

**Transferring Insight on Collaboration to Practice**

by

**Siv Vangen BA, MSc**

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**Strathclyde Graduate Business School  
University of Strathclyde**

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## ABSTRACT

The need to form inter-organisational collaborative working arrangements is now common across community, public and private sectors. Working collaboratively however, is extremely complex and failures abound. Much research has recently been directed at understanding the nature of inter-organisational collaboration. Insight gained through such research provides the basis for informing, pragmatically, those trying to manage collaborative activities in practice. To date, attempts at making the insight on collaboration available and accessible to practice appear limited in scope and success. Many of those who embark on collaborative working arrangements also seem unaware of the need to consider explicitly the management of their collaborative processes. The high level of complexity, coupled with poor awareness of the need to consider the management of collaboration render the task of making insight available to practice difficult. This is the challenge addressed by the research upon which this thesis is based. The aim of the research was to generate process theory on the transfer of insight on collaboration to practice. The work was undertaken in Participatory Action Research and Action Research capacities with individuals pragmatically concerned with collaboration in practice. Ten Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice were developed. Conceptualisations of who should be targeted, how they should be targeted and what the substance of the insight should be were also developed. These developments address relevant issues pertaining the *Transfer of Insight on Collaboration to Practice*.

*To Kieran and Siv  
with Love*

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Collaboration: Introduction and definition
- 1.2 Complexity in collaboration
- 1.3 The difficulty of succeeding in collaboration
- 1.4 Bridging theory and practice

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The research described in this thesis was devoted to exploring ways of *Transferring Theoretical Insight on Collaboration to Practice*. This challenge encompasses a wide range of issues relating to appropriate target audiences, transfer mechanisms, types of theoretical insight, levels of complexity of insight and so on.

The aim of the research was to generate process theory specifically relating to the transfer of insight on collaboration to practice. Linked to that aim, the development of specific tools or methods which would facilitate the transfer of theory, was a further aim of this research. A thorough understanding of the substantive theory on collaboration has obviously been fundamental to the design of the transfer process. It was expected that the research would further advance the substantive theory on collaboration but this was not a primary aim of the research. Any advancement of substantive theory resulting from this research is therefore only reported upon in as far as it relates directly to the transfer process. The research output reported on in this thesis therefore relates primarily to process theory on the transfer of insight rather than substantive theory on collaboration.

The research was undertaken in participation with individuals pragmatically concerned with collaboration in practice. As such, the research was aimed at benefiting those directly involved, as well as, ultimately, others striving to make collaboration succeed in practice. The extent to which those directly involved have benefited and the extent to which theory generated may benefit others pragmatically concerned with collaboration are thus indicators of the validity of the research undertaken.

The aim of this chapter is to provide relevant background information and provide the rationale for undertaking the research. The chapter will conclude by introducing the remaining chapters of the thesis.

### **1.1 Collaboration: Introduction and definition**

The need for organisations to form collaborative working arrangements is now common place across the community, public and private sectors. In the private sector, inter-organisational relationships are usually, though not exclusively, driven by an economic

imperative. The need to be ahead of competitors in an increasingly globalised market place requires organisations to collaborate to pool their competencies. In the public and community sectors, government policies have led to an increased pressure on organisations to work together. In the United Kingdom (UK), such government policies relate to, for example, the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering requiring those contracting out services to develop effective collaborative arrangements with those delivering the services. Thus, managers of organisations in all sectors are likely to find themselves, to varying degrees, involved in inter-organisational activities.

Many authors use different terminology to differentiate and distinguish between different forms of inter-organisational working arrangements. However, for the purpose of this research, collaboration was defined broadly as *a working arrangement spanning organisational boundaries*. This definition therefore includes community, public and private sector collaborations such as strategic alliances, joint-ventures, co-ordination, networking, strategic bridging and so on. This broad definition is intended to indicate the generic nature of many collaboration process issues, although there are undoubtedly also many differences across the different sectors and across the many types of collaborative working arrangements.

The research forming the basis of this thesis was carried out interactively with individuals and organisations involved in collaborations aimed at addressing social and economic development. The research has therefore included primarily individuals involved in community, voluntary and public sector collaborations. The research output may as such apply primarily to these types of collaborations. As indicated above, however, the issues addressed as part of this research could, to varying degrees, apply to a whole range of different collaborations including private sector inter-organisational relations but this is not validated in this thesis. Indeed, the discussion of the different types of literature that has informed this research includes private as well as public and community sectors collaborations (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Central to this definition of collaboration, is the notion of *Collaborative Advantage* defined as (Huxham with Macdonald, 1992, Huxham, 1993a; 1996a; 1996b):

*'Something unusually creative is produced - perhaps an objective is met - that no organisation could have produced on its own and that each organisation, through the collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone' .*

When Huxham introduced the notion of *Collaborative Advantage*, she did not suggest that all collaborations ought to or indeed do aim for *Collaborative Advantage*. However, she suggested that the notion of *Collaborative Advantage* may be a useful ideal for practitioners to aim for as well as an appropriate focus for discussion. Certainly, this research aimed at designing a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is ultimately intended to help those concerned with collaboration in practice to collaborate more successfully. In that respect, it may help increase their ability to gain *Collaborative Advantage*.

## 1.2 Complexity in collaboration

It is evident from the large amount of literature available that a great deal of research effort has been devoted to gaining insight into collaboration (see Chapter 2). Researchers continue to debate what the main issues pertaining to collaborative processes are and how those involved ought to go about managing the collaboration. There seems to be general agreement however, that collaborative processes are highly complex and require appropriate attention by those involved. The complexity of inter-organisational collaboration relates both to the collaborative processes themselves as well as the issues or activities sought to be tackled by the collaborative working arrangement. Working across organisational boundaries complicates matters due to increased activities with the world 'outside' the organisation (Luhmann, 1979). Succeeding with collaborative working arrangements can be extremely difficult because parties who were previously largely independent of one another are required to co-ordinate and work together. The discussion on *Collaborative Inertia* (Huxham and Vangen, 1994, Huxham, 1996b) in Chapter 2, provides some of the reasons why doing so is difficult. Differences between the collaborating parties in terms of aims, culture, structures, procedures, languages, power and accountabilities, together with the great time commitment required to manage the collaboration are all contributing factors (Huxham and Vangen, 1996a; 1996b).

Successfully managing the process of collaboration *per se* however, is usually not the primary goal but rather a necessity where a task or an issue, because of its complexity, demands the perspectives, resources and commitment of multiple parties (Vansina, Taillieu and Schrujijer, 1996). These *required* multiple perspectives, resources and commitments imply increased complexity and interdependency. Collaboration is indeed most likely to occur over problems or subjects which in themselves are highly complex, wide in magnitude

and beyond to scope of one single organisation to tackle on its own (Trist, 1983). Roberts and Bradley (1991) argue that such issues, which were characterised as ‘messes’ by Ackoff (1974), and ‘problematiques’ by Trist (1979), are technically complex, scientifically uncertain, and ill defined. Similarly, Calton and Lad (1993; 1995) refer to ‘messes’ as complex, open-ended, multi-faceted, interdependent problems that must be addressed co-operatively and collectively over time by managers and stakeholders within a problem domain.

These general rationales suggest that collaboration is often a necessary working arrangement, for example, to tackle major social problems like pollution, drug abuse, crime and poverty (Lawrence, Hardy and Phillips, 1997, O’Toole, 1997). Contemporary social work requires partnership practices to take place over complex social problems such as urban renewal and economic development, homelessness (Hood, Logsdon and Thompson, 1993), community care (Webb, 1991, Wistow and Hardy, 1991) and often the situations are highly difficult involving families, children and elderly people who are at risk of care (Newton and Marsh, 1993). In the United States of America (USA), issues associated with the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have led to complex, inter-governmental relations among national, state and local government organisations (Dodge, 1997). Both in the UK and the USA, individuals in the communities put energy into coming together striving to do something about issues of concern to themselves such as housing, youth problems, care for the elderly and so on (Himmelman, 1992; Snape and Stewart, 1996). Increasingly, such groups find themselves part of highly complex collaborative structures. For example, many partnerships with rather complex structures have been initiated in areas which have been given *Partnership Priority Area* status by the Scottish Office (Vangen and Huxham, 1998). A requirement of many of these partnerships is that community activists represent the community on the issues addressed by their community groups.

The problem of complexity is not unique to the public and the voluntary sectors. Faulkner (1994) for example, noted that alliances are most likely to be initiated in markets with turbulence and conditions of high economic uncertainty. Pitts and Daniels (1984) described joint ventures as ‘an inevitably complicated arrangement’ and Kaths and Kahn (1996) highlighted the administrative complexity of inter-organisational arrangements. Similarly, Harrigan and Newman (1990) noted that most joint ventures formed today are complex as they face a world with shorter product lives, maturing domestic economies, explosive effects from technological improvements, shifting boundaries of industry and global competition.

It may be argued, however, that the complexity is even greater when social issues are the focus of the collaboration due to the ambiguity that surrounds the nature of social issues. As well as which, many of the organisations involved tend not to have a clearly defined role to play. By contrast, strategic alliances and joint-ventures, for example, tend to focus on clearly defined projects and rarely involve more than two partners, each of whom brings clearly differentiated skills to the project (Eden, Huxham and Vangen, 1996). The multiple perspectives, resources and commitments inherent in inter-organisational collaborations imply a greater complexity and interdependency, which in fact, make multi-party collaborations qualitatively different from bi-party collaborations. Furthermore, the possibility of forming coalitions in multi-party collaborations not only increases their complexity but also makes them more dynamic and unstable (Vansina et al, 1996). Thus, the processes of collaboration as well as the issues over which collaboration take place, contribute to the overall complexity of collaborative working arrangements.

### **1.3 The difficulty of succeeding in collaboration**

In view of the substantive and procedural complexities pertaining to collaborative activities, it is not surprising that collaborative endeavours frequently fall short of the expectations of those involved. In fact, it may be logical to conclude, as Weiss (1981) did, that unless it is absolutely necessary, as little energy and enthusiasm as possible should be invested in arrangements which depend on co-ordination. Whilst Chisholm (1989) has pointed, in general, at the frequent failures of co-ordination in multi-organisational settings, there are also more specific examples of the many inter-organisational collaborations that have failed.

McCann (1983) argued, from an USA perspective, that 'efforts to solve social problems fail perhaps more often than they succeed because of the complexities of the issues and the processes applied to solve them'. There is ample evidence of long standing problems of co-ordination within the UK public sector as well (Webb, 1991). For example, there are evidence of limited achievements and slow progress in health and local authority collaboration in the field of community care (Wistow and Hardy, 1991). Social workers have recognised that their team work with health, education, housing and other professionals may not be as effective as it should or could be (Iles and Auluck, 1990). Multi agency teams set up to foster co-ordination, such as the National Health Service's health care planning teams drawn from social services, health authorities and housing departments,

often result in conflict and frustration rather than co-operation (Sims, 1986). Generally, the co-ordination called for by the government between the National Health Service and Social Services has been fraught with difficulties mainly due to the different cultures and management styles of the two systems (Webb, 1991).

This high likelihood of failure is not limited to partnerships within the community and public sectors. In the private sector, failure rates of between 60% to 75% have been reported (Bleeke and Ernst, 1991 & 1993, Thakur and Srivastave, 1996). Osborn, Denekamp, and Baughn (1997), for example, noted that despite the initial promise of success with which many international alliances are started, many studies show very low survival rates and mixed results with regards to success. Porter (1990) suggested that the high costs associated with alliances in terms of co-ordination, reconciling of goals and creation of competitors, make alliances transitional rather than stable arrangements. In this respect they are not successful and sustainable means of creating competitive advantage. Pothukuchi and Park (1996) noted that the high rate of failure associated with international co-operative ventures reflect the extent to which they are risky and highly unstable. Newburry and Zeira (1997), provide numerous more specific examples of Equity International Joint Ventures, International Acquisitions and International Greenfield Investments that have failed.

#### **1.4 Bridging theory and practice**

Despite the complexities of collaboration that have been highlighted above, the arguments supporting collaborative working arrangements are largely positive, emphasising mutual benefits and gains. Those about to embark on collaborative ventures may also have had little warning that they are entering a hugely complex working arrangement. Paradoxically therefore, despite the complexity and likelihood of failure, many of those who try to collaborate seem unaware of the need to consider explicitly the management of their collaborative processes. That collaboration is difficult and worthy of careful consideration often come as a surprise to those embarking on collaborative activities (Calton and Lad, 1995; Huxham, 1993b; Kanter, 1994; Nocon, 1989). As Wilcox (1994), put it in the context of getting the community involved in the delivery of services at a local level: 'it is seductively easy to rush into participation that can be fraught with dangers'.

The type of insights resulting from research undertaken with a view to gaining an understanding of collaboration will be discussed in Chapter 2. To date, there is not much evidence of any serious attempt at making the insight to collaboration available to practice. However, some forms of support are available as discussed in Chapter 3.

Insight into collaboration gained through research efforts provides the potential for informing, pragmatically, those involved in collaboration. The high level of complexity, coupled with the low level of awareness of the need to consider explicitly the management of collaboration activities render that task far from easy. Exploring possible ways of providing that pragmatic help through bridging theory and practice was thus the aim and challenge of the research upon which this thesis is based. The methodological design of this research project, aimed at exploring a possible design and development of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, is discussed in Chapter 4. The remaining chapters all address issues pertaining to, and outcomes resulting from, that research process. Chapter 5 describes three key areas of concern pertaining to the transfer process. Chapter 6 describes six specific means for transferring insight to practice. Chapter 7 gives an account of all the research events which were designed deliberately with the purpose of developing the transfer process. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by discussing a set of *Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice* and by recommending future research to facilitate the transfer of insight on collaboration to practice.



## **CHAPTER 2 THE COLLABORATION LITERATURE**

- 2.1 A selective classification of collaboration literature
  - 2.1.1 Specific theoretical frameworks
  - 2.1.2 Success and hindrance factors
  - 2.1.3 Different types of inter-organisational collaborations
  - 2.1.4 Topic or subject specific contributions
  - 2.1.5 Case studies
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- 2.2 Literature on generic collaboration process issues
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- 2.3 Key conceptual collaboration frameworks
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  - 2.3.3 Collaboration language and shared meaning
  - 2.3.4 Collaboration membership structure
  
- 2.4 Summary collaboration literature

## CHAPTER 2 THE COLLABORATION LITERATURE

Chapter 1 defined collaboration broadly as a working arrangement spanning organisational boundaries. That broad definition includes a variety of collaborations spanning the community, public and private sectors. Similarly, the literature on collaboration is equally broad. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the many different types of collaboration literature that are available. As the research which is the subject of this thesis was not aimed specifically at advancing the theory on collaboration, the aim is not to provide an exhaustive literature review. Rather, since the purpose of the thesis is to discuss design issues pertaining to a process for *Transferring Theoretical Insight on Collaboration to Practice*, the aim is to discuss the range of different types of collaboration literature that may have an impact on the design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

In this chapter, relevant collaboration literature has been categorised in terms of the way in which the authors approached their research and the type of contributions their research generated. Each category's potential contribution to the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is indicated primarily based on the extent to which it is subject specific versus process specific and the extent to which it aims to describe rather than conceptualise. Each category's potential contribution to the *Transferring Insight to Practice* process is thus seen in terms of the direct pragmatic value of that contribution to those practically involved in collaborative activities.

The chapter thus provides an overview of the type of literature that is available. Within each category, a few very brief summaries are provided to give a flavour of the type of knowledge which may be gained from each. In providing this highly selective review, I am aware that I have neglected many of the contributions to the relevant literature. The aim has been to ensure that all the different types of collaboration literature that may have an influence on a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* have been addressed.

The chapter is divided into 3 sections. Section 2.1 provides an overview of different types of collaboration literature which are relevant, yet for various reasons, less directly applicable to the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Section 2.2 provides an overview of a type of collaboration literature that is more akin to the theory that has influenced the transfer process. Finally, section 2.3 gives a description of some

theoretical frameworks which have been used directly in the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as part of the research upon which this thesis is based.

