidirectional transformation (Hastings, 1996). So, I believe Axelrod has something to tell us about the pragmatics of partnership that can usefully be incorporated into its design and practice.

Changing the pay-offs is more difficult to translate into practical application. The pay-offs refer to rewards for co-operation or penalties for non-co-operation. It is hard to envisage how within a voluntary partnership these can be operationalized. Hierarchies could issue edicts and laws governing bad behaviour and offer rewards for good, but this is simply not feasible in multiorganizational partnerships. In fact, introducing new artificial pay-offs would be tantamount to abandoning partnership in favour of some form of hierarchy, which would be antithetical and counter-productive.

Teaching people to care about each other seems rather trite and does not altogether fit the model Axelrod promotes of 'tit for tat' co-operation based on self-interest. Caring mentalities would clearly help, but if these do not already exist to a large extent it is hard to see how partnership by itself can change partners' basic cultures. Teaching reciprocity may offer more benefits as a way of building progressive trust and partnerships could experiment more by promoting these kinds of bi- and multi-lateral exchanges as a way of building up a portfolio of small wins that might progress to more ambitious levels (Das and Teng, 1998; Lane and Bachmann, 1998; Vangen and Huxham, 2003b; Webb, 1991). Newman (1998) warns that it may be dangerous to assume trust prematurely based on supposed common values and expected outcomes. In this case the *'myth of trust may be a barrier to negotiating the reality of its practice in a rigorous way'* (page 43). In other words it may be better to acknowledge at the outset of partnership ventures that little trust exists and attempt to build it through joint actions building from small to significant, than assume trust and inevitably become disenchanted.

Axelrod's final lesson can be summed up as improving the predictability of exchanges against a strategy understood by the signals given by interacting partners, and ensuring that mutually beneficial changes to the strategy are equally semaphored so that partners' suspicions regarding a possible defection are assuaged. This requires subtle judgment as to the intentions of partners and astute 'reading of the tea leaves', and is in fact what goes on all the time in all our relationships. The success of this recommendation depends on the skills and experience of partners as discriminating executives and being able or empowered to take reasonable risks. In a complex multilayered Partnership as in my case study, it can be problematic whether a Partner operating below top level can commit on behalf of his or her organization. It is clearly important though not always possible for Partners to be able to talk for their organization within parameters of risk. This, therefore, requires top level partners to coach their representatives in anticipation of likely scenarios that might arise if they themselves are unable to attend meetings or act personally. This again raises the issue of the skills and competences of senior partnership professionals. Through the 'partnership:

exchange' at my local University Business School referred to earlier, we have been able to help senior professionals who work extensively in partnerships to share issues, develop understanding, and support each other through expert facilitation in a variety of events and seminars. This was a vital collateral benefit arising from my DBA and which is published in Armistead and Pettigrew (2004), appended to this thesis as Armistead and Pettigrew (2004).

Thus, Axelrod's recommendations for better co-operation have helped to frame my own judgments about the practical ways in which the LEP could have improved its performance and reduced the negative political tensions it encountered. Hopefully these reflections will be useful in other partnership and collaborative contexts. Essentially, my inquiry demonstrates that partnerships need to establish ways to practice reflection on the process and dynamics of bi- and multi-lateral relationships with each other alongside business arrangements. This might imply training partners in dialogical thinking, for example using left hand column 'voicing' (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1985) as a means of surfacing tensions which if left undisclosed and undiscussed can (and did in my case) undermine the Partnership (Argyris, 1990).

Third-Person Conclusions and Reflections

I discuss below three particular aspects of my research primarily from a third-person perspective, to which I suggest partnerships as a whole need to address attention in order to avoid some of the pitfalls that became increasingly apparent in this case study as it took shape. These relate to the debilitating effects of unresolved dysfunctional past relationships between partners and factions of partners that are carried forward to new structural frames represented in a multiorganizational partnership. I also consider the related issue of the under-resourcing of partnerships to deal with complex, sensitive problems like these, and finally the influence of powerful third parties, in my case study the Government, which can use its position at the apex of the power hierarchy to affect profoundly the course of Partnership transformation even when the Partnership is not mandated but voluntary. These I

consider to represent my principal contributions to the literature in the third-person voice.