## **2.1 A selective classification of collaboration literature**

This section provides a classification of relevant collaboration literature according to; specific theoretical frameworks influencing the generation of different types of literature; contributions concerned with identifying conditions influencing or hindering successful collaboration; different types of inter-organisational collaborations; collaboration topic or subject specific contributions; case studies; and contributions based on literature reviews.

### **2.1.1 Specific theoretical frameworks**

Many researchers approach their studies from the point of view of a specific literature or theoretical framework (for example, network theory, inter-organisational domains and game theory). The specific literature or theoretical framework guide their empirical field work and / or the interpretation of data gathered from their empirical research. In this section, examples of contributions by researchers who have approached their empirical research based on a conceptual framework informed by a specific type of literature or theory are provided.

Sydow, Well and Windeler (1998), for example, applied a 'structurationist' network perspective and provided an account of the effects of a tightly networked industry on organisations operating within that network. From that perspective, less domineering organisations for example, may perceive themselves as lacking power to change aspects of relationships within the network and thus experience the structure as a constraint. Other, more dominant, organisations may not be inclined to change the network because they benefit from its current structure. Highly asymmetric structures of domination therefore, in a densely networked industry, makes strategic manoeuvring for those organisations that are dominated very difficult. However, in terms of managing within such networks, Sydow et al., suggest that organisations must recognise their network character and build their strategies upon that knowledge.

Within the public sector, O'Toole (1997) suggested that public administration in the USA increasingly takes place in settings of networks characterised by structures of interdependence, yet the literature which public administrators rely on for advice on how to improve performance devotes little attention to acting effectively within a network setting. He proposed therefore that public administration should attend to an agenda of network focused research with a view to informing and improving public administration.

Another example of network focused research within USA public sector, is that undertaken by Milward and Provan (1997) who developed a preliminary theory of network effectiveness. They argued that the network perspective to their study was critical for explaining a service (in their case mental health) that could not be provided in a community setting by a single organisation acting on its own. They concluded that the most effective community health network was not flexible or adaptive, but one which was controlled by a monopoly provider. The authors reinterpreted their findings from the perspective of 'organisational economics' to strengthen the empirical results of the network effectiveness study. Their main conclusion remained the same.

A third, UK based, example is that of Cropper (1997) who examined 'actor-network theory' as a way of exploring inter-organisational relations. He points to the similarity between his own work on facilitating and understanding collaboration and the concepts and methods captured by the 'actor-network theory'. As with theory on collaboration, the 'actor-network theory' captures issues of power and influence, of connectivity and power and of social interaction. Cropper argued that ideas emerging from actor-network-theory provide a useful way of exploring collaborations. He concludes that as the theory does not presume privilege to any actor, it challenges contemporary thinking about the social bases of collaboration.

The above very brief examples aimed to illustrate the type of insight on inter-organisational collaboration which may be gained using network theory. Thus it may be possible to understand how a network structure affects inter-organisational relations and individual organisations operating within it as well as why specific network structures may cause the organisations operating within it to deliver collectively a better service. The examples do not, and were probably not intended to, provide those acting within the networks with pragmatic understanding of how to manage within such structures.

The notion of inter-organisational domains (Trist, 1983; McCann, 1983; Westly and Vredenburg, 1991) has provided a popular framework for many contributions. Hardy and Phillips (1998), for example, provided a brief overview of the literature on inter-organisational domains and argued that it failed to deal adequately with the role of power (Hardy and Phillips, 1995) in inter-organisational domains. The authors described briefly a theoretical framework of power which they viewed to be useful in making sense of the dynamics in inter-organisational domains. They proceeded by introducing their case study as an inter-organisational domain, and presented four specific relationships between the organisations in that domain with the view to describe surface dynamics characterised by both co-operation and conflict. Based on this they propose four strategies of engagement in an inter-organisational domain; collaboration, compliance, contention and contestation and described four countervailing strategies which may be taken whether the intention is to defend the domain from change or to influence the direction that change takes; reciprocal collaboration, regulations, marginalization and co-optation. Thus, based on the literature on inter-organisational domains, a framework of power and a case study, the authors developed a conceptual framework for engagement strategies in inter-organisational domains.

Nathan and Mitroff (1991) also focused on problem domains though they use the term inter-organisational fields. They applied negotiated order theory as a tool to examine the level of shared understanding among organisations in a inter-organisational field within which any collaboration may occur. They argue that the understanding that can be gained through the application of negotiated order theory is essential to inter-organisational development.

In another paper, Lawrence, Hardy and Phillips (1998), examined the dynamics of multi-sector collaboration, focusing on tensions that may occur within an individual collaboration and between it and the larger domain. The authors introduced their theoretical perspective on collaboration followed by an introduction of their case study (in this instance, a collaboration involving pharmaceutical companies and community groups from the Canadian HIV / AIDS domain). Integrating their theoretical framework with that case study, the authors set out to examine in greater detail the tensions inherent in multi-sector collaboration. The authors identified the following challenges to effective multi-sector collaboration: interest must be sparked; partnership must be forged; coherence must be achieved; and balanced contributions must be made. They argued that the key to success lies in establishing and maintaining a balance between competing influences and that as the participants are both representatives and collaborators, the tension between the two roles is a

key element that must be retained when managing collaboration processes. The authors conclude that the role of trust and communication as key ingredients for success has been over-emphasised. They argued that as the goal of collaboration is not only to respond to the needs of those directly involved but also to take into account their responsibility to their organisations, power and conflict are essential ingredients. Power and conflict, they argued, signal that partners are equal players each contributing to a joint definition of the problems and to common solutions. Thus the authors provide theoretical contribution in terms of understanding the factors that can contribute to success in collaborative arrangement. The identification of 'success or hindrance factors' or 'conditions facilitating collaboration' is a popular way of studying and interpreting collaboration (see for example; Auluck and Iles, 1991; Harrigan and Newman, 1990; Hood, Logsdon and Thompson, 1993; Wistow and Hardy, 1991). A couple of examples are given below.

In the examples provided above, the lessons from the empirical fieldwork are understood from the point of view of a particular literature (for example, network theory or inter-organisational domains) and interpreted using a theoretical framework (for example, power). The interpretations result in another theoretical framework or clarification of collaboration issues from a theoretical point of view. The immediate pragmatic value of these contributions are limited for two reasons. The papers are generally aimed at academics and therefore not written in a practitioner oriented language. The practical value is less transparent due to the theoretical frameworks used to interpret the data. In other words, because the recommendations for actions are based on theoretical frameworks which may or may not reflect the true nature of inter-organisational collaboration, the contributions do not necessarily instantly 'strike a chord' with practitioners, nor were they intended to in most instances. The papers contribute to the overall understanding of inter-organisational activities but due to the theoretical perspectives from which they were written, do not provide much direct help in terms of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

### **2.1.2 Success and hindrance factors**

As mentioned above (Section 2.1.1), some contributions focus on 'conditions facilitating or hindering successful collaboration'. Norton and Rogers (1981) for example, studied conditions under which public services could work together successfully to simulate innovation in aid of the elderly. The recommendations they provided are too comprehensive

and too detailed to be summarised here. These recommendations include for example; who should be responsible and centrally concerned with managing such a collaboration; how the expertise and experience of consultants should be integrated into the collaboration; what the task of the management team such be; how often it should meet; how it should delegate tasks; how the management team should link with the general administration of the services concerned; what status such a team should have; how it should receive support from local authorities and how it should communicate with elected members.

Gray (1985) focused on the identification of generic conditions conducive to collaboration particularly in inter-organisational domains (Trist, 1983) where there are no domineering existing networks of organisations. Gray suggested that there are certain conditions which are essential to achieving collaboration during each of three successive phases of a inter-organisational domain development (McCann, 1983); problem setting, directions setting and structuring. The conditions she proposed are; at the problem setting phase, the recognition of inter-dependence among stakeholders, the identification of a requisite number of stakeholders, the perceptions of legitimacy among stakeholders, the presence of a legitimate convenor, positive beliefs about outcomes and shared access to power; at the direction setting phase, coincidence in values among stakeholders and dispersion of power among the stakeholders; and finally at the structuring phase, a high degree of ongoing interdependence, external mandates, redistribution of power and influence of the contextual environment.

'Success and hindrance factors' are obviously concerned with the performance of a collaboration be it in terms of the working arrangement or in terms of the output produced. Some use the term sustainability as a measure of performance of collaborations (Gray, 1996; Sink; 1996). Cropper (1996) proposed a slightly different interpretation of sustainability in the context of collaboration. He proposed that sustainability should be seen as an expression of value rather than as a measure of performance. This interpretation places emphasis on the future value of the collaboration and how that value may be produced. Cropper distinguished between two different bases of value; consequential value and constitutive value. Consequential value bases, he concluded, are concerned with the derivative, behavioural qualities of collaboration and are not susceptible to direct manipulation. The constitutive value bases are concerned with purpose, fit with institutional context, capacity and conduct and may be susceptible to manipulation. By implication, they concern the future oriented view of the management of collaboration.

Success or hindrance factors or the concept of sustainability do not generally reflect the complexity of inter-organisational activities nor were they intended to. The identifications of 'success factors' or 'challenges' do not necessarily provide practitioners with any clues on how to manage the challenges and how to ensure the right ingredients for success. Indeed, Thakur and Srivastava (1996) pointed to the lack of practicality of "do's and don't's" lists in inter-organisational alliances. However, papers of a nature similar to those described above contribute to the understanding of collaboration processes. The material has to be translated into a form suitable for the *Transferring Insight to Practice* process.

### **2.1.3 Different types of inter-organisational collaborations**

Another category of contribution is provided by a large number of researchers who have studied particular forms or types of inter-organisational relations. Examples within the private sector are; Strategic Alliances, Joint Ventures and 'Buyer-Supplier Relations' and within the public sector; Inter-Governmental Relations or Public Sector Management.

Inkpen and Beamish (1997), for example, developed a theoretical framework for understanding the instability of International Joint Ventures grounded in bargaining power and the dependence perspective. They examined equity-based International Joint Ventures to explore why some are more stable than others. In doing so they provided insight to the underlying reasons for the instability of International Joint Ventures. They argued, for example, that when knowledge acquisition shifts the balance of bargaining power between partners then the co-operative basis for the Joint Venture may erode because the partner who has acquired the local knowledge may also have acquired the ability to act autonomously and hence venture instability may result. As well as providing the theoretical understanding of joint venture instability, the authors also provide some valuable lessons for the management of International Joint Ventures. For example, they argue that if the local partner takes steps to ensure that their role encompass more than a one-off contribution of local knowledge, then instability normally resulting from such one-off contributions may be controllable.

Pearce (1997) studied Joint Ventures performance from the perspective of transaction cost theory and argued that the Joint Ventures form of governance imposes a greater burden of bargaining cost and political influence cost on the top management team's decision-making



process than would be the case in a hierarchy. Thakur and Srivastava (1996), noted that the transaction cost analysis perspective may also be the most widely used approach to study strategic alliances. They undertook a post-hoc study of USA and Indian partners that had already formed alliances and remained engaged in them. Their study was undertaken from the theoretical perspectives of transactions costs and game theory and included the study of 48 organisations operating as partners in India. They claimed to have developed an ideal sequential order for alliance activities blending both process (how the alliance will work) and the content issues (what the alliance agreement says). They also aimed to discuss implications for international management. The authors identified some issues that may arise in Indo-American alliances due to cultural differences. For example, apparently Indian firms are reluctant to think strategically which requires the USA partner to put a lot of energy into encouraging strategic consideration of the alliance imperatives before the deal is signed. The authors introduced the purpose of their study by pointing to the lack of practicality of the current literature on international alliances. It would be interesting to know however, whether managers would find Thakur's and Srivastava's contribution more valuable from a pragmatic point of view.

'Buyer-supplier relations' are seen by some as a form of inter-organisational collaboration. Brensen (1996), for example, aimed to incorporate the key elements of organisational and inter-organisational theory into the analysis of 'buyer-supplier relations' in order to develop a framework for the analysis of such relations. He argued that the current literature lacks any real consideration of the impact on intra-organisational structures and processes that affect the organisations and actions of the parties engaged in a 'demand-supply' transaction. The paper draws upon existing research evidence but re-frames it in a way that points out its limitations in helping to understand the complex structure and dynamics of inter-organisational relations. Brensen concluded that future research needs to look more closely at internal organisational features and the effects that these may have upon the structure and conduct of 'buyer-supplier relations'. Thus, it appears that Brensen did not undertake any empirical research but used existing theoretical frameworks to identify issues pertaining to 'buyer-supplier relations'. The papers value in terms of contributing to the understanding of collaboration appears rather limited.

In the public sector, the areas of inter-governmental relations and public sector management have received much attention (see for example, *The Journal of Public Management*, 1988; *The Journal of Public Administration Review*, 1983). Dodge, (1997) reported on a study

based on 'an overlapping authority model of inter governmental relations'. The study aimed to understand the relationship between national and state administrative agencies charged with enforcing anti-discrimination statutes in the public and private workplace. The study was based primarily on public reports of the various governmental bodies concerned. The study described the inter-governmental relations and the administrative enforcement of equal employment opportunity laws. Falcone and Lan (1997) provided a discussion of coping strategies that should be or are being used to enhance the productivity of intergovernmental relations. It is not possible to detect what their paper was based on in terms of theory or empirical work. Lowndes (1997) developed a theoretical framework based upon 'new institutional' theory which she 'tested' using data from in-depth studies of management change in individual public service organisations, mostly Local Authorities. The resulting conceptual framework threw light upon the empirical complexity of public service management including the affects of the growth in multi-agency partnerships. Finally, Webb (1991), examined British policy towards community care and de-hospitalisation as a case study of governmental attempts to improve inter-organisational relations. He examined whether public policy theoretical approaches offer policy makers a coherent guide to action, whether governmental policies have been influenced by such theory and whether empirical research on joint planning has offered additional insight to help policy makers. He concluded that the British government remains singularly non-reflexive and despite the surge of academic interest, within the government itself there is no well developed body of theory and practice concerning policy implementation. There are therefore contradictions and tensions with regards to co-ordination in public sector management. The government shapes the inter-organisational environment within which local organisations operate through for example, influencing the power relationships between them. At the same time, co-ordination, seen as a central feature of policy implementation, is treated as a problem to be solved at sub-national level. A better understanding of the government's shaping of the inter-organisational environment within which local organisations operate seem to be required in order to improve the co-ordination of public services.

The conclusions with regard to the applicability of this type of contribution to the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is similar to that of the previous sections (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). The theoretical frameworks used to interpret the data render the contribution to practice less transparent. The 'implications for practice' tend also to be rather superficial in nature leaving the managerial complexity of collaboration activities aside. In addition, the

above examples are more context specific highlighting issues relevant to Strategic Alliances, Joint-Ventures or inter-governmental relations, for example, rather than to working across organisational boundaries in general. However, collectively the papers do nevertheless provide a good contribution to the understanding of inter-organisational activities in general and may as such be valuable to the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

#### **2.1.4 Topic or subject specific contributions**

There are also a variety of papers which seem concerned primarily with describing a subject area such as economic regeneration, health development, community care and community development where partnerships and collaborations may be a necessary way of working. Notably, there are papers of this nature written from the point of view of policy or politics.

For example, Coulson (1997) provided a historical description of public and private sector partnerships' contribution to economic regeneration. The paper provides the reader with insight to who the various partners are and what the problems might be in terms of developing a wider political vision. There has also been much focus on partnerships within UK urban policy. Stewart and colleagues (Stewart, 1997; Stewart and Huxham, 1997; Snape and Stewart, 1996; Hambleton and Stewart, 1997) for example, wrote about the emergence and the role of inter-organisational partnerships in urban regeneration, describing different models of partnerships, their structural characteristics, how the communities fit into those structures, how such partnerships are governed and how their governance / leadership may lead to the mobilisation of Collaborative Advantage.

Salem (1997) described the 'Philippines Health Development Project (PHDP), 1990-95', a project aimed at building public service delivery capacity through Local Government - Non Governmental Organisations Partnerships. The paper provides a good description of many aspects of this partnership. For example, the paper explains the concept of partnership between public and private sector agencies as a mechanism to strengthen local institutional capacity and promote community health development. The paper concludes that processes and mechanisms commonly used to bring partnerships about are still in their infancy and need to be continuously monitored and nurtured. It was pointed out that the question of how to carry that out is problematic despite the experiences which cases like this project bring to bear on the questions. Williamson (1996), described area-based partnerships for social and

economic developments between a community and its representatives and statutory and private interests in Ireland. Williamson described welfare programmes that are in place with the support of the European Union. He concluded that the political and social circumstances of Ireland are likely to reveal some unknown aspects of partnership theory and practice.

Himmelman's (1992; 1996; 1997) work is extremely focused on multi-sector collaboration involving communities in processes for social change. The broad substantial aim of the collaborations is social justice via the transformation of power relations beyond integrating social services to actively empowering community residents. The proposed collaborative processes thus actively include community residents in efforts aimed at revitalising communities and building 'new societies' collaboratively from the 'ground-up'.

Himmelman proposed ways of designing and developing multi-sector collaboration along a continuum of developmental complexity. Along that continuum, he distinguished between collaborative betterment and collaborative empowerment depending on whether the collaboration is initiated outside the community within public, private or non-profit institutions and then brought to the community or whether the collaboration is initiated within the community and is brought to public, private and non-profit institutions. Collaborative empowerment, he argues, tends to produce greater long-term ownership by communities and increase the communities control over their own destinies. Himmelman thus focuses on collaborative process but is at the same time as much concerned with the outcome of collaboration. That is, the collaboration should influence the existing inequalities in many societies with respect to class, race and gender.

With a totally different and much less prescriptive approach compared to that of Himmelman, Sink (1996; 1997) focused on multi-sector collaboration for community development addressing social and economic development of urban areas. Like Himmelman's approach, central to the community collaborations addressed by Sink is the inclusion of people who live in the communities and whose involvement is critical to the success of the collaboration. Sink also focused on conceptualisation of the development of comprehensive, community-wide collaboration contributing to the general understanding of how community collaborations may be approached and how obstacles may be overcome.

There are also many examples of UK based contributions to the literature on community collaborations. Miller and Ahmad (1997) described community development within the restructuring of social welfare. They examine the contribution of occupational networks

(i.e. this is also another example of contributions based on network theory) in promoting community development's effectiveness. My own contribution to this area has involved the identification of general collaboration process issues pertaining to community collaborations concerned with combating poverty (for example, Vangen, 1993; 1995; Barr and Vangen, 1994). In a similar vein, Barr and Huxham (1996) focused on general issues pertaining to the involvement of communities in collaboration processes.

The contributions above have all focused on collaboration undertaken in order to achieve something be it community development or economic regeneration. There are also examples of contributions however, that focus specifically on the effects of collaboration on fairly narrowly defined subject areas rather than on the collaboration itself. Goes and Park (1997), for example, undertook a longitudinal study of 400 hospitals over 10 years. The aim was to study the effect of inter-organisational links on organisational innovation. Data were gathered through various sources such as interviews, observations, mailed surveys, organisational documentation and hypotheses were tested. The authors concluded that collective governance structures stimulated innovation through the sharing of asymmetric competencies, through rationalisation of resources and through enabling hospitals to overcome resource dependence and grapple with institutional pressures. The paper is a good description of what may happen in terms of innovation but does not provide much discussion on why or how to go about it.

The contributions in this category provide a thorough description of their chosen area of focus and will be valuable to anyone collaborating within those same areas. However, the contributions do not prioritise conceptualisation regarding general partnership issues and therefore offer very limited concrete learning in terms of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Their value in terms of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is also limited because they do not focus on the management of collaboration activities. They may nevertheless have a role to play in such a process in particular if the context addressed by a specific paper is familiar to the audience at which the transfer process is targeted.

### **2.1.5 Case studies**

Some researchers provide an in-depth account of a specific collaboration that they have studied. The focus is on the subject of the collaboration rather than on collaborative

processes *per se*. The authors write about collaboration in a highly subject specific as well as a context specific manner.

For example, Phillips and Hardy (1997) studied the actions of four organisations; the British Government, the Refugee Legal Centre, the British Refugee Council and the Refugee Forum to examine how the concept of a 'refugee' is discursively constituted within the UK refugee system. They focus on understanding the role of discursive as well as traditional sources of power within such an institutional field. They examined how particular organisations play a role in the construction of refugee identity. Their paper provides the reader with learning about, for example, power and control in collaboration. This learning is however, not very transparent nor easily transferable to other contexts. As it stands therefore, this type of contribution is not very accessible to practitioners and was perhaps not intended to be, unless the practitioners were involved in the refugee system. It may be possible, however, for someone with an understanding of collaboration processes to take the learning across to other contexts. In that sense, it may be useful in a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

There are also many examples of cases studies reporting on collaboration within the private sector. Jolly (1997), for example, based his article on a case study of co-operation between Fiat and PSA with the intention to draw lessons for alliance management. No theoretical framework aided the understanding of the case nor did it result in any general concepts. It may be difficult for someone who is not particularly interest in the car manufacturing business to draw any useful lessons from this type of article. Osborn, Denekamp and Baughn (1997) examined the linkage between selected alliance characteristics and durability of these entities by looking at USA / Japanese Alliances across three industries (automobile, computer and semi-conductors). The durability of an alliance was seen as a measure of success. They concluded that alliances more appropriately configured to competitive conditions in their globalised industries were more durable. Specific embedded combinations of alliance characteristics which were consistent with a major function for the alliance proved to be significantly more durable. The pragmatic value of this type of papers is possibly at best limited to those with a particular interest in the subject addressed. Examples of other contributions in this category are; a co-operation between a community, a university and a federal agency in the development of a youth service system in the USA (Hodson, Armour and Touliatos, 1976); a collaboration between a community hospital and a probate system to enhance the care, service delivery and quality of life of the elderly

(Hackstaff-Goldis and House, 1990); and a discussion of a collaborative alcohol education programme in South West England (Means, Harrison, Jeffers and Smith, 1991).

In order to draw general lessons from these highly subject and context specific articles, the reader may have to use their own understanding of collaboration in order to interpret and generalise what is being reported. The reader may also have to read a lot about a subject which they may or may not be interested in. Thus, the general learning about collaboration processes is not transparent. Case studies may nevertheless have a role to play in a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* in particular if the subject addressed by the case study is familiar to the audiences targeted through the *Transferring Insight to Practice* process.

The extent to which the focus is on the subject of the collaboration versus collaboration processes *per se* has a profound effect on the extent to which the lessons are transparent and hence whether the reader can transfer that learning to their own contexts.

#### **2.1.6 Literature reviews**

Another form of contribution to this field of study is that which is based entirely on a review of literature with no empirical field work being undertaken. For example, Newbury and Zeira (1997), set out to examine the impact of ten generic differences between Equity International Joint Ventures (EIJVs), International Acquisitions (IAs) and International Greenfield Investments (IGIs). They developed a model based entirely on the review of 'failures and successes' of all three of these business forms as reported by the business press and academics. They argued that failure of parent companies to recognise the effects of generic differences upon EIJV, IA and IGI performance may be a contributing factor to the poor success rates of these business forms. Their model lists recommendations for improved EIJV, IA and IGI performance such as the need to 'establish trust between partners' and 'be quick and secretive in negotiations'.

Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) undertook a literature review of the co-ordination problem in British government starting from the period of administrative reform in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They concluded that there were a range of different models through which co-ordination between various agencies had been attempted. For example, the rationalist-centralist model of co-ordination involved prescribed structures for collaboration and

imposition on agencies of a legal obligation to co-operate. The approach appeared to have had limited success because it had not provided incentives for co-operation and had not recognised the problem of differences in attitudes and perceptions. The partisan mutual adjustment model dictated a totally different approach allowing agencies to co-ordinate services through a process of persuasion, negotiation, compromise and bargaining. This approach had led to a fragmented ad hoc approach to co-ordination. Approaches in-between these two extremes which had identified more clearly with the impediments to co-ordination and addressed them through specific mechanisms, such as joint finance, had seemed more successful.

A final example of literature review is that undertaken by Mattesich and Monsey (1992). They undertook a review of all the research they could find which related to collaboration with the view to identify factors influencing the success of collaboration. This resulted in the identification of 19 success factors relating to six categories; membership, communication, resources, environment, process / structure and purpose of the collaboration.

These type of contributions are valuable in the sense that they provide overviews of what the issues in any collaboration may be. However, precisely because they are overviews, they do not generally convey the complexity inherent in collaborations. The information provided is therefore of a rather superficial nature. For example, it may be suggested that trust is an important 'success factor' but an explanation of what trust may mean in a collaboration context and how those involved may go about establishing trust is lacking. Literature reviews can provide the reader with a structure for thinking about collaboration issues rather than provide clues about how to manage within any collaboration. Their contributions to the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is therefore of an indirect rather than a direct nature.

One last source of contribution that has to be mentioned before moving on to the next section is that of two special issues of *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* (1991). The two special issues of the journal are entirely devoted to generating theory on collaboration from practice. Some of the contributions to this issue have been discussed already. Most of the remaining contributions are of the character described in this section and will therefore not be discussed in any more detail.



## **2.2 Literature on generic collaboration process issues**

The contributions discussed in section 2.1. were divided into different categories according to how the researchers appeared to have approached their work and what the subject of their contributions were. All the different types of contributions discussed are obviously valuable and collectively they provide a wealth of insight and information about collaboration. In terms of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* however, their pragmatic contributions are less obvious because they are for example, based on particular theoretical frameworks requiring the reader to be familiar with that specific theory in order to comprehend the concepts put forth. Some of the contributions were addressing different types of subject areas not necessarily rendering the contributions pragmatically applicable to other areas of collaboration. The contributions to be discussed in this section are different in nature to those discussed above in that they focus more directly on collaborative processes *per se* regardless of the research and theoretical framework which informed their development. This is not intended to imply that the contributions were not informed by theoretical frameworks or specific case studies undertaken. Most of the contributions discussed in this section are likely to have emerged from interactions or 'face - to - face' methods with individuals actually involved in collaboration in practice rather than some theoretical framework. For this reasons, the contributions to be discussed in this section are likely to be more directly applicable to the process of *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

### **2.2.1 Step-by-step collaboration processes**

Someone who enjoys a high profile in the field of collaboration in the public and non-profit sectors is Gray (see for example, Gray 1985; 1996; 1997; Gray and Wood, 1991). Among her many published contributions is the book 'Collaborating; Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems' (1989). In her book, Gray described collaboration loosely as a process for solving complex social problems. It is beyond the scope of this review to provide a thorough summary of Gray's book which is a comprehensive contribution to understanding collaboration. Briefly, however, the book comprises many case studies, offering examples of successful collaborations. Gray described collaboration as a process in which those who have a stake in a problem, to be tackled by a collaboration, actively seeks a mutually determined solution. In writing the book, her aim was to provide insight to how collaborations are conducted. In doing so she took a pragmatic as well as a theoretic

approach. She explored the rationale for collaboration from a pragmatic (the incorporation of multiple perspectives to solve social problems) as well as an analytical (contextual incentives such as rapid economical and technological change and globalisation) point of view. Similarly, and also in a pragmatic sense, she outlined a step-by-step process for undertaking collaboration and pointed out some of the obstacles to collaboration. She proposed a matrix for classifying different collaborations based on incentives for collaboration and expected outcomes. She also provided a theoretical perspective of Collaboration drawing on her understanding of organisation theory. Thus, the book provides a wealth of insight to collaboration. In terms of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, it is useful to compare Gray's step-by-step process to collaboration with the approach taken in the design of the *Transferring Insight to Practice* process described in this thesis.

In proposing a three phase step-by-step approach to collaboration, Gray argued that although certain phases are more significant to some collaborations than others, there are still a fundamental set of issues that must be addressed in the course of any collaboration. On that basis, she proposed a generic three phase process of collaboration; problem setting, direction setting and implementation. The book includes a detailed descriptions of tasks that need to be undertaken in each phase.

Gray's step-by-step process to collaboration is similar to the process for Social Problem Solving proposed by her colleague McCann (1983). McCann proposed a framework for understanding social problem solving (SPS) and offered four guide-lines for designing interventions to facilitate the process. He argued that SPS consists of three integrally woven processes, each posing a critical developmental issue for those affected. The three processes he suggested are; problem setting, direction setting, and structuring. It is a process framework which assumes 'all stakeholders included' and focuses on helping stakeholders understand the dynamics of their situations and providing a working vocabulary to help the communicate with one another. McCann argued that intervention in large-scale social processes must become more effective if endemic, damaging social problems like crime, pollution, and poverty are to be managed. The process framework suggests a set of key questions for stakeholders to answer, guiding them through each stage of the process.

The step-by-step approach to collaboration is not unique to social problem solving. Kanter (1994), for example, argues that relationships between companies begin, grow and develop,

or fail, in ways similar to relationships between people. Thus, she argues, successful alliances generally unfold in five overlapping phases; courtship, engagement, setting up housekeeping, learning to collaborate and finally changing within. She suggests steps and tasks an organisation might want to undertake to get through each stage successfully.

There are many others who prefer to conceptualise collaboration as a process developing over specific phases including a clear beginning, middle and an end (see for example; Davidson, 1976; Auluk and Iles, 1991; Melaville and Blank with Asayesh, 1993; Pickles, 1993; Winer and Ray, 1994). Some of those processes will be discussed briefly in Chapter 3. However, in terms of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, focusing on step-by-step approaches to collaboration may not provide enough flexibility for reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, my focus is on *Collaboration Themes*, that is, on process issues typically causing concern for those involved in collaboration rather than on entire collaborative processes *per se*.

With a less step by step specific approach, others also focus on developing or exploring processes for effective collaboration. From the literature review described above (Section 2.1.6), for example, Alaszewski and Harrison concluded that effective processes to collaboration should identify more clearly with the impediments to co-ordination and address them more clearly through specific mechanisms. Coe (1988) developed an 'open focus' model and argued that it should be adopted as a step towards more successful project implementation in the multi-organisational setting. The open focus model is characterised by openness to the 'meta-organisation', linking communication (including networking and supportive communication), evocative leadership (substituted for hierarchical authority), and collaborative vision (open participation in decision). Inherent in the open focus model is the enhancement of the sense of mutual trust, credibility, and interest, which set the stage upon which to develop common goals.

### **2.2.2 Stakeholders in collaboration**

The notion of stakeholders is a topic which has engaged many researchers and stimulated their contributions to the field of collaboration. Finn (1996) for example, suggested that for problems that lie in an inter-organisational domain (Trist, 1983) neither the problem itself nor the individuals or organisations required to tackle the problem are necessarily self

evident at the outset. When dealing with such complex problems and within the context of much uncertainty, the problem may need to be further defined to ensure that all those who need to be are 'at the table'. Finn proposed a Group Support System (GSS) process which encourages individuals initially involved in a collaboration to define the problem as well as the membership of the collaboration. The process requires the presence of a facilitator and includes the identification of stakeholders, options and a collaborative agenda. Finn concluded that only by identifying who the collaborators are and what the problem is in the context of the collaboration is there hope for generating successful solutions.

Eden (1996) focused on a process for conceptualising and identifying stakeholders and their potential for collaboration as a way of promoting collaborative advantage. Whilst Finn's approach focused on who ought to be 'at the table', Eden's process focused on identifying stakeholders who will, or can be persuaded to support actively a strategic intent of an organisation. The approach categorised different types of stakeholders according to two dimensions; the stakeholders interest in the given strategy and their power to influence the achievement of the strategic intent. Based on this conceptual framework, it is possible to identify who the interested and powerful stakeholders are versus those who are not interested whether they have power to influence the strategy or not. The framework thus provides a handle for identifying individuals and organisations of significance to the collaboration. Eden concluded however, that the process of bringing together an appropriate set of stakeholders and enabling them to collaborate successfully depends among other factors on the ability to understand each collaborator's goal system (Vangen, Huxham and Eden, 1994). These two accounts on stakeholder analysis are also tools which group process facilitators can use with collaborations (see Chapter 3).