Shadows of the Past

A key thread running through my inquiry concerned the fact that creation of the Partnership was not necessarily the beginning of relationships between organizations and individuals. This theme recurs throughout my thesis and was discussed also under the second-person voice above in terms of the inter-subjective origins of this intra-partnership phenomenon. In this section I concentrate on how these issues translate into impacts on partnerships as entities and what might be considered appropriate policy responses.

Old and bitter rivalries, whose origins were lost in the distant past and the reasons for which could hardly be articulated, had created a chronic lack of trust between certain Partnership factions. The rise of the Partnership seemed merely to fan the flames of past suppressed but unresolved conflict. Other authors (e.g. Eden and Huxham, 1996; Vickers, 1983) have similarly pointed to the significance of past historical relationships in determining future social behaviour and patterns of interpersonal as well as interorganizational relationships.

Clearly, in most cases, partnerships are built upon previous experience involving to some extent the same organizations and individuals. As Stewart (2002) points out, every setting will have a different history of inter-organizational relationships underpinned often by interpersonal relationships, and these can be hard to disentangle. These relationships may have been formal or informal, loose or intense, stable or unstable and more or less influenced by the degree of shared concern in a domain (which may itself change through time) and by the interest of Government in an area's well-being. In any case previous relationships of hierarchy and power can continue to compromise the relationship between participants in a 'partnership' environment (Atkinson, 1999).

In addition, powerful individuals or those who consider themselves empowered to act in the partial interest of a group or faction will use positions of power granted in

public office to legitimate their actions. As we have seen in the case of the LEP the main actors were largely individuals from the private and public sectors, who used these platforms to engage in politically motivated activity. However, the degree of past conflict blighted the possibility of future productive relationships. When the LEP first formed there was little of this activity to be observed, but once the Partnership gained in stature and significance, what I call the *recognition* stage of transformation (see Chapter 1), it was clear that historic unresolved conflict was going to lead to serious consequences.

Although recognized by some authors as stated above, the legacy of past relationships between the major players - the shadow of the past - is often played down or ignored in the literature, which tends to focus on the issues of partnership working as if there were no past precedent for their existence. These problems may actually have had their origins deep in the past and outside a partnership context. In Government thinking too, whereby often 'new' partnership initiatives succeed each other or overlap at an alarming rate, there is often little or no reflection on the past in setting up new partnerships (e.g. Stewart, 1999, 2002). Yet partnership initiatives are seldom introduced into virgin territory, but rather on a palimpsest of previous, usually failed or unfulfilled, initiatives and strained relationships. The label 'new' does not mean that past conflicts and rivalries are suddenly cleared from the slate. Some degree of remedial action, therefore, needs to be addressed before embarking on a new partnership venture so that the potential for bad blood to cause disruption is minimized. This might mean members spending a significant amount of time at the beginning of a partnership, perhaps with expert facilitation, to review past interorganizational and interpersonal history and what worked and didn't work and why. In this spirit of reconciliation it would also be important to be clear about the fundamentals: why the partnership exists; the key issues to be addressed; membership and membership rules; rules of engagement; and the process by which past issues and conflicts between organizations and individuals will be resolved (e.g. Huxham and Vangen, 2000a, b, c; Williamson, 2001).

This will not be easy to accomplish. For one thing, partnerships usually start off with a flush of enthusiasm and a keenness to 'get things done' and not to be

accused of being a 'talking shop'. Partnership leaders and funders will also be impatient to prove the partnership a 'success' before it has had a chance to find its feet. It is particularly important for Government to realize that partnerships cannot be expected to 'deliver' right away without a period of time devoted to a recognition and reconciliation of the issues blighting past relationships and learning from the errors and misfortunes of the past (Stewart, 2002). In my own case study, however, despite the obvious logic of this approach, even on reflection, I cannot see how this would have been achieved without external pressure. In a sense I believe that some of the senior Partners actually enjoyed the conflicts and stand-offs, taking advantage of uncertainty and assumption in order to give cause for and justify politically motivated behaviour. It seemed to act as a motivator and galvanizing force, something to be enjoyed as sport for its own sake.