### **2.2.3 Some generic collaboration concepts**

Among those who are most well published in this area of research is Huxham. Her research has focused both on conceptual development (Huxham with Macdonald, 1992; Huxham, 1993a; 1993c) and on processes for collaboration (Huxham, 1993b; 1993d). Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, Huxham's notion of *Collaborative Advantage* underpins much of the theory on collaboration upon which the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is based. One popular recent contribution is the book 'Creating Collaborative Advantage' (Huxham, 1996a). The book reflects the typical characteristics of Huxham's work in that it

offers both conceptual as well as process oriented contributions to collaboration. As many of the contributions to the book have already been discussed above no further description of the book will be provided here. However, Huxham and I have undertaken research jointly for more than five years. Some of the contributions to the literature on collaboration resulting from that work is discussed separately in the final section of this Chapter.

There are also a number of contributions that focus specifically on single key issues such as commitment, culture, power and trust, pertaining to collaborative processes. Pothukuchi and Park (1996) examined the issues on cross-cultural interactions and developed a theoretical framework that aimed to specify the effects of organisational culture on the outcome of inter-firm collaboration across national boundaries. They found that culture has an influence on other key issues, in particular communication, co-operation, commitment and conflict resolution, which all have a reciprocal relationship with trust. They explained that as the influence of these issues tend to shift from a characteristic-based framework to a process-based framework, any attempt to explain the role of organisational culture in the context of inter-organisational co-operation must be viewed as a dynamic and evolving relationship rather than as a static relationship. Pothukuchi and Park concluded that the clarification of this issue is important for practitioners because it provides crucial signals to take corrective measures and develop cultural sensitivity.

The single issue that has received by far the most attention recently is that of trust (Vangen and Huxham, 1998). Indeed, the literature on trust in general and in particular with regards to collaboration is so vast that it would be a mammoth task to provide a fair review of it here. Very briefly however, the concept of trust in inter-organisational relations has been examined from a range of different theoretical perspectives (McAllister, 1995). Much of this literature focuses on the private sector (for example, Butler and Gill, 1995; Calton and Lad, 1995; Lane and Bachmann, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1992) though there are some valuable exceptions within the public arena (Hardy and Phillips, 1995; Webb, 1991). In general, trust is perceived as being important to the success of inter-organisational collaborations. Contributions based on, for example, the psychology, economics and sociology literature, have focused on both the behavioural foundations and the social mechanisms of trust. On the one hand, for example, trust may be perceived as a mechanism for reducing complexity of collaborative interactions by fostering co-ordination and co-operation among collaborators. On the other hand, trust may be associated with risk in that placing trust in others generally generates possibilities for opportunistic behaviour. Taken

together, these efforts provide much valuable insight. In their present forms however, these conceptualisations are not designed to be of immediate pragmatic use to those directly involved in the management of inter-organisational collaborations.

The contributions discussed in this section have, for a number of reasons, been different in nature to those discussed in Section 2.1. The contributions have been directly concerned with generic collaboration process issues regardless of the subject of the collaboration from which their insights were gained. The contributions in this section were also more accessible from a pragmatic point of view primarily because they were not too heavily flavoured by specific theoretical approaches. The extent to which collaboration process issues are conceptualised based on theoretical frameworks not developed from the field of collaboration is likely to influence the extent to which those involved in collaboration can identify with it and hence the extent to which it is pragmatically useful to them. The pragmatic nature of the contributions in this section also relate to the fact that much of the insight gained is likely to have derived from direct interactions with individuals involved in collaborative activities.

Much of my own theoretical understanding of the field of collaboration has been gained through research of the same general nature as that described in this section. This contribution, together with that of her colleagues, to the field of collaboration has naturally had the greatest impact on the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The parts of that theory that has been used directly in the design of the transfer process is the subject of Section 2.3.

### **2.3 Key conceptual collaboration frameworks**

This final section provides a brief description of the substantive theory on collaboration which has had the greatest impact on the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. I had gained that understanding primarily through working on a three year long Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project aimed at investigating 'The Nature of Inter-Organisational Collaboration Across Community and Public Sector Organisations' (Huxham, Eden and Vangen, 1997). The grant holders of the ESRC project were Professor Chris Huxham and Professor Colin Eden and the theory to be summarised below resulted from joint efforts of Huxham, Eden and myself. The way in which the

theory been described here, with emphasis put on specific aspects of that theory, is shaped by my own understanding of that research.

The theory was developed primarily from working with collaborations concerned with tackling major social issues and therefore primarily involving organisations within the public and private sectors. It follows that individuals working in similar collaborations may identify more easily with the resulting theory. It is likely however, that the general issues captured by the various theoretical concepts are transferable to different collaborations across the public, community and private sectors.

Four comprehensive theoretical frameworks relating to collaborative inertia, goals, language and membership were particularly fundamental to the current research and will be described below. Although they were developed as four separate frameworks, they obviously inter-relate. They have also all been developed on the back of the notion of Collaborative Advantage as discussed in Chapter 1.

### **2.3.1 Collaborative inertia**

The ESRC research project mentioned above (Section 2.3) involved intervention in collaborative core groups that had become 'fatigued'; the members of the core groups were still meeting but were unable to develop any real sense of achievement. The need to explore and understand the reasons why collaborations so commonly appeared to be stagnant in this fashion became an aim of that research. *Collaborative Inertia* emerged as a concept describing collaborative situations falling short of the expectations of those involved (Huxham, 1996b; Huxham and Vangen, 1994). In situations where collaborations have become stagnant, the rate of work output by the collaboration appears considerably less than what a casual observer might expect.

The concept, *Collaborative Inertia*, is thus intended to capture and explain the reasons why collaborations so often fail to live up to the expectations of those involved (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of the likelihood of failure). Briefly, organisations, groups and individuals involved in a collaboration are likely to have different aims which may cause a range of misunderstandings and even conflicts (Vangen, Huxham and Eden, 1994). The size, cultures, procedures and structures of the organisations involved will often vary greatly.

The individuals representing the organisations, who are responsible for managing the collaboration, are therefore likely to have very different professional, cultural (organisational and sometimes ethnic) and educational backgrounds. The individuals' backgrounds as well as the organisations they currently represent will have a great impact on the individuals' behaviour with respect to the collaboration. They are for example, likely to have to deal with highly different sets of accountabilities, some of them being able to act autonomously whereas others have to go through lengthy processes seeking approval to act on behalf of their organisation. In a similar fashion, there are likely to be real as well as perceived differences of power between those involved which will cause additional stresses on the working relationship. Because of their different backgrounds, individuals are also likely to have slightly different languages which may manifest itself through differences in meaning (Eden and Vangen, 1995). Let alone the sheer time required to manage the logistics of communication therefore, further complications arises due to potential misunderstandings caused by differences in languages. Thus, there are a number of factors all potentially causing the core group (individuals concerned with managing the collaboration) to experience *Collaborative Inertia*.

Typically however, individuals and organisations involved in Collaboration do not realize the complexity of the working arrangement (see Chapters 1 and 5). They are typically not able to articulate the difficulties and the problems they are facing and would not know what to do about them even if they were able to articulate them. The concept of *Collaborative Naivety* emerged as a way of describing such collaborations (Huxham and Vangen, 1994). Characteristically, collaborative core groups which remain naive will enter a state of *Collaborative Inertia* and may eventually collapse.

### **2.3.2 Collaboration goal structure**

The importance of agreeing on the goals for the collaboration is an issue constantly raised by practitioners and a frequently quoted 'success factor' by researchers of collaboration (see section 2.1.2 above). The inability to agree on goals is a great source of frustration in practice. Indeed, and as mentioned above, one of the factors causing *Collaborative Inertia* relates to the members of the collaboration having different aims and objectives. Research aimed at understanding more about the nature of goals in collaboration led to two distinct ways of conceptualising the goal structure of collaborations.



One way in which goals in collaboration may be conceptualised is as a taxonomy of goal types present among the members of the collaboration (Vangen, et al, 1994). Such a goal taxonomy is illustrated in Figure 2.1. This conceptualisation has been applied in various ways in the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as explained in Chapters 6 and 7. The taxonomy distinguishes between; the various types of goals pertaining to a collaborative situation; the means of achieving the goals; goals concerned with the substantive purpose of the collaboration and the goals concerned with the process of collaborating; and finally, whether the goals are explicitly expressed, assumed or hidden.

A brief discussion focusing on the various goal types is provided here with the intention to illustrate why goals in collaboration can cause a great deal of frustration in practice. The goals pertaining to a collaborative situation may be classified into three main categories, *meta-goals*, *organisation goals* and *individual goals*. Meta-goals are the goals for the collaboration, that is, a statement of what the collaboration is aiming to achieve. At face value it might seem that meta-goals ought to be stated explicitly and in detail but in practice, doing so can produce difficulties in itself. Organisations will have different aims and objectives and therefore the more openly discussed and tightly defined the meta-goals are the more difficult it will be for the participating organisations and individuals to agree on them.

Organisation goals are the goals that individual organisations wish to achieve for themselves, some of them through the collaboration. Similarly, individual goals are the goals that individual members of a collaborative group wish to achieve for themselves, some of them through the collaboration. Some of these organisation and individual goals will not relate to the overt purpose of the collaboration and may form part of hidden agendas. For example, an individual's involvement in the collaboration may be crucial to, or detract from, their career development plan and may, hence, determine how they behave in the collaboration. As such, organisation and individual goals often cause confusion and tensions between members. However, these goals provide much of the incentive for organisations and individuals to participate in the collaboration and therefore it is generally helpful for other members of the collaborative group to be aware of their existence, even if they have not been discussed publicly.

In view of the number of related and often hidden or competing goals which are present in collaborations, it is not surprising that collaborators often express frustration about lack of a

sense of direction. Even if there were no hidden agendas, it is likely that there will be a wide variety of different assumptions about the goals of the collaboration. This is likely to result in confusion, conflict and counter-productive actions. Given this complexity, it is obvious that care is needed in the discussion of aims and objectives. A great deal of sensitivity to others' needs is essential and the extent to which all these goals are brought out into the discussion arena is not a matter to be taken lightly. Often what is needed is sufficient discussion to gain 'enough' commitment to the meta-goals to allow the collaboration to proceed with action, rather than a detailed and explicit discussion of a meta-goal statement.

Another way of conceptualising goals in collaboration is aimed at capturing the dynamics of the negotiation of the purpose of collaboration (Eden *et al* 1996). This conceptualisation models the way in which the beliefs of core group members about their own values, the values of their organisations and the values of the core group itself may interact in the course of a dialogue. This modelling led to the identification of nine typical 'stances' taken by an individual and how each stance influences their behaviour in collaboration discussion. For example, one stance is characterised as the 'mandated spy with hidden agenda'. This 'stance' represents an individual who believes that their organisation is not really interested in pursuing the objective put forth by other members of the collaboration but wishes nevertheless to ensure that its organisation is not left out if the collaboration pursues the objective. This type of conceptualisation is less pragmatic than the one described above and has only been used indirectly in the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. However, as with the previous conceptualisation, it does provide insight to why agreeing on goals for collaboration is complex.

**GOAL TYPES FOR SUBSTANTIVE AIMS AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESS**

**THE MEANS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL**

	<b>THE COLLABORATION</b>	<b>THE ORGANISATION</b>	<b>THE INDIVIDUAL</b>
<p><b>META-GOALS</b>  <b>Explicit:</b>                      - openly acknowledged;                      - all agree, in principle, on what they are                      - there may be differences in interpretation  <b>Assumed:</b>                      - not stated so likely to be multiple views on what they are  <b>Hidden:</b>  <i>non-existent, by definition</i></p>	<p><b>Goals for the collaboration</b></p> <p><b>substantive aim:</b>                      e.g. - influence Local Authorities' policies</p> <p><b>collaborative process:</b>                      e.g. - work as a team rather than as a collection of individuals</p>		
<p><b>ORGANISATION GOALS</b>  <b>Explicit:</b>                      - acknowledged by the organisation and other members of the collaboration  <b>Assumed:</b>                      - not explicitly stated                      - the organisation may not have acknowledged it to itself                      - other organisations may be unaware of it, or have varying perspectives on it  <b>Hidden:</b>                      - the organisation deliberately does not state this interest - believes it to be unacceptable to others</p>	<p><b>Goals for specific organisations which can (only) be achieved through the collaboration, but which differ from the overt purpose of the collaboration</b></p> <p><b>substantive aims:</b>                      e.g. - put additional weight on organisation XXX arguments for the need for after school care</p> <p><b>collaborative process:</b>                      e.g. - get voluntary organisations to take on projects together rather than compete for resources</p>	<p><b>Goals which specific organisations wish to achieve for themselves by themselves, some of which will be related to their participation in the collaboration</b></p> <p><b>substantive aims</b>                      e.g. - provide child-care for low income families</p> <p>(collaborative process; <i>logically impossible</i>)</p>	
<p><b>INDIVIDUAL GOALS</b>  <b>Explicit:</b>                      - acknowledged by the individual and other members of the core group  <b>Assumed:</b>                      - not explicitly stated                      - the individual may not have acknowledged it to him/herself                      - other individuals may be unaware of it, or have varying perspectives on it  <b>Hidden:</b>                      the individual deliberately does not publicly state this interest - believes it to be unacceptable to others</p>	<p><b>Goals for individual core group members which can (only) be achieved through the collaboration, but which differ from the overt purpose of the collaboration</b></p> <p><b>substantive aims</b>                      e.g. - widen personal knowledge of Child and Poverty issue</p> <p><b>collaborative process</b>                      e.g. - improve my chairmanship skills through chairing the core group</p>	<p><b>Goals which individual core group members wish to achieve for themselves through their own organisation, some of which will be related to its participation in the collaboration</b></p> <p><b>substantive aims</b>                      e.g. - put effort into securing my own job by increasing the chances that my organisation will receive funding / grants</p> <p>(collaborative process; <i>logically impossible</i>)</p>	<p><b>Goals which an individual core group member wish to achieve for themselves by themselves, some of which will be related to their participation in the collaboration</b></p> <p><b>substantive aims</b>                      e.g. - increase the chances of keeping my job</p> <p>(collaborative process; <i>logically impossible</i>)</p>

**Figure 2.1 Goal Taxonomy for Collaboration**

### **2.3.3 Collaboration language and shared meaning**

The importance of and ability to communicate is another issue raised by practitioners and also a frequently quoted 'success factor' by researchers of collaboration. However, as mentioned above, individuals participating in a collaboration are also likely to have different languages to which different meanings may be attributed (Eden and Vangen, 1995). Complications arising due to the potential misunderstandings caused by differences in language is one of the factors that cause *Collaborative Inertia*. Research aimed at understanding more about the role of *Language and Shared Meaning* in collaboration led to development of a conceptual framework capturing the potential impact of shared language and meaning among core group members on the success of a collaboration.

A number of different assumptions are captured by this framework. For collaborative core groups the 'world-taken-for-granted' which forms the basis for social interaction, joint problem definition and problem solving in single-organisation teams is unlikely to exist. The degree of similarity of language and argumentation and the degree of similarity of meaning between core group individuals are indicators of the likelihood of social intercourse and the development of collaborative conversations. The likelihood of collaborative conversation and collaborative action indicates the likelihood of the success of a collaboration.

The development of a computer based method for assessing these indicators, for use in the early stages of a collaboration, associated the development of this conceptual framework. The framework itself and the associated analytical method were intended to aid facilitators working with a collaboration group rather than to be of pragmatic value to collaborators themselves. The analytical method has not been applied directly in the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* but the ideas captured by the framework has had at least an indirect impact upon the design.

### **2.3.4 Collaboration membership structure**

The complexity stemming from the structure of goals in collaboration as discussed above is directly related to the membership structure of collaboration. As the complex and dynamic nature of membership was not adequately captured by existing theory on collaboration,

membership structure of collaboration became the fourth area of conceptual development (Huxham and Vangen, 1997). The complexity of membership structure may have a profound impact on *Collaborative Inertia* not least due to highly different sets of accountabilities as discussed in Section 2.3.1 (Vangen and Huxham, 1998).

The nature of the membership of collaborations was conceptualised from two perspectives. The first considers the complexity in the *structure* of collaboration, and argues that ambiguity and complexity in structure may be demonstrated over many dimensions. These dimensions relate to; the clarity of who the actual members are (suggesting that members of a collaboration often do not necessarily know who the other members are); ambiguity over membership status (relating to the many motivations and incentives individuals have for joining a collaboration); ambiguity over the relationships between individuals and organisations as members (relating to the degree to which the individuals on the core group are there in their own capacity only or fully representing their organisations); ambiguity over members representativeness (relating to what members are actually representing relating to for example, individuals wearing multiple hats and community activists purporting to act and speak on behalf of a community); and finally, complexity may relate to the extremely complex structures of many collaborations (stemming from the sheer number of partnerships that have been initiated in the UK lately and the fact that many organisations increasingly find themselves being part of multiple partnerships).

The second perspective adds another layer of complication through exploring the *dynamics* of the way in which membership structures change over time. The nature of collaborations, at least those aimed at tackling social issues, is such that they can change from one shape to another frequently, rapidly and sometimes imperceptibly. Within this dynamics, the relationship between the membership of a collaboration and its purpose is very significant. The discussion of goals in collaboration above (Section 2.3.2), illustrated that agreeing on goals and defining the purpose of a collaboration can be a very difficult and complex activity. In addition, the purpose of a collaboration tends to change over time and this influences and is influenced by changes in membership over time. The dynamics may be illustrated as follows.

Any collaboration will at some point have been initiated by someone who would have had a view of the purpose of the collaboration and of individuals or organisations central to that purpose. The purpose of the collaboration as defined by the initiator may or may not have

been of central importance to those other individuals and organisations and it is likely that there would have been an implicit re-negotiation of purpose. That re-negotiation of purpose may in turn have suggested others who might be central to that purpose and who, if included in the collaboration, would not necessarily agree with the purpose of the collaboration causing yet another re-negotiation of purpose and so on. There is thus a dynamic arising from the cyclical influence between the nature of the participating organisations and the focus of collaboration, with the participants defining the focus and the focus defining new participants. In practice, the intensity of this dynamic tends to slow down as those involved lose interest in inviting new members. However, the process of taking action, reviewing results and agreeing on new courses of action makes it inevitable that the cycle will continue to cause incremental shape change.

In addition to this 'internal' cycle inherent in any collaboration, individual and organisational changes also have an influence on membership both at the individual and at the organisational level. Whether the changes are at individual or organisational level, the collaboration will change shape. New representatives will bring new agendas and the purpose will (albeit sometimes not explicitly) be re-negotiated. Environmental factors may also alter the shape of the membership indirectly, through influencing the purpose. For example, changes of government policy may mean that the specific concerns of the collaboration cease to exist, or that other issues become more important for some members. This may in turn result in a re-negotiation of aims which may end in the withdrawal of some members and co-option of others.

This conceptual framework thus paints a picture of membership of collaboration as *ambiguous, complex* and *dynamic*. The practical implications are numerous. The lack of clarity of membership has an effect on *collaborative inertia* in particular resulting from lack of clarity about members' accountability. The members' *actions* pertaining to the collaboration need to be in line with the actions and goals of members in other contexts and *vice versa*. If members are not clear about the structure of the collaboration, they will also not be clear where the accountabilities lie. They will therefore not be certain about whether their interests are actually being represented. Individuals confused about their own representativeness, will also be confused about their accountability. A continual shifts of membership not only adds to this confusion but also leads to continual re-negotiations of the purpose of the collaboration and hence the introduction of new sets of accountabilities.

Because the situation is so complex and prone to conflict the collaboration often makes little progress and enters a state of *Collaborative Inertia*.

There are also practical implications for those convening or designing collaboration. There is a lot of emphasis on the identification of *stakeholders* in the collaboration literature, as discussed in section 2.2.2 above. Regardless of the many reasons why there ought to be a focus on membership (such as to include; the stakeholders who would otherwise sabotage the collaboration; the individuals who will be affected by the outcome of the collaboration; the organisations who have the resources or expertise the collaboration needs and so on), the conceptual framework illustrated above suggests that designing the membership structure most likely to achieve a specific purpose is unlikely to be a simple task.

The four conceptual frameworks summarised above (Sections 2.3.1 - 2.3.4) are obviously inter-connected. Goals and membership structures and the nature of language and meaning all have an impact on inertia. The conceptual framework on language and meaning captured the point that for collaborative core groups the 'world-taken-for-granted' which forms the basis for social interaction, joint problem definition and problem solving in single-organisation teams, is unlikely to exist. When individuals from multi-organisational contexts work together for the first time, a great deal of effort is required by all concerned to understand the collaboration as seen by all the participants. Differences in languages and meaning influence the difficulty of communicating generally and agreeing on purpose and aims specifically. As with goal negotiation, ambiguity and complexity in membership structures will compound the problem, making it unclear where effort towards attaining mutual understanding should be directed. Continually shifting membership means a continual need to learn about others' 'worlds-taken-for-granted', to reassess and re-negotiate others' agendas and to re-agree on the purpose of the collaboration and so on. It is not surprising therefore that the ability to move from naivety to maturity and acquire the skill to avoid or overcome inertia may require considerable stamina and commitment on behalf of those involved.

The specific ways in which the theoretical frameworks discussed in this section have influenced and been applied in the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is explored in Chapter 5 and 6.

## 2.4 Summary collaboration literature

This chapter has been concerned with providing an overview of the types of collaboration literature that may have an impact on the design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Section 1 provided a classification of collaboration literature based on; specific theoretical frameworks influencing that literature; contributions concerned with identifying conditions influencing or hindering successful collaboration; different types of inter-organisational collaborations; collaboration topic or subject specific contributions; case studies; and contributions based on literature reviews. For various reasons, the contributions discussed in Section 2.1 are likely to have an indirect rather than a direct impact on a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Section 2.2 provided a brief overview of the nature of theory that is likely to have a greater impact on such a transfer process. The literature discussed in Section 2.2 was more generally concerned with generic collaboration process issues regardless of collaboration subject and type and regardless of theoretical angle from which the research underpinning the contributions were approached. Finally, Section 2.3 provided a description of conceptual frameworks directly applied in the design and development of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

Most, though not all, of the literature discussed in this section has been aimed primarily at academics. In Chapter 3, a type of literature more directly aimed at practitioners is reviewed. The literature in Chapter 3 is quite different in nature to that discussed in this chapter because most of it was intended to provide direct pragmatic help to those involved in collaboration.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A REVIEW OF SUPPORT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO COLLABORATORS**

- 3.1 Support provided via written material
  - 3.1.1 Guidebooks on collaboration
  - 3.1.2 Reports on collaboration projects
  - 3.1.3 Books on collaboration
- 3.2 Support provided by facilitators
  - 3.2.1 Group process facilitators
  - 3.2.2 Partnership support workers
- 3.3 Some unique types of support
- 3.4 Summary of support currently available to collaborators

The purpose of this chapter is to review the type of support that is currently available to those involved in collaboration. The aim is to discuss the various types of support that are available rather than to provide a complete review of all support currently available to collaborators. The review was undertaken bearing the design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* in mind. This, as well as my own understanding of collaboration (see Chapter 2) has flavoured the review. Most types of support seem to fall into two general categories; that provided via written material and that provided via facilitation. Other, more unique types of support also exists, a couple of which are described towards the end of this chapter.

### 3.1 Support provided via written material

The written support material discussed in this chapter is limited to that which is collaboration specific and which appears to be aimed at collaborators rather than other academics such as the material discussed in Chapter 2. As such, guidebooks on effective group and team-work for example, are not included. There are different types of written support material and three possible categories are; guidebooks to collaboration; reports on collaborative projects and books or book chapters on collaboration process issues.

#### 3.1.1 Guidebooks on collaboration

When Wilcox (1994), set out to provide a quick overview of community participation in the delivery of services at the local level, and signpost readers to techniques that they could use, he concluded that there is a great deal of theory available but not many 'cookbooks'. Similarly, Marsh and Fisher (1992) pointed to the lack of material available to enable partnership practice in social services. However, there are some 'guidebooks to collaboration' for example, those obviously recognisable by their titles such as; 'A DIY Guide to Collaborative Action Planning' (Pickles, 1993), 'Making Partnerships Work' (Wilson and Charlton, 1997) and 'How to Create and Maintain Interorganizational Collaborations and Coalitions' (Rosenthal and Mizrahi, 1994). In addition, there are likely

to be reports and guide books commissioned for example, by local government authorities which are not widely published and hence accessible (see for example, *Communities Against Poverty Resource Pack*, 1994; Laughlin and Black, 1995).

Characteristically, guidebooks are concerned primarily with process issues such as, membership identification and recruitment, management and leadership, decision making structures, dealing with differences in power and so on, rather than subject specific issues which a collaboration may be concerned with, such as poverty, homelessness and crime. Some guidebooks are targeted at specific audiences such as, policy makers (Burner, 1991), local education agencies (Haglund and Larson, 1994), people who aim to start or manage participation processes, or who control funds or other resources (Wilcox, 1994) or community workers and activists (*Communities Against Poverty Resource Pack*, 1994; Laughlin and Black, 1995). Others have a wider audience aiming to target any individual involved with a collaboration as a volunteer, field worker, manager, elected official or policy maker or indeed any teacher or trainer working with the subject of collaboration (Melaville, Blank and Asayesh, 1993; Pickles, 1993; Rosenthal and Mizrahi, 1994; Wilson and Charlton, 1997).

Similarly, the authors of guidebooks aim to achieve different things. For example, Wilson's and Charlton's (1997) guide is descriptive and aims to illustrate through practical advice and examples, how managers in the public, private and voluntary sectors can work together to develop and maintain cross-sectoral partnerships. Burner (1991) aims to foster local collaboration by enabling policy makers to assess key issues in establishing inter-agency initiatives and Potapchuck and Polk (1994) seem to aim to stimulate discussion based on lessons learned from successful applications of collaborative approaches. The majority of guidebooks though are designed more specifically as resource or workbooks and aim to provide practical guidance, tools and training material to help individuals manage their collaborative activities (*Communities Against Poverty Resource Pack*, 1994; Haglund and Larson, 1994; Melaville *et al*, 1993; Pickles, 1993; Rosenthal and Mizrahi, 1994; Winer and Ray, 1994; Wilcox, 1994).

Many authors of guidebooks propose set stages, phases or routes which they suggest that the readers should follow (see also section 2.2.1). They thus imply that collaborations develop according to fixed stages. These stages may include; getting together; establishing common ground including building trust and ownership; developing a plan including defining and

agreeing on goals; taking action and implementing the plan and sometimes planning the termination of the collaboration (Haglund and Larson, 1994; Melaville, *et al*, 1993; Rosenthal and Mizrahi, 1994; Wilcox, 1994; Wilson and Charlton, 1997; Winer and Ray, 1994). However, the nature of collaboration is such that it usually involves the bringing together of a number of different individuals, groups, agencies and organisations often across different sectors, with highly different purposes, agendas, cultural backgrounds and so on. Therefore, whilst some collaborations may develop exactly according to the stages suggested above, many do not. Indeed many collaborations evolve over time with their membership, purpose and structure changing to the extent that even the starting point is no longer clear (Vangen and Huxham, 1998). Also, in addition to assuming that all collaborations go through similar stages, in a similar sequence with a clear starting point, this approach also assumes that the guides will be available and used by the collaborators at that starting point. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, collaborators are often so eager to start tackling the substantive tasks of the collaboration and are often at best only looking for help when they are experiencing difficulties at some point in the development of the collaboration. Thus, the fixed stages approach may be too rigid to allow for the varying needs of collaborations with different structures and purposes and at different stages of their evolution.

Some authors have explicitly addressed the need for a flexible rather than a rigid guide. Whilst still advocating a five-stage collaboration process, Melaville *et al.* (1993) for example, explicitly state that they aimed to write a 'guide' rather than a 'cookbook' because the experience of study group members and other collaborators who had participated in their research showed that following a rigid formula would not work. Also, the authors believed that there was not enough research available for a definite book. Wilcox's (1994) guidebook was also deliberately designed not to read as a step-by-step manual or 'cookbook' in order to account for the fact that every situation is different and that different methods suit different people. He advised the users not to read the guide from front to back but to dip in and out and find cross references (however, following up the cross-references can be a bit tedious in particular since the references are made to sections rather than page numbers). Similarly, Pickles (1993), designed his manual as a self-help guide and encouraged the users to treat it as a source book from which to take ideas, extract individual exercises and tailor their own programme to meet their own particular situations.

The guidebooks by Melaville et al. (1993), Pickles (1993) and Wilcox (1994) are examples of good attempts at providing flexible guidance to people involved in collaboration. However, the inevitable constraints of the linear format nevertheless limits the possibilities of what may be conveyed via written text. One problem with linear text relates to the need to simplify in order to aid understanding and make the guidebooks readable and attractive enough to encourage the potential audience to use it. Indeed, most of the guidebooks reviewed here are attractive in terms of layout, design and use of colour. They are produced in an A4 format and some are ring bound to aid multiplication of selected material to suit individual situations (for example, Haglund and Larson, 1994; Communities Against Poverty Resource Pack, 1994). In general, however, the need to simplify coupled with the limited flexibility of written text in terms of structure often results in the provision of highly prescriptive advice without the provision of insight into why it might be worth following particular advice as well as how to do so. For example, although Wilcox (1994) provides sensible lists recommending 'things to do when' and lists recommending 'how to do what', the links between the two are not clear and hence the bridge between theoretical insight and practice is not obvious. Similarly, it is interesting to note that Rosenthal and Mizrahi (1994) not only explicitly state that their workbook was written as a prescription for effective coalition building, including many specific suggestions, but also confidently state that if the reader applies the recommendations that appear in each chapter, their collaboration is more likely to succeed. These are highly ambitious aims considering the complexity of collaboration and their high rate of failure as discussed in Chapter 2.

The provision of highly simplistic prescriptive advice without adequate back-up can indeed be problematic. For example, it is commonly suggested that collaborators must *build trust* (Melaville et al., 1993; Pickles, 1993; Wilson and Charlton, 1997; Winer and Ray, 1994). That trust is extremely important to the success of a collaboration is evident not least from the amount of research devoted to this topic over recent years (see Chapter 2). In their collaboration guidebook, Winer and Ray (1994) suggest that the disclosure of individual self-interest is key to building initial trust between members and suggest steps the collaboration has to take in order to enhance trust between members. In doing so they bring attention to the importance and difficulty of building and enhancing trust. If the collaborators were willing to set aside a significant amount of time to develop the process of collaboration, then these steps could possibly help them develop trust. It is far more common however that beyond the simplistic statement that it is important to build trust, little help is given. The prescriptive advice seem to be limited to suggesting that collaborators

must take time to understand each others' systems and differences (without acknowledging that the difference can be difficult to live with once unearthed) (Melaville et al., 1993), meet people informally, be open and honest and deal with any suspicions from the past (Wilcox, 1994). The literature suggests that the concept of trust is quite complex and that for example, there are different definitions of trust, different views of its role in a collaboration and how it may be developed and maintained (see Chapter 2). When individuals from organisations between which a great deal of mistrust has developed for example, are required to work together, building trust is far from easy (Vangen, 1992). Prescriptive recommendations which do not convey the difficulty of building trust may possibly mislead those practically involved in collaboration and hence cause a great deal of frustration and possible harm to the success of a collaboration. Thus, it would seem that some transfer of insight about the concept and nature of trust could be useful beyond the mere prescriptive advice.