In addition, since partnership implies notions of moving towards more equality between the players, ways have to be found within the complex layering of organizations and individuals of accepting the reality that some partners are more equal than others for a variety of reasons: budget, time invested, political influence, personalities, reputation, etc. Inevitably and inexorably this will result in political activity both within and outside the partnership, the formation and reformation of coalitions, cliques and factions, each with their own agendas. In my experience in this case study there is no point in a strategy that denies the inevitability of political activity. The key insight is that ways need to be found for partnerships to discuss difficult issues openly with external facilitation (Balloch and Taylor, 2001a). There were times in the life of the LEP when this did happen to some degree (e.g. the Don Watson Group – see Chapter 4), but although the talks took place, they were not at the start of the Partnership, were not inclusive or facilitated, and ultimately failed to resolve differences by agreeing a new sustainable platform for conducting relationships and building trust between mutually suspicious and alienated Partners. If anything this episode was motivated by maintaining the current balance of power it was in no one's interest to threaten or disrupt. The aim of the regime was to maintain the existing paradigm and adapt rather than generate a new model of working. In other words learning was Model 1 single- rather than Model 2 double-loop (Argyris and Schön, 1978).

As I illustrate in Chapter 4 there was no obvious cause for continuing mistrust and animosity in the LEP, but it continued even when none of the protagonists ostensibly could remember the origin or nature of the issues. As Gambetta (1988) puts it: *'once distrust has set in it soon becomes impossible to know if it was ever justified, for it has the capacity to become self-fulfilling, to generate a reality consistent with itself'* (page 234).

Thus, addressing the 'shadows of the past' ought to be a primary concern particularly for new partnerships being formed on a palimpsest of previous initiatives. Reflection and review needs to be 'built into' the modus operandi from the start of a partnership and not just about the progress towards objectives in a technical sense based on setting targets and indicators. Many factors influence the culture, development and character of partnerships, which are bound up in past practice, conventions and how relationships have been maintained and engendered (Reid, 2001). Some will be beneficial and some not, and much will depend on the history of partnership development in an area, the institutional mix, the severity of local social, economic or environmental concerns, the degree of shared ownership of local issues and concerns and the degree of intervention from external sources, not least the Government. All of these factors will determine to some extent the norms to which a partnership aspires and the influence they have, therefore, on the future determination of local partnership trajectories. In a very real sense the 'shadow of the future' (Axelrod, 1984) is dependent on early resolution of the shadows of the past.

Resourcing Partnerships

It is ironic that despite the emphasis placed by Government on partnership approaches the resources available to support partnerships and partnership working are often so meagre. Thus, sensitive chronic issues such as the 'shadows of the past' are unable to be discussed or resolved and are carried through to poison future reframed relationships in a partnership context. One of the biggest constraints on the ability of the LEP to function well was simply the lack of time

available for busy executives to devote to the Partnership (see Chapter 5). Partnership remained a marginal activity for most of the participant organizations (e.g. Wilkinson and Applebee, 1999). This had an effect not only on the level of identity Partners had with the LEP but the resources they could devote to it. Much of the network power identified previously was mediated through the goodwill of mainly public sector executives acting above and beyond the call of duty, often unauthorized or only tacitly acknowledged by their bosses.

Senior private sector members were not able (or simply chose not) to devote resources to the Partnership, but expected and, to some extent, were expected to 'lead' it. They tended to be influential in terms of governance and decision-making, but their influence was disproportionate to effort expended. Unsurprisingly, this caused some resentment among public sector representatives who shouldered most of the Partnership burden in terms of activity to underpin it. This generic phenomenon is often referred to in social science as the 'free rider' problem after Olsen (1971), who argued that individual members lack incentives to contribute to a shared interest. Many partnerships are thus unable to exclude non-contributing members from aggregate group benefits. In other words, where group benefits are provided on a non-exclusionary basis, individuals can obtain advantages without paying the cost of time, money and effort to create the benefits in the first place.

The lack of dedicated human resources was exacerbated by the fact that the Partnership was voluntary and had no support or remit from Government, unlike the many mandated partnerships around the country, especially in areas of urban deprivation undergoing regeneration. The result was that the power of the TEC was exaggerated as it was the only Partner to have discretionary resources to devote to the purposes of supporting the LEP, including cash as well as my time as Partnership Manager.