Deciding on aims and objectives for the collaboration is another example of a topic where the actual complexity (as discussed in Chapter 2) is generally not conveyed. Statements such as; the collaboration must 'establish agreed upon goals' (Haglund and Larson, 1994, p. 12); the individuals must 'disclose self-interest' (Winer and Ray, 1994); 'to be effective, partners must work together to achieve a commonly agreed upon set of goals and objectives ...' and 'outline the specific targets and goals of the partnership' (Wilson and Charlton, 1997, p. 1 and p. 2) are very common. Although some guidebooks devote a significant amount of discussion to goals (for example, Rosenthal and Mizrahi, 1994) and others suggest that the collaboration may wish to engage a third-party facilitator in that process and hence acknowledge that agreeing on goals can be difficult (Melaville et al., 1993), the complexity of the issue and reasons why it is difficult is generally not explored nor conveyed. It follows that little pragmatic help on the management of the issue is given. Practical guidance seems to be limited to suggesting that aims and objectives may be clarified by asking each group member to write an aims statement followed by simply discussing differences and agreeing a joint statement (e.g. Wilcox, 1994, p. 29). Alternatively, the development of a shared vision is seen simply as a process that requires time and a commitment to be open, from all partners (e.g. Wilson and Charlton, 1997, p. 31). Thus, the message seems to be that it is fairly easy to agree on a vision provided that enough time and energy (often a significant amount) is devoted to it (Melaville et. al, 1993). Simple advice of this type given without reference to how difficult agreeing on aims and objectives will be in a partnership where partners come together with a great number of

different interests (Vangen, Huxham and Eden, 1994) can actually cause a great deal of frustration if adequate support is not given. For example, the collaborators may not be aware of the dangers of unearthing differences in the process of agreeing aims and objectives.

Decisions pertaining to the membership of the collaboration, that is, who should be involved, is yet another topic whereby the constraints of the linear format seem inadequate for conveying the genuine complexity of the issue whilst at the same time provide useful help or guidance to the audience. In their guidebook, Rosenthal and Mizrahi (1994) devote a chapter to the discussion of membership recruitment and cultivation in which they make numerous cross references to other chapters, exercises and appendices. Together, the chapter and the cross references certainly begin to convey the complexity of membership. For example, a reference is made to a section which outlines the many forms in which differences between members manifest themselves along with suggestions of how to manage these tensions. The authors also point out that prospective members should help develop the statement of purpose and those joining later should help review it, thus alluding to the dynamics of purpose and membership (Vangen and Huxham, 1998). However, a full comprehension of the issue certainly depends on the reader's ability to infer from the chapter and its many cross references. The rigid structure of written text makes gaining this appreciation difficult. Also, even with a full appreciation of the complexity of this issue, it is certainly not easy to conclude how to act in practice. Other authors attempt to give practical guidance by suggesting criteria for choosing potential members and by suggesting steps for bringing the right people together (Melaville et. al, 1993, Winer and Ray, 1994). Winer and Ray, 1994 also begin to address the complexity of membership by pointing to the fact that members chosen initially will later select strategies and control resources and that therefore there might be a temptation not to invite potential members who are key to the subject of the collaboration but who may oppose the opinions of the initiator. Others refer to stakeholders and suggest that stakeholder analysis is used to guide decision of who to involve (e.g. Wilcox, 1994).

The membership issue is however, more commonly treated simplistically and as if it were merely a matter of deciding who should be involved and reaching out to them (Haglund and Larson, 1994; Wilson and Charlton, 1997). Simplistic statements such as 'continuously review and widen membership' (Wilcox, 1994, p. 18) and 'try to get as many different agencies present as possible' (Pickles, 1993, p. 8) can be frustrating because increases in

diversity and total membership also increase the potential for difficulties due to individual and organisational differences in cultures, backgrounds, aims, languages and so on. Similarly, statements such as 'should involve at least one from each organisation ..... who should speak on behalf of their agency ... and be able to commit staff and resources' ... (Pickles, 1993, p. 6) can be equally frustrating because they do not reflect reality. For example, it can be very difficult to get all the relevant organisations to commit anyone to the collaboration let alone someone with this level of authority. Also, there is an issue of how to manage the situation if someone from a key organisation but without the required level of authority attended the collaboration.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the complexity of collaboration can make it very difficult to succeed in collaboration. The guidebooks discussed above are designed to provide practical guidance, tools and training material to help individuals manage their collaborative activities. However, they are severely constrained by the linear format and may seem inadequate for conveying the genuine complexity of collaboration whilst at the same time providing useful help or guidance to their audience.

### **3.1.2 Reports on collaboration projects**

Another type of written support material is provided via reports on collaborative projects. In particular, the Rowntree Foundation seems to have funded much research generating these types of reports. The audiences and aims of such reports vary greatly. For example, Bemrose and MacKeith (1996) reported on a study aimed at identifying sources of tension in the relationship between local authorities and local voluntary organisations and at describing good practice for local authorities in working with the voluntary sector. Their report, 'Partnerships for Progress' is targeted at managers in both statutory and voluntary organisations and anyone wanting to develop good practice in the relationships between the two sectors. Fogarty and Legard (1993) addressed working relationships across the voluntary and private sectors and aimed their report both at voluntary groups, to help them better understand the variety of ways in which industry can provide support and at corporate companies by showing how the community support strategy of IBM may be applicable to others. Goss's and Kent's (1995) report, 'Health and housing: working together?' is aimed at regional officers, health authorities, local authorities, housing departments and housing associations and aims to review the extent to which links between agencies have been



established, particularly between health authorities and housing departments, and the barriers and problems these organisations have faced. As a final example, Hastings, McArthur and McGregor (1996), targeted policy makers, practitioners, community development workers, researchers, voluntary organisations and community groups with their report on good practice in establishing and operating community partnerships.

In general, reports on collaborative projects are more subject specific compared to that of guidebooks which, as discussed above, are concerned with generic issues pertaining to collaborative processes *per se*. Typical subjects addressed are joint working between statutory organisations, (Goss and Kent, 1995; March and Fisher, 1992; Newton and Marsh, 1993; Travers, Biggs and Jones, 1995), relationships between local authorities and local voluntary organisations (Bemrose and MacKeith, 1996), private and voluntary sectors partnerships (Fogarty and Legard, 1993) and community involvement in partnership processes (Hasting et al, 1996; Taylor, 1995).

The material in this category is further characterised by being rather descriptive. For example, March and Fisher (1992) described why a partnership involving the user in social services is important and the need for a service model that responds not only to the user's demands but also to the workers' needs for a 'practice technology which allows them to pursue their aims effectively. Fogarty and Legard (1993) described IBM's model to community investment for example in terms of how new projects are initiated and how they are managed. Hastings et al. (1996), presented the findings of a study of community participation in estate regeneration and described for example, different arrangements for drawing members from the local community. As a final example, Goss and Kent (1995) described the current state of affairs as regards health and housing inter-agency working and attempted to show the different functions that can be carried out across organisational boundaries.

The reports are obviously aimed to inform the reader about some aspects of collaborative activities. Some also aim to offer specific guidance with the management of collaborative activities. For example, Bemrose and MacKeith (1996) aspired to present their findings in the form of clear and practical guidelines. Their guidelines are specifically related to issues in the relationship between voluntary and statutory organisations such as practical problems of writing contracts, explaining services, evaluating quality of services contracted out and so on. Hastings et al. (1996) aimed to help by for example, suggesting steps that community

representatives can take to improve accountability and dialogue and Fogarty and Legard (1993) provided lessons on how to create a 'climate of collaboration' for voluntary organisations as well as corporate companies. Thus, the help provided is typically more subject specific compared to that of the guidebooks discussed above. Because the books are generally not designed as guides or workbooks, advice on how to act typically come without any guidance on how to do so. For example; '... the first step is to develop clarity about shared goals and desired outcomes between organisations' or 'flexible an imaginative use of resources is needed on the part of all parties involved' (Goss and Kent, 1995, p. 25). However, advice of this simplistic nature can, as discussed above, cause a great deal of frustration and possible harm because they do not convey the complexity of collaboration.

Reports on collaborative projects can be successful in informing the reader about a range of subject specific aspects of collaborative activities. However, if their authors were aiming to provide practical help beyond information then as with the guidebooks discussed above, their success may be limited. The limited success relate to the constraints of written text which do not readily allow the right balance between conveying the complexity of collaboration and simplifying to provide practical help.

### **3.1.3 Books on collaboration**

There are also books devoted entirely to the subject of collaboration. This discussion on written support material is thus concluded by a brief review of a few good examples of such books. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review all the books that are available. The aim here is to describe the type of books that are available rather than provide a full review.

The book, 'Creating Collaborative Advantage' edited by Huxham (1996a) was mentioned in Chapter 2. This is an highly informative book targeted at students and professionals in strategic management, public sector management, management science and operational research and general management. The general aim of the book is to contribute to a practical understanding of how organisations may collaborate effectively. 'Collaborating' (Gray, 1989) is another well known book in this category. A brief review of this book was given in Chapter 2. Gray targeted managers, public officials, scientists, lawyers, planners, dispute resolution practitioners, and other professionals and citizens whom may be potential partners in collaboration. Her aim was to provide, specific insight into how collaborations

are conducted and critical evidence from practice about the realities of collaborating. A third example, 'Collaborative Leadership' (Chrislip and Larson, 1994) was targeted at citizens and civic leaders with the aim to help them address public concerns and provide them with knowledge about how to initiate, facilitate and sustain collaboration in the public arena. The book was also aimed at students and practitioners trying to understand the complexity of, and the leadership practices that support, collaboration. Finally, and of a different nature, Montanheiro, Rebelo, Owen and Rebelo's (1996) book on Public and Private Sector Partnerships is a selection of academic papers described by the editors as 'a constructive set of articles to further the knowledge of business related partnerships'. The book is targeted at academics and students as well as non-academics who perceive a need to familiarise themselves with or learn more about collaborative working.

*Because they are devoted entirely to the subject of collaboration these books can offer a great level of detail and variety of information and support. The specific way in which they address the subject of collaboration is obviously different but they do have some general characteristics. Like the guidebooks to collaboration, these books are typically concerned with generic process issues rather than being generally subject specific. They also typically promote collaborative working. For example, Huxham (1996a) argues generally that inter-organisational collaboration offers the only way by which serious social problems can be tackled. Gray (1989) explains why collaboration is important and describes how collaboration can be used in order to help organisations join forces, pool information, and reach mutually-satisfying long term agreements. Similarly, Chrislip and Larson (1994) describe the increased emphasis on collaboration as a means of creating useful change in communities.*

The general aim of all these books is to offer help, in one way or another, with the management of collaborative activities. The specific ways in which help is offered varies. The book, 'Creating Collaborative Advantage' draws heavily on the authors' experience of work with active collaborative groups either as researchers, participants or facilitators. The book offers prescriptive theory about the nature of collaboration, the process of collaborating and theory about facilitator-led processes to assist those involved in collaborations (Huxham, 1996a, p. 17). Gray (1989) advocates a process oriented approach (problem setting, direction setting and implementation) to collaboration and interrelates conflict resolution and advancement of shared vision. She outlines key steps for undertaking successful collaborative effort and illustrates how these steps have been put into

action in a variety of settings to arrive at lasting solutions. By extensive use of case studies, she aims to demonstrate how collaboration can be successfully applied to solve problems of wide ranging scope and complexity. 'Collaborative Leadership' was designed to help citizens and civic leaders bring together diverse community members for community development (Chrislip and Larson, 1994). Based on a large number of case studies, the authors suggest how to design, initiate, and sustain a constructive, collaborative process and emphasise specific leadership strategies and activities which in their view are crucial to effective collaboration. Montanheiro et al's (1996) selection of papers vary so much in nature, style and indeed language, that it is impossible to suggest any general type of help or insight offered to the reader.

The above examples of books on collaboration are primarily concerned with collaboration across the public, community and occasionally the private sectors. However, there are also books which specifically address corporate, profit driven collaborations (for example, Bleeke and Ernst, 1993; Lewis, 1990; Shaughnessy, 1994). Targeted at managers of corporate businesses they aim to provide information and guidance on how to manage national and international inter-organisational relationships as strategic alliances and joint-ventures. The authors of these books promote alliances and joint-ventures attributing the significant changes in the global economy to the increased level of short and long term collaborative interaction with other firms including those which span national boundaries. Typically, using case study type examples, they describe issues such as how to; form successful alliances, work with other cultures, search for and select partners, assess and manage risk, protect core businesses, build trusting relationships with alliance partners, develop mutual understandings and make joint decisions.

The types of books on collaboration discussed above can provide the reader with a great deal of insight on collaboration process issues. These books differ in character from that of the guidebooks in that their design is generally not one that provide specific guidance or direct practical help beyond general information about collaboration processes. However, some include guidance on how to go about certain aspects of collaboration. For example, Gray (1989) explains how to go about problem and agenda setting including the importance of a mediator's role and Chrislip and Larson (1994), provide guidance on how to identify stakeholders. If the authors of books on collaboration, in the same vein as those of reports on collaboration, were aiming to provide practical guidance then their success would most likely be constrained by the general inflexibility of written text as discussed above.

### **3.2 Support provided by facilitators**

An alternative and more flexible form of support, compared to that provided via written material, may be provided by facilitators. Indeed authors of guidebooks themselves recommend the use of facilitators. Pickles (1993, p. 13), for example, suggests that if collaborators run into difficulties (the discussion of complexity and likelihood of failure in Chapter 1 suggests that they often do), if there are tensions between organisations and individuals, or if hidden agendas are likely to exist, then a neutral facilitator should be used. Melville et al. (1993, p. 43) also suggest that the collaboration may wish to engage a neutral facilitator in the process of defining shared vision and goals. Many of the other guidebooks discussed above also appear to assume the presence of a facilitator though it is often not explicitly stated. Similarly, Gray (1989) advocates the use of a mediator, and a significant amount of Huxham's (1996a) book is devoted to methods and techniques applied by facilitators in supporting collaborative groups. The general advice thus seems to be for collaborations to seek at least temporary help from external facilitators. Schuman (1996, however, takes this advice further suggesting that as long as there are power differences, distrust and so on, a collaborative group cannot perform the facilitative role for itself, even if it has developed substantial process expertise. He argues that the notion that collaboratives should or can become self-facilitating is not necessarily true nor a useful goal for the collaboration.

The extent to which a collaborative group may be advised to use an external facilitator is thus not clear. Moreover, the option of seeking help from an external facilitator is not open to all collaboratives mainly due to financial constraints and the availability of facilitators. However, there are facilitators who work with collaborative groups and the remainder of this section discusses briefly, the type of facilitator led support that may be on offer.

#### **3.2.1 Group process facilitators**

Broadly speaking, *group process facilitators'* main expertise lies in substantial knowledge and experience of group decision support processes, methods and techniques (Ackermann, 1996; Eden, 1990; Eden and Radford, 1990; Friend, 1989; Hickling, 1989; Huxham, 1996c). Most group process facilitators do not generally consider themselves experts on collaboration nor the subject that the collaboration aims to address, though they may have

considerable knowledge about both. However, there are also a few group process facilitators who in addition to their groups process facilitation skills may be considered experts on collaboration process issues (for example, Himmelman, 1996; Huxham, 1996a; Winer and Ray, 1994). They too will generally not be experts on the subject addressed by the collaboration but may have a particular interest in the facilitation of collaborations. Finally, a third group of facilitators are Partnership Support Workers (Frew, 1997; Johnson, 1997a; Huxham and Vangen, 1996b). They may have experience in using facilitation techniques and of collaborative working but are generally not experts in either field. Their main expertise is rather related to the subject of the collaboration such as poverty, youth crime or substance abuse. Because these facilitators have different backgrounds and expertise, they will offer different types of support to collaborators.

In general, facilitators aim to help collaborators manage their collaboration processes. Their intervention processes for helping collaborators and their interpretations of the word 'process' however, may differ greatly (Huxham, 1996c; Huxham and Cropper, 1994; Schuman, 1996). The intention here is not to go into this subject in any detail, but rather to illustrate how it determines the type of support given to any collaborative group.