There is a real danger, therefore, in partnerships being seen as paper tigers, consuming eons of executive time, but still remaining what Williamson (2001) calls '*a marginalised activity for enthusiasts*', unless the more fundamental issue of the

collaborative capacity of the whole partnership is also addressed including its organizational components. This issue dominated the findings of the Partnership survey described in Chapter 5. Only when organisations are well-integrated internally, self-confident and secure in their own purposes and processes argues Huxham (1993), can they expect to build effective partnerships. The evidence from this study seems to accord with other partnerships in that *'joined-up delivery has occurred extensively but in an ad hoc, almost accidental manner, dependent on the energy and imagination of individuals... (and) the vision, skills and behaviour of key individuals'* (Stewart, 2002, page 125). Stewart goes on to say that *'it is through shared exploration and creative thinking that partners learn to work together, and local partners and government need to value and make time for shared thinking and learning. Successful partnerships take 5 to 10 years to establish and, whilst their purpose is to provide an integrative overview and strategy for local partners, it is important that they are not overloaded'* (op. cit., pages 125, 126).

A clear conclusion, therefore, is that partnerships need to be resourced properly and be allowed time to build capacity if they are to be effective. Partnership may be a priority for Government and some powerful local players, but for most members it is inevitably a secondary concern to their overriding organizational responsibilities. Partnership in practice is often a marginal activity and only made to work by the energy, skill and commitment of a few individuals who give to the partnership ideal more than they take out. These individuals tend often to operate at the margins of their own organizations, inhabiting the boundary between their employing organization and the partnership in which they are active. They often tend to be 'unsung heroes', skilled networkers usually not operating at the top tier in their organizations, but who keep the Partnership ethic alive through their altruistic contributions.

One of the reasons for partnerships being such a marginal activity is their sheer proliferation. Armistead and Pettigrew (2004) in their work with partnership practitioners mainly in the public sector found that most of them were active in a number of different partnerships whilst also occupying senior positions in their employing organizations, such as primary care trusts, the police, local authorities,

etc. Efforts by Government to try to rationalize the number of partnerships operating in a locality through creating 'local strategic partnerships' has not succeeded in this objective and if anything has spawned even more partnerships (Stewart, 2002). My experience was that certainly some senior public sector officials appeared to spend a lot of their time sitting round a confusing web of overlapping partnership tables. Their ability to influence them strategically was limited as their primary concerns were marginal to those of the partnerships of which they were members. Yet they often felt they had to be seen to be supporting their partnerships even when it was a waste of their time and they were aware of the opportunity costs involved⁷. With no senior organizational resource to compensate for the time spent in attending various partnerships, the question has to be asked whether this is an effective use of scarce executive time given the opportunity cost involved. These are clearly difficult conundrums that need to be resolved, but there are pragmatic issues of capacity and capacity-building that need to be addressed if partnership-working is to offer sustainable synergistic benefits, or 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham, 1996b). Otherwise, partnerships, especially strategic partnerships, will be seen as expensive talking shops, gesturing to genuine domain concerns rather than tackling them effectively.

Government Power

A number of authors point to the overwhelming power of government to influence partnerships through direct funding, specification of partners and adherence to rules governing how expenditure is directed and managed (e.g. Bailey et al., 1995; Jacobs, 1997; Morgan et al., 1999; Parkinson, 1996; Stewart, 1994). Some authors such as Davies (2000) go further, claiming that by holding strategic control of partnerships Government purchases effective control rather than empowering decision-making at lower levels. However, there is little in the literature about the role of Government in influencing partnerships, as in this case when there was no direct funding and when the Partnership was voluntary.

⁷ My current research tackles this issue and builds on Amistead et al. (2003)

The RGO was becoming increasingly perturbed by the attitude of BLB during the period of the SBS bidding process described in Chapter 4. Although the finance for the BLB was channeled via the TEC from central government, the RGO had a role in monitoring the contract between the TEC and BLB for the delivery of services to small businesses. From conversations I had with RGO officials following meetings between the TEC and BLB which the RGO attended, it was obvious that they were very concerned about their extreme independent stance. This was because BLB was originally supposed to be a network or partnership, a brand rather than an organization as such. However, it behaved more and more as an independent organisation in an anti-partnership style. This was not the impression to give to an RGO already short on patience given the impending bidding process for the SBS franchise. The latter became the means by which the Government could ensure that their desire to resolve the situation was expeditiously effected.

Thus, when the decision had to be made on the destination of the SBS franchise the Government through its RGO ensured that the Hydra was radically removed to ensure that no regenerated heads appeared in any future form of Business Link. This was understandable in rejecting BLB's bid for the franchise, but surprising and devastating for the Partnership when its bid failed for the same reasons. The RGO would prefer to bring in external providers rather than risk the Hydra or any of its component heads reappearing, even within a Partnership umbrella. The RGO acted in a ruthless way. At the time I thought they had committed a heinous mistake by throwing baby out with the bath water, but with hindsight, and as my reflective mentors and interviewees recounted, they probably had no alternative.

Less clear cut was the rationale behind the RGO in thwarting local efforts championed by the LEP Chairman to relocate the key elements of the LEP in one office to ensure that the economic development strategy transcended local organizational boundaries (see Chapter 4). It was a major blow to the Partnership Chairman, George Patterson, who was very keen on the prospect of the TEC moving to new premises alongside the economic development functions of the other Partners. Although again the lack of co-operation from the BLB and BCCI was a sticking point, the decision at the eleventh hour by the RGO not to sanction

the move, because of the likelihood that the new LSC would take over the lease of the TEC's building, killed the idea dead. It seemed that any serious attempt by the Partnership to shape its own identity was going to be blocked by a Government using its overarching power to achieve its own ends and maintain its own power with little regard to the wishes of the sub-region.

Thus, the power of central government as mediated through the RGO was, rightly or wrongly, an ultimately decisive and divisive force. Its actions support Davies' (2000) view that Government sought less to devolve power through espousing partnerships as to seek to mediate its own control through them. It also resonates with Morgan et al. (1999), who argue that:

'the presence of regional institutions in Wales presents us with an uncomfortable paradox, namely that the Welsh Office, by virtue of its power and resources, tends to foster vertical networks which have the effect of disempowering local actors from building effective horizontal networks.' (page 114).

For some Partners they were left with the feeling that in the end Government quite deliberately set out to block any attempt at local self-determination or assertion through a voluntary Partnership which they could not control through their own purse strings and rules. Their actions were paternalistic and demonstrated a lack of confidence in the sub-region to sort out its own affairs and tend to its own destiny. This in turn engendered a feeling among some Partners of powerlessness: that we had collectively been 'sent to our rooms' by a critical parent.

Final Conclusions and Reflections

I offer below my final conclusions and reflections at the end of my inquiry. Firstly I consider the ontological and methodological approach I have taken and its suitability for the task I set out in my research questions in Chapter 1. Following

that I focus on the key insights derived from my study and then I offer a note on nature of the deep learning I experienced in undertaking this inquiry.

Methodology

I adopted a research strategy in this thesis based on the twin ontological bases of philosophical hermeneutics and critical realism. These ontologies, emphasizing interpretation and a form of social construction of reality that allows a degree of reification in order to study the Partnership as if it existed as an entity, have underpinned my research paradigm and thus my methodological approach. This has pointed to strategies appropriate for the deep engagement I envisaged as well as consistent with my ontological position. This meant an emphasis on a qualitative, interpretive approach and utilizing a form of action inquiry set within a case study. I believe these ontologies and methodologies have served the nature of my inquiry well and have encouraged both a realistic, unexpurgated account of a real live Partnership subject to political conflict and transformational possibilities; a clear focus on interpreting and re-interpreting emergent phenomena over a period of time giving my study a longitudinal dimension as well as depth; and as befits an action inquiry process, insights drawn through reflection.

I have emphasized in the study the uniqueness of my context and personal situation and the pros and cons of operating as an insider within a complex socially constructed milieu. I believe the benefits of being able to provide an account of a real Partnership undergoing an episode of profound change adds a new dimension to the literature and one called for by a number of authors in the field (e.g. Hastings, 1999; Stuart, 2002) and especially in relation to the issue of power and transformation (e.g. Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Martin, 1999). On the other hand the benefits of providing this unique perspective are tempered by the ambiguities and tensions faced by the researcher/practitioner working in an exciting but often fraught political context. This can cause heightened personal vulnerability owing to dilemmas of priority between the two roles and ambiguity of perception by colleagues and Partners. Nonetheless, I hope that the approach I have taken will

have resonance in other partnership situations and help to provide a better understanding of some of the political issues facing partnerships in transformation.