'Social process' is defined by Schuman (1996) as relating to interpersonal interaction, group dynamics, communication, body language and so on. He argues that the importance of social process is increasingly recognised as essential to solving complex problems. The implication is that facilitators need to be concerned about the 'social process' because the issues tackled by collaborations are typically complex. If facilitators adopt Huxham's and Cropper's (1994) notion of *the management of process*, then they will be concerned with the management of the process between themselves and the core group (that is, the individuals concerned with managing the collaboration) and the interaction between the members of the core group.

Schuman contrasts 'social processes' to 'cognitive processes' (Eden and Radford, 1990). Facilitators concerned with cognition aim to capture, structure and feed back information, values, beliefs and ideas in a way which will represent the cognitive perceptions of their clients (Eden, 1989). This is thus central to the way in which they manage the content of the collaboration (Huxham, 1996c; Huxham and Cropper, 1994). In other words, *content* may refer to the subject specific issues addressed by the collaboration. The management of content refers to the way in which the facilitators manage the data about content for example

in terms of analysis and modelling. Facilitators concerned with cognition will interpret or influence the content of the collaborative process, but they will aim not to contribute to it based on their substantive expertise, but rather based on their *analytical expertise* (Schuman, 1996).

Substantive expertise may refer to the facilitators' understanding of collaboration processes (Huxham, 1996c; Huxham and Cropper, 1994). Thus, the 'substantive content' of the facilitation may deliberately be collaboration (as opposed to for example, strategy development). Thus, facilitators may aim to manage content in such a way that their own understanding of collaboration will impact on the process of collaboration that takes place between the collaborators. It will be argued below that Partnership Support Workers, may be more likely to influence the content of a collaboration based on their understanding of the content and hence perceptions of the subject of the collaboration. Thus, whereas group process facilitators may strive to intervene mainly in process rather than in the content, Partnership Support Workers may be more inclined to intervene in content. Group process facilitators whose' expertise is founded in both group decision support and collaboration processes may explicitly use both these types of expertise in their intervention process. They too will strive not to influence the collaboration based on their understanding of the content. It has been argued however, that all facilitators will inevitably influence all aspects (process, substance and content) but to varying degree (Huxham and Cropper, 1994).

Huxham (1996c, p. 147) suggests an intervention process which requires this combination of group decision support expertise and collaboration expertise. She outlines a facilitative process which both encourages collaborators to consider the process of collaboration and which focuses attention on exploring key areas of collaborative tensions. She emphasises that focus on process should be done gently to ensure that collaborators perceive it to be relevant and gain ownership of it. The facilitative approach she suggests would acknowledge and use participants' commitment to the subject of collaboration because it is likely to be easier to engage them in a conversation about the subject of collaboration than about the process. However, she argues further that it is important to include parallel and interacting processes for consideration of issues over which collaboration takes place and for consideration of the nature of the collaborative process themselves. The overall process should be led by consideration of the substantive issues rather than of the collaboration process. The initial emphasis, she argues, should be on the issue with the aim to allow concerns about collaboration to fall out of discussion about the issue.

### **3.2.2 Partnership support workers**

A different type of support may be provided by Partnership Support Workers (also referred to as co-ordinators of multi-agency projects). Partnership Support Workers posts may typically have been created to develop strategies and integrate services in the statutory and voluntary sectors (Johnson, 1997a; Frew, 1997). The posts may typically be part of demonstration projects and often undertaken as action research projects by statutory or voluntary organisations (Frew, 1997; Johnson, 1997a; Huxham and Vangen, 1997). The post holders typically come from a social science background and have experience in community development, youth work, poverty alleviation, crime and drugs prevention and so on. The roles played by Partnership Support Workers are typically twofold comprising of a service delivery role as well as developing and co-ordinating a collaborative process between agencies concerned with the issues addressed through the delivery of the service. For example, the co-ordinator of a drugs prevention project in Renfrew Town (Frew, 1997) frequently found herself being asked to run youth activities as part of a drugs prevention programme although the role she was employed to fulfil was to co-ordinate the activities between service delivering agencies rather than being involved in service delivery herself. Similarly, the Partnership Support Workers of a young offenders project in London (Johnson, 1997c) were employed to encourage and co-ordinate activities between agencies dealing with young offenders whilst at the same time having a 'caseload' themselves of a few young offenders.

The exact nature of facilitation provided by Partnership Support Workers is not clear. However, it seems to entail initiating, organising and chairing meetings as well as running exercises aimed at addressing process issues. For example, the Partnership Support Workers of the young offenders project developed a toolkit which they have used in their endeavours to develop multi-agency activities (Johnson, 1997b). The toolkit is heavily substance driven in that a case study about a young boy experiencing difficulties is presented. This is followed by an exercise asking questions about which agencies could provide the services required, what issues would be important to the agencies, what would be common or uncommon in their agendas and so on. The toolkit aims to encourage attention to process in the sense that it encourages the participant to think about how the working arrangement between possible agencies may be shaped. Thus, in comparison to the



Group Decision Support example above, the support offered by the Partnership Support Workers seem to be based more heavily on their substantive expertise rather than group processes collaboration.

### **3.3 Some unique types of support**

In addition to the general written material and that provided by facilitators, some unique forms of support not necessarily available to a wider audience also exist. A couple of examples are given below.

Firstly, the Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology (CEST) is an organisation that tries to establish collaboration across industry, academia and government. It is unique in the sense that its purpose is to identify areas where others can collaborate. CEST staff will endeavour to identify collaborative opportunities upon which they will get in touch with possible collaborators and invite them to meet with one another to talk about the issue over which a collaboration may take place. Typically, the proposed collaboration may be about something that an organisation may be interested in but not part of its core business. If the potential collaborators agree to an initial meeting then CEST staff will follow this up by encouraging and facilitating initial stages of a collaboration among the relevant parties. Typically, a potential collaboration is facilitated by CEST staff until it gets established and starts to become successful. The nature of facilitation provided by CEST is not clear but it entails initiating and facilitating meetings and providing substantive information on the subject of the proposed collaboration. The support offered by CEST is obviously not readily available to any one collaboration but it is interesting to note that an organisation exists that purports to specialise in finding collaborative opportunities, initiating and facilitating collaboration among others.

The Poverty Alliance in Glasgow is another example of an organisation with a remit to promote and facilitate collaboration among others. The Poverty Alliance offers a range of different types of support to communities, agencies and organisations concerned with tackling poverty in the West of Scotland. More detail about the Poverty Alliance is given in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.3.1) as the majority of the research underpinning this thesis has been undertaken in participation with the director and staff of the Poverty Alliance.

Another unique type of support is a special three day long training event developed and run by group process facilitators at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Vansina, Leuven and Schruijer (1996) developed the training event as a *simulation workshop* for participants to learn about collaboration. The simulation is based on a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the island Kotlin, near St. Peterburgh, Finland. The workshop participants are introduced to the island and its emerging problems created by the Government's dramatic reduction of the Navy budget which may result in massive redundancies through the closure of the Island's main employer. The simulation thus comprises a range of potential collaborative parties (such as the public authorities, a shipyard, a Yacht Club and a bank) all having their own interests and resources and confronted with a real emerging issue to be dealt with in one way or another. The parties are described during the introduction to the event and the workshop participants (international consultants, trainers and psychotherapists) are asked to anonymously choose a party based on their own individual preferences. The participants task is to deal with the economic deterioration of the island. They all have their 'own' interest to protect and can either compete, form partnerships or collaborate to make the best of an emerging issue. No particular roles are prescribed to give the participants the opportunity to participate as 'themselves' and make use of their own experiences. Workshop participants can meet one another at their choosing but the formal meeting of representatives is restricted to the time the 'town hall' is made available. Only one member of each party can get to the discussion table at any one time but the others can listen and pass on written notes to their representative.

The aims of the training event are for participants to learn how to cope with the role of a convenor, how to develop the domain of a collaboration and how to manage the interests and contributions of the different parties. From observing numerous such simulations, the authors conclude that when people participate in a collaboration without training or pre-established procedures, the uncertainty of the task call for behavioural alternatives which they do not master. It is difficult to ascertain what exactly the participants take away from these events. They are certainly given the opportunity to simulate a collaborative process. They typically seem to be provided the opportunity to experience inability to arrive at a shared problem definition and develop common ground (Vangen et al, 1994). They thus have to practice trade-offs between securing their own party's interest and participating in a multi-party collaboration. Provided that the participants are able to reflect and conceptualise in terms of the collaborative process, it is possible that this type of training events can support them in their real life collaborative undertakings.

The above examples illustrate the wide variety and creativity with which collaborative support may be offered. However, such rather unique types of support are not generally and readily available either because it is simply not on offer to all potential collaborators or because collaborators are prohibited by financial constraints.

### **3.4 Summary of support currently available to collaborators**

The range of support currently available to collaborators spans the spectrum of ‘do-it-yourself’ guidebooks, implying that collaboratives can be self-facilitative, to facilitation led intervention processes, arguing that collaboratives need the presence of an external facilitator. This range of support was seen in terms of two general categories, that provided via written material and that provided via facilitation. In addition, a couple of examples of more unique types of support were also given.

Three different types of written support material; guidebooks to collaboration; reports on collaborative projects; and books on collaboration were discussed. Guidebooks to collaboration are aimed at different audiences and have slightly different aims. However, the majority are designed specifically as resource or workbooks and aim to provide practical guidance, tools and training material to help individuals manage their collaborative processes. The guidebooks are thus generally concerned with generic collaboration process issues. Reports on collaborative projects are more subject specific and generally also more descriptive than the guidebooks. Most reports seem to offer indirect help with the management of collaborative activities though some also aim to offer specific guidance. The books on collaboration differ in character from that of the guidebooks in that their design is generally not one that aim to provide specific guidance or direct practical help beyond general detailed information about collaboration processes. Some do however, include guidance on how to go about certain aspects of collaboration.

Collectively, the written support material provides both a broad and deep understanding about collaboration and has the potential to provide valuable guidance to collaborators. However, the inevitable limitations of linear text may render written material inadequate for conveying the genuine complexity of collaboration whilst at the same time provide useful help or guidance to their audience. In particular, the ‘fixed stages approach’ to collaboration promoted by many authors of guidebooks may be too rigid to allow for the varying needs of

collaborations with different structures and purposes and at different stages of their evolution. Despite good attempts by some authors to design guidebooks with flexible rather than rigid structures, the constraints of the linear format limits the possibilities of written material. One particular problem relates to the need to simplify in order to aid understanding and encourage use by the potential audience. This need to simplify coupled with the limited flexibility of written text in terms of structure seem often to result in the provision of highly prescriptive advice without the provision of insight into why it might be worth following a particular advice as well as how to do so. The provision of highly prescriptive advice without adequate back-up can cause a great deal of frustration and possible harm to the success of a collaboration because the genuine complexity of for example, managing membership issues, conflicting aims and objectives and building trust is not conveyed. Thus, whilst most of the guidebooks have been designed to be used directly by collaborators to provide them with pragmatic help and guidance, they do not generally capture and convey the complexity of collaboration. The reports and books on collaboration have generally not been designed to be used directly as practical guides. They are therefore not written in a style which immediately translates into practical actions. In addition, the subject specific reports may not necessarily be seen as of immediate relevance to those addressing other subjects.

The entire package of support provided by trained facilitators is far more flexible than any form of written text can ever be. It may be argued therefore, that facilitators are better able to provide the support required to manage the complexity of collaboration compared to that provided via written text alone.

Facilitators specialise in different areas and will offer different types of support based on their backgrounds and expertise. Group process facilitators whose main expertise lie in group decision support (GDS) may aim to manage their intervention processes in such a way that their own substantive expertise about collaboration processes and the subject addressed by a collaboration does not influence the collaborators actions. Group process facilitators whose expertise is founded in both group decision support and collaboration processes may explicitly use both these types of expertise in their intervention process. They too will strive not to influence the collaboration based on their substantive expertise. An intervention process which requires this combination of group decision support expertise and collaboration expertise was described (Huxham, 1996c).

A different type of support may be provided by Partnership Support Workers of multi-agency projects. Partnership Support Workers typically come from a social science background with experience in community development, youth work, poverty alleviation, crime and drugs prevention and so on. Their roles are typically two fold comprising a service delivery role as well as developing and co-ordinating a collaborative process between the service delivering agencies. The exact nature of facilitation provided by Partnership Support Workers is not clear but is likely to involve initiating and facilitating meetings. Partnership Support Workers may generally have considerable expertise about the content of the collaboration and may explicitly use it in their co-ordinating activities. Thus, in comparison to group process facilitators, the support offered by Partnership Support Workers seem to be based more heavily on their substantive expertise rather than group decision support processes.

An example of an organisation specialising in identifying, initiating and facilitating collaboration and an example of a rather unique simulation training workshop were given to illustrate the variety, creativity and uniqueness with which support may be offered to collaborators.

Not all these types of support are readily available to any collaboration needing help and guidance. The more unique types of support are obviously not on general offer. Also, at least in the UK, collaboratives cannot rely on having a facilitator readily available both in terms of financial constraints and because the total number of facilitators available may not be sufficient.

In designing a process for Transferring Insight on Collaboration to Practice, the challenge was to overcome the limitations of the existing support material as discussed in this chapter. The methodological design of the research addressing that challenge is the topic of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4                    METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1     **Research aims and underlying epistemology**
  - 4.1.1   **The role of the substantive theory on collaboration**
  - 4.1.2   **The expected output of the research**
  - 4.1.3   **The research design**
    - 4.1.3.1 **The Poverty Alliance introduced**
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  - 4.4.3   **Some specific difficulties relating to the chosen methodologies**
  
- 4.5     **The structure of the research output**

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodological framework within which this research was undertaken. The methodological underpinnings of the research will be explained and arguments supporting choices made regarding the methodological framework and specific research support methods will be made. The aim is to demonstrate the quality and strength of the research as a basis upon which the validity of this research is claimed.

### 4.1 Research aims and underlying epistemology

The general purpose and aims of the research which is the subject of this thesis were outlined in Chapter 1. Briefly, the idea to conduct the project arose out of the belief that theory of collaboration could be of benefit to those trying to manage the complexity of collaborative activities in practice. The intention therefore was to explore a possible design and development of an approach or a process for transferring collaboration insight to practice. The exact components of such a process and what possible shape or form it would take was not clear at the outset. The nature of the planned research was therefore highly exploratory and heavily concerned with *bridging theory and practice*. The intention was to gain an *in-depth understanding* of, including reasons for and consequences of, *the means* by which collaboration theory could be transferred to practice. For these reasons, the phenomenological and interpretative paradigms (Kuhn, 1970) provided the methodological underpinnings of the research (see for example, Cassell and Symon, 1994; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991; Gummesson, 1991; Leiter, 1980).

The phenomenological methodology would facilitate the need to discover how theory on collaboration could be transferred to collaborators (that is, those undertaking collaborative activities in practice) through gaining an understanding of all aspects of such a process as perceived by collaborators (Gummesson, 1991). The intention was to design the research process in such a way that ultimately a holistic view of a transfer process, as it affects collaborators carrying out their 'every-day' collaborative activities, could be gained (Cassell and Symon, 1994, Hughes, 1990, Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The need to gain a holistic view also relates to the complexity of collaboration in general and the fact that many individuals and organisations with different views, cultures and backgrounds influence collaboration in practice (See Chapters 1 and 2).

#### **4.1.1 The role of the substantive theory on collaboration**

The design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* would obviously be heavily influenced by the substantive theory on collaboration (see Chapters 1 and 2). Indeed the entire research project was based on a thorough understanding of the nature of collaboration. As explained in Chapter 2, I had gained that understanding primarily through working on a three year long research project (from June 1993 onwards) aimed at investigating 'The Nature of Inter-Organisational Collaboration across Community and Public Sector Organisations' (Huxham, Eden and Vangen, 1997). Some of the data gathered as part of that project was also developed further specifically for the research reported on in this thesis. In particular, the development of the *Collaboration Themes*, as outlined in Chapter 5, makes use of data gathered for the above mentioned research project.