I have used the metaphor of first-, second-, and third-person (or increasingly first, second and third person voices) both as a means of structuring my thesis as well as a unifying theme allowing me to triangulate the three perspectives adding validity to my study. I believe that the narrative approach adopted in Chapter 4 containing the key episodic data on which my inquiry was based brought out not only the emergent, unfolding plot, but clearly exposed the second voices of the Partnership in the form of its constituent clans, groups and factions. Seeking the Partnership's third voice as a reified entity in Chapter 5 proved rather more problematic, both on ontological/methodological as well as practical grounds. My conclusion was that despite the difficulties of trying to elicit the Partnership's voice, there was no such voice to be heard. Even if there was a Partnership voice, however, I was not sure there was a better method of finding it than the survey tool I adopted. I concluded that that pursuit of the Partnership voice merely reaffirmed and amplified the importance of the second person voice. Then in Chapter 6 I used an on-going self reflexive analysis based on personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955) as a means of generating my first-person voice as a key player in my own right within the Partnership with my own ability and power to influence. This voice was created and mediated through my own frame of reference or constructs. Significantly, but to a lesser extent than in Chapter 5, this analysis again threw up the importance of factional identification, emphasizing again the all-pervading feeling of the Partnership having little or no substance or existence in reality beyond an umbrella or domain within which the various factions operated, competed and attempted to influence others.

Broadly I am satisfied that this syntactic strategy has been helpful in helping to organize my thesis as well as helping to navigate across the three perspectives in order to appreciate the whole picture, albeit that my conclusion would be that the Partnership showed little potential to transform itself from within and to be able to generate new synergistic sources of collective power or leadership.

Findings

There is much work to be done to replicate action inquiry approaches to complex inter-organizational partnerships in order to build up a body of evidence that can be compared and contrasted with other documented experience such as this case study. This is still relatively uncharted territory, but I believe my inquiry has added to our knowledge about how transformation and power operate at a micro-scale in complex partnership settings. I suggest that taking a first-, second-, and third-person approach has helped to triangulate my study from these different perspectives, adding a degree of validity to my conclusions. In some aspects my findings encouragingly substantiate the work of other researchers (particularly Huxham and colleagues – see List of References), who have conducted most of their recent research working from a slightly different perspective to me, working alongside practitioners as distinct from being an active practitioner/researcher participant in their own right.

The insights into transformation and power I offer build upon this perspective and the concepts of hierarchical and network power. They suggest that at least in this case study network power was a feature of the early stages of the Partnership but this was soon eclipsed by a more formal hierarchical arrangement with the formation of a Partnership board. Even this structural power base, however, was undermined by powerful factions within the Partnership that the Board could not control. All the while there was also the largely concealed power I personally applied behind the scenes trying in some sense to paper over the cracks, find solutions, and create a positive internal and external image of the LEP. To some extent I was supported by my reflective mentors in this endeavour, but essentially this was a lonely role in which I had to make my own real-time judgments about what to say and do in situations. In addition, there was the pervading role of external factors such as the RDA and crucially the Government, which through arbitrating the SBS franchise, was able to exterminate the errant faction and in so doing restrict the LEP's transformation process. Throughout the process the level of transformation in the sense of Mackintosh (1992) and Hastings (1996) rarely in my judgement got beyond the unidirectional (see Figure 12, page 281), and my

own typology of transformation as explained in Chapter 1, did not reach the level of 'identity' as implied by the synergistic levels I posit in Figure 12.

Many forms of power became manifest in the Partnership including virtually all the types I set out in my typologies of power in Figures 2 and 3 drawing from the literature in Chapter Two. It was interesting that the most obvious forms of power I witnessed were in response to a perceived threat, which makes one wonder what we might have achieved if that negatively motivated power could have been harnessed for the positive benefit of the Partnership. Partners generally felt they were less powerful than others rather than recognizing, celebrating and putting to good effect the power they did have for collective benefit. Whilst this provided the Partnership with a power of balance it was set at a low level, leaving the balance of power to be contested by factional interests (Torbert, 1991). Although I say little about leadership in this thesis, its influence on the Partnership was important and is the subject of a paper I am currently writing with colleagues, a conference version of which is at Armistead et al (2003). Suffice to say in this context that both power and leadership theories can be seen to have first-, second-, and third-person dimensions as I set out in Chapter 2, and that I suggest all three need to be taken into account in understanding how these complex concepts are played out in partnership settings. In particular, there are interesting avenues for research that focus on third-person aspects of power and leadership, particularly viewing them (and helping practitioners to view them) as distributed in the sense of being collective and emergent in nature (LSDA, 2003) and perhaps not quite so obvious as first and second-person forms. This may be a way of harnessing the latent power that resides within partnerships but which tends to be emasculated and dominated by its first- and second-person manifestations. Seeing power and leadership as a collective resource rather than territory to be fought over, and encapsulating it in third-person processes and ways of working might be one way forward for Partnerships to become more effective.

This final chapter in my thesis has attempted to draw together some of the key conclusions and reflections of making partnerships more effective through a deeper understanding of issues of transformation and power. Although drawn from a case

study and therefore to be treated with caution in terms of any inferences that can be made regarding multiorganizational partnerships in general, I hope that my findings will be seen as a worthwhile contribution to the literature and have application in other contexts. Certainly, drawn as they are from personal experience working inside a multiorganizational and multisectoral Partnership, and having researched the issues in depth and over a long period of time, I trust that my conclusions and reflections will be considered honest and valid.

Finally, contrary to current conventional wisdom as espoused by consecutive governments in the UK, partnership cannot be regarded as a simplistic solution to all of society's ills. Partnership may well be the first step towards reframing policy domains in order to tackle complex societal issues, but insufficient attention is often paid to the design of the partnership and the rules by which the process and governance of partnership should be conducted. Furthermore, resources need to be applied to the rhetoric in order that partnership as a principle is mainstreamed rather than marginalized as it often appears in practice, and allowed sufficient time to establish positive, productive relationships. There are serious issues regarding the competences required of partnership participants and professionals, and particularly partnership managers and change agents. Leadership and management education and training need to respond to these challenges.

These issues are too often ignored or left to chance so that the massive challenges that partnership presents to traditional approaches to policy integration and service delivery remain unacknowledged or unresolved. I hope that if nothing else my thesis will contribute to a knowledge base in which these issues can be better understood, particularly with reference to my twin themes of transformation and power.

Postscript on Deep Learning

Finally, at the end of a very long journey of discovery in researching and writing this thesis, which has its core rationale a quest for a practice-academy nexus, it is worth pausing to reflect on the nature of the learning that has been generated through the

process at first-, second-, and third-person levels. As I have explained in a horizontal sense this methodological approach has the potential to be applied in other contexts where researchers are inquiring into complex social phenomena such as multiorganizational partnerships. It allows for a triangulation of the three voices and a sense of validity in a qualitative research context. However, to what extent in a vertical sense can we assess the level of learning that took place across the syntactical range?

For me personally I started out as my profile states in Chapter 1 as someone who was sensitive to doing everything the right way and with a preoccupation for perfection. I think the reader can guess that I spent a lot of time thinking through my methodology, for example, so that it allowed me to think and frame reflections in a structured way. I was and still am, though, intolerant of unfairness as I see it. My deep learning through my research has been about understanding the impact of my own values on others and through having to deal with extreme complexity and much stress in handling diversity. In earlier drafts of this thesis, particularly Chapter 4, I was more inclined to find fault in others in a single loop sense than to change my mental model to accommodate a variety of 'action-logics', 'frames of reference' or 'mental models', all metaphors for achieving double-loop learning. My experience has made me more susceptible to the idea of opening up our thinking, challenging each other's assumptions and from there constructing a partnership's own reality. I have discovered that my rather strict value system could sometimes be at odds with the need to accommodate the full range of diverse value systems found in complex entities like partnerships.

I found the inherent lack of equality and unfairness that I frequently came across in the Partnership at times disturbing and I had to learn that the Partnership and I were not synonymous in terms of values and mental models. It was sometimes difficult to reconcile the two when the going got tough as looking back I can see that I considered the Partnership as my baby. I had perhaps taken personal identity with the Partnership too far, confusing the first with the third voice. I am continuing my journey beyond the DBA to challenge my own and others' value systems when they get in the way of professional judgement and encouraging others to challenge

mine. As Fisher and Torbert (1995) suggest, personal transformation is a necessary precursor to organizational transformation.

At a second voice level, clearly the factions did not progress beyond single-loop learning, and even at that level there was not much evidence of even adaptive learning (Senge, 1990). Similarly, their transformational potential was restricted to the unidirectional (Hastings, 1996) and even at that it was singularly unsuccessful. Ultimately, the effect was to annihilate the BLB/BCCI faction or rather to cause its own demise. Could the first-person and third-person voices have done more to prevent this outcome? Although as I have explained at the beginning of this chapter I was personally but subtly powerful in the Partnership, I did not have the status to influence the 'Big Boys' behind the scenes. Whenever I tried to help through backstaging I was consistently met with blocking tactics as though only confrontation could be countenanced. There could be no backing down. Could the Partnership have done more? My alliances were clearly with the dominant force within the Partnership represented by the Chairman and majority of Board members and supporting officers. The Partnership tried to appease the BLB/BCCI faction and the others represented by conurbation and county interests, private and public interests, county and district interests, etc.. There was much evidence of mutual adjustment and accommodation if not transformation between these factions apart from the first, which made no concession to the Partnership until the very last move of the game when it supported a Partnership bid for the SBS franchise, but by then it was too late

At the third-person Partnership level there was some good evidence of at least unidirectional learning and embryonic isomorphic adjustment through the process. Particularly, at lower levels in the Partnership there was evidently much network learning and social capital building as evidenced in Chapter 5. However, again, this was within the existing Partnership envelope. It did not transform it into an entity with its own 'personality' and culture able to influence and be influenced from within, far less being able to share a united vision as theory in use or to influence externally to any effective extent. This was partly because the second-person factional voice was so strong within the Partnership. The Partnership was ultimately not internally

strong enough to find ways to challenge and change the outlook of the various factions, but more importantly their belief in the LEP was insufficiently robust to effect their own transformation.

Glossary

The Actors

Avery	Sean	TUC representative
Ball	Jonathan	Chief Executive of Denbury Borough Council (DBC)
Beamish	Martin	Chairman of Business Link Brookshire (BLB)
Bottomley	Madge	TEC Board Director
Cowans	Barry	Leader, Denbury Borough Council (DBC)
Cowdrey	Bill	Leader, Chilton Borough Council (CBC)
Davenport	Rod	Principal of Local FE College
Evans	Chris	Senior Denbury Borough Council officer
Fairgrieve	Alan	Senior Chilton Borough Council officer
Gray	Carole	Chief Executive of Careers Service
Hardwicke	Sue	Chair of Voluntary Bodies
Hastings	Robert	BCCI Member
Jones	Dai	Chief Executive of Brookshire County Council
Kitchener	Betty	Chief Executive of BLB
Lawson	John	Elected Member, Brookshire County Council
Norton	David	Chief Executive of Chilton Borough Council
Patterson	George	Second Chairman of the Partnership and Chief

		Executive of the TEC
Pennington	Brian	Senior RDA official
Piper	John	First Chairman of the Partnership
Powell	Colin	Senior Brookshire County Council Officer
Slater	Tom	Senior Government Office official
Styles	Graham	Elected Member, Brookshire County Council
Tiler	Geraldine	Vice-Chancellor of Chilton University
Unwin	Donald	Chief Executive of the Small Business Service (SBS)
Walsh	Gordon	Deputy Chairman of BLB and BCCI Member
Watson	Don	BCCI Member
Wills	Tom	Chief Executive of the TEC
Wilson	Danny	Senior Chilton University official
Yeading	Gary	Deputy Chair of TEC and CBI member

The Organizations

BBF	Brookshire Business Forum
BCC	Brookshire County Council
BCCI	Brookshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
BLB	Business Link Brookshire
CBC	Chilton Borough Council

DBC	Denbury Borough Council
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FSB	Federation of Small Businesses
LEP	Chilton, Brookshire and Denbury Economic Partnership
LLP	Lifelong Learning Partnership
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NBL	New Business Link
Partnership	Chilton, Brookshire and Denbury Economic Partnership
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RGO	Regional Government Office
SBS	Small Business Service
SRP	Chilton, Brookshire and Denbury Economic Partnership
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council

Other Abbreviations

FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
LA	Local Authority
LGR	Local Government Reorganization
NDPB	Non Departmental Public Body
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SRP	Sub-regional partnership

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