#### **4.1.2 The expected output of the research**

The contribution to knowledge aimed for at the outset of the research project was process theory about the transfer of collaboration insight to practice. To that end, 10 *Design Principles* have been developed. These *Design Principles* will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Two additional types of outputs were expected as a result of developing the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. It was anticipated that the research would result in specific tools or methods which would facilitate the transfer of theory, as part of the process. A total of 6 such *Transfer Means* were developed and explored. These *Transfer Means* are discussed in Chapter 6. It was also expected that the research would contribute to the advancement of the substantive theory on collaboration. Though the value of this potential advancement of the theory was recognised, the substantive theory itself is only reported on in this thesis in as far as it relates directly to the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* (see for example discussion on *Collaboration Themes* in Chapter 5). However, some of the substantive theory on collaboration which emerged out of this research process has contributed to my general interest in the development of that theory and has been reported elsewhere (see for example, Huxham and Vangen, 1996a and Vangen and Huxham, 1998a).



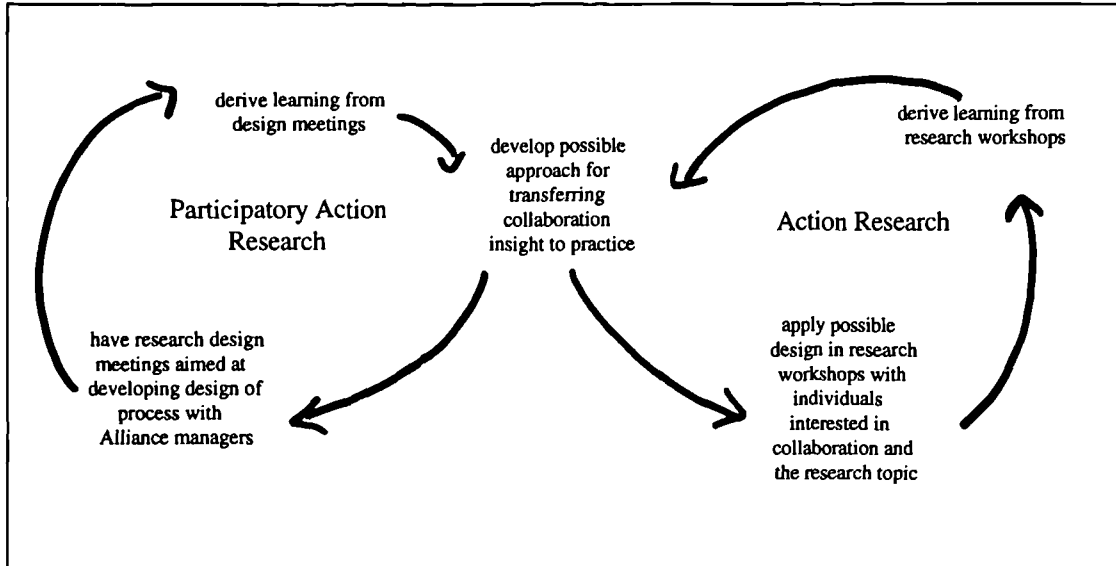
As discussed below, the research was undertaken within the Participatory Action Research and Action Research frameworks. In addition to the above mentioned contributions to knowledge, this research was also aimed at producing benefits for the Poverty Alliance in particular as well as, participants of the research workshops.

#### **4.1.3 The research design**

In designing the research process, a number of concerns such as the exploratory nature of the project, the methodological validity of the research, the general complexity of collaboration as a subject and the specific aim of bridging theory and practice had to be considered. The exploratory nature of the project dictated a developmental research design. As the output aimed for was process theory about the transfer of collaboration insight to practice, a key concern was to design a research process that would facilitate a link between theory and practice. This aim was thus in tune with Whyte (1991, p. 8) who states that 'it is important, both for the advancement of science and for the improvement of human welfare, to devise strategies in which research and action are closely linked'. Among the many varieties of phenomenological research, Participatory Action Research and Action Research, or 'New Paradigm' research as termed by Reason and Rowan, (1981) establish the greatest collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Reason, 1988, Whyte, 1991). Hence, these research methods establish the greatest potential link between research and action and theory and practice. The core of the developmental design had therefore to comprise of research involving individuals with a genuine interest in collaboration and the research topic. The director of the Poverty Alliance in Glasgow, Damian Killeen and a senior development officer of the Alliance, Janet Muir, were already involved in the research project aimed at investigating the nature of collaboration, mentioned above. As will be explained below (Section 4.1.3.1), the Alliance also had a keen interest in the current research, and became involved in a *Participatory Action Research* capacity.

In order to take the design of the project forward, a *Design Group* comprising Damian Killeen and Janet Muir of the Poverty Alliance, Chris Huxham, who supervised this research project, and myself was formed in May 1994. To further facilitate the link between research and action as well as, theory and practice, it was decided that a greater number of individuals involved in collaborative activities and interested in the research should become involved in an *Action Research* capacity (these participants are introduced in Section

4.2.2.1). This resulted in a developmental, cyclical research design as illustrated in Figure 4.1. The definitions of Participatory Action Research and Action Research adopted for the purpose of this project are given below followed by a discussion of the various components of the research design.



**Figure 4.1 The developmental nature of the research process for Transferring Collaboration Insight to Practice**

The centre of Figure 4.1 presents the purpose of the research. Members of the design group worked together in a Participatory Action Research capacity. Design group meetings were thus conducted with the view to discussing key issues pertaining to both the design of the research and the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. As possible design issues emerged, they were implemented and tested in workshops with individuals interested in the research, in an Action Research capacity. Learning derived from workshops were reflected upon by the design group and necessary changes to the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* were made. This research process was repeated several times in a developmental and cyclical fashion. Hence, the design of the process was shaped by research undertaken with the Alliance managers as well as other individuals involved in the workshops.

The expression Action Research is generally believed to have been first used by Lewin (1947). According to Lewin, the definitional characteristics of Action Research would be, briefly, to focus the research efforts on specific problems with the aim to influence actions pertaining to those problems. An understanding of the effects of an action should be gained by studying the dynamic nature of change under controlled conditions, as the change took place. Since then, Action Research has grown in popularity though with slightly different interpretations. Many still hold the view that Action Research involves learning about an organisation or a social system through attempting to change it. This includes involving people affected by that change in the research, though not necessarily working under controlled conditions (Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991; Karlsen, 1991; Walton and Gaffney, 1991; Whyte, 1991).

The definition of Action Research adopted for the research project upon which this thesis is based, implies that the research involved planned interventions. The intention was thus to contribute to the existing knowledge of the subject under study through working collaboratively with individuals practically and genuinely concerned with that subject (Eden and Huxham, 1996, Gill and Johnson, 1997, Rapoport, 1970). The researcher's intervention was thus an intrinsic part of the research design (Gill and Johnson, 1997). The intention of the planned interventions was to learn from individuals' actions as well as having a direct influence on their future actions with regards to the subject of the research.

The work with the Alliance managers was undertaken in a Participatory Action Research capacity. The methodological difference between the involvement with the Alliance managers and the other individuals is that the Alliance managers participated in the actual design of the research right from the beginning throughout the entire research process (Argyris and Schön, 1991; Rowan, 1981; Santos, 1991; Whyte, 1991). The definition of Participatory Action Research adopted for this project does not include the idealistic notion that Participatory Action Research is more concerned with helping a community of disadvantaged people rather than being a scientific approach to research (Reason, 1994). Also, the definition was not intended to imply any commitment to creating greater democracy at the work place nor that the research was undertaken as a way of empowering participants (Eden and Levin, 1991). It ought to be mentioned however, that the Alliance managers are concerned with the alleviation of poverty. They believe that community empowerment plays a central role in that context.

#### **4.1.3.1 The Poverty Alliance introduced**

The Poverty Alliance was established primarily to develop effective networks and to promote collaborative processes between its members and others working with different aspects of poverty in the West of Scotland. Currently, the Alliance has a membership of around 100 organisations as well as a few personal individual memberships. The structure of the Alliance is rather complex. Formed as a limited company, it has a board of directors comprising elected individuals from 13 different organisations, whose role is to direct the Alliance at a policy level. The day to day management of the Alliance is undertaken by 13 staff members. Specific projects are also carried out by working groups comprising representatives of member organisations along with a staff member who maintains the communication link between the board of directors, the staff team and the working groups.

Clearly, with this complex structure, Alliance staff undertake numerous collaborative activities simply by managing co-ordination within and between its different internal components, members, board, staff and working groups. In addition, the core staff's remit centres around encouraging collaboration not only between the Alliance's members but also, between its members and others concerned with poverty. Potential collaborators range from large international charities to individual community activists. Thus, the staff team has a real need both to understand collaborative practice and how insight about this practice may relate to, and be communicated to, other collaborators. From a practical viewpoint, through their involvement in this research, the Alliance managers were looking for tools to help its staff in their task of promoting collaborative responses to poverty issues.

#### **4.1.4 The type of theory development envisaged**

As stated above, the project aimed to develop process theory about the transfer of collaboration insight to practice. In the phenomenological paradigm, the development of theory generally results from a process of inductive analysis of empirically collected data (see for example, Burrell and Morgan, 1997; Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991). The Participatory Action Research and Action Research approaches lend themselves to the development of such 'emergent theory' of which 'grounded theory' is an example (Eden and Huxham, 1996; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The aim was that the developmental and cyclical research design illustrated above would generate emergent theory in a similar fashion to that described by

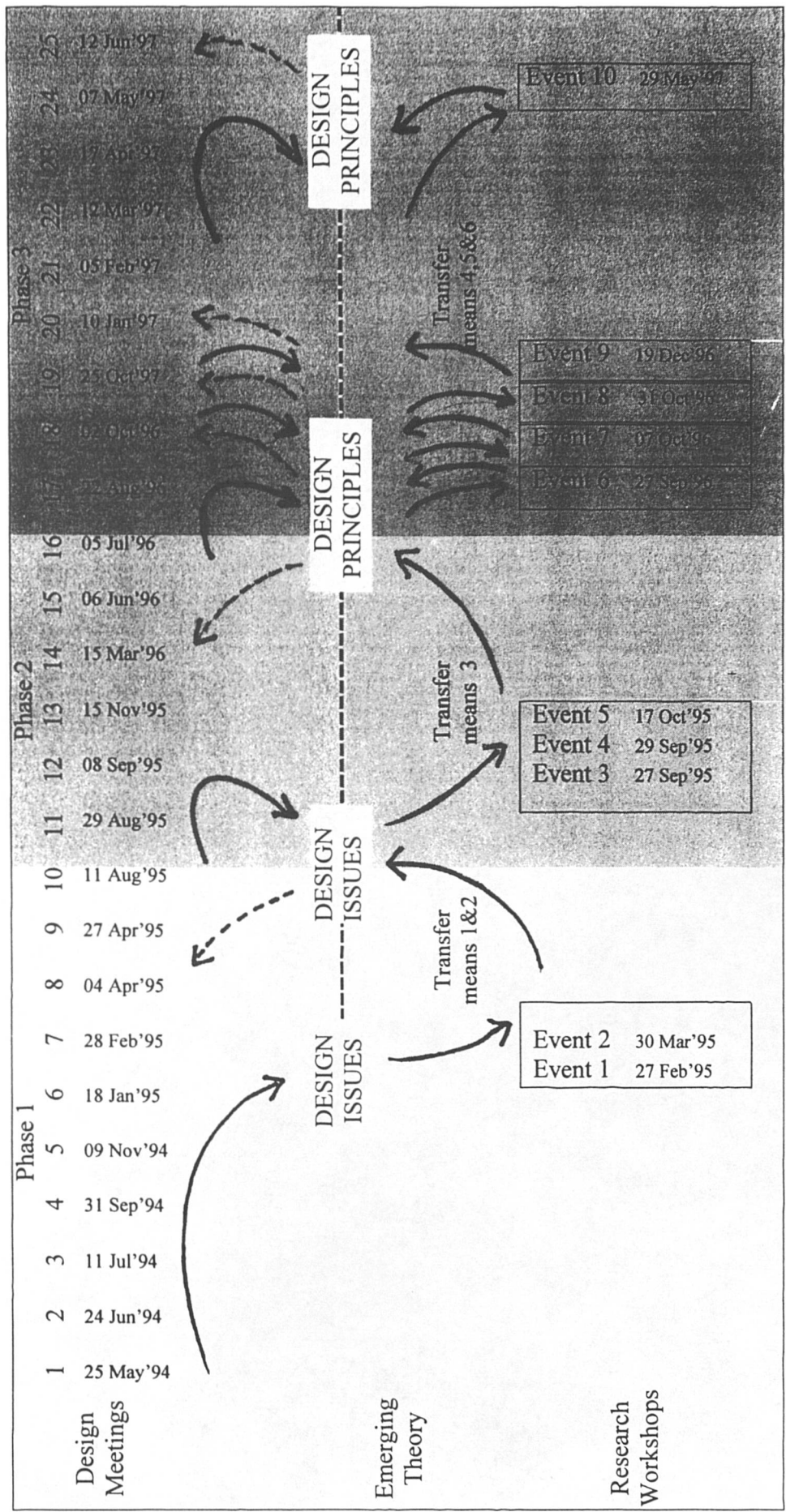
Eden and Huxham, (1996). Thus, it was envisaged that the substantive theory about collaboration (Chapter 2) as well as theory generated from support material currently available to collaborators (Chapter 3) would provide initial theoretical clues about the design of an approach for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The gradual development of that approach through working with individuals concerned with collaborative activities in practice was outlined above. This process was then expected to generate, in an incremental fashion, emergent process theory about the transfer of collaboration insight to practice. The way in which theory emerged from this project and the extent to which it is grounded in data will be discussed in more detail below.

#### 4.2 Specific components of the research design

The aim of this section is to explain the various research activities (design meetings, research workshops and analyses) undertaken within the developmental process described above and to relate these to the theory output emerging from those research activities (*Design Issues* and *Transfer Means*). Retrospectively, the research developed in 3 main Phases as illustrated in Figure 4.2.

The Participatory Action Research framework within which the research was undertaken and the exploratory nature of the research meant that the initial Design Meetings were devoted to the design of the research process itself and to identifying preliminary issues pertaining to the design of the approach for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. To that end, Phase 1 generated output relating to the identification of possible *Target Audiences*, possible *Transfer Mechanisms*, initial *Design Issues* and *Collaboration Themes* (representing issues of concern to collaborators). These research outputs will be discussed in Chapter 5. The initial set of *Design Issues* was applied in the first two *Research Workshops* held with Collaborators. The design of these *Research Workshops* also generated three of the *Transfer Means* to be discussed in Chapter 6.

Research efforts during Phase 2 continued to apply and explore the *Design Issues*, but focused on specific aspects of the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The three *Research Workshop* designed and conducted as part of Phase 2 were thus concerned with exploring the design implications relating to the many different ways in



**Figure 4.2** A retrospective view of the research process for Transferring Collaboration Insight to Practice

which collaboration may be defined. A *Transfer Means* was designed and developed as part of that process.

The Design Issues developed incrementally throughout the research process, gradually taking on a more general character. During the early part of Phase 3, the set of *Design Issues* were translated into a set of *Design Principles* for *Transferring Insight to Practice* by targeting Partnership Support Workers. These *Design Principles* were applied in an intensive series, comprising 5 *Research Workshops*, with the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team. Two further *Transfer Means* were developed during Phase 3.

#### 4.2.1 Design meetings

The interactive and developmental process aimed at exploring possible designs of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as described above, involved a total of 25 Design Meetings. On average therefore, the Design Group met every 5-6 weeks to discuss the research process and issues pertaining to the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. (In the period December 1995 - May 1996, the Design Group met only once because I was on maternity leave.) Initial Design Meetings focused, as discussed above, on identifying preliminary issues pertaining both to the research design and the approach for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. In general, the discussions during the Design Meetings were typically free flowing and deliberately intended to *explore the design from different perspectives seeking to gain a holistic view of a transfer process* (Cassell and Symon, 1994; Hughes, 1990; Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

All the members of the Design Group contributed to every aspect of the research process (Rowan, 1981; Whyte, 1991), but taking different roles and placing different emphasis on different aspects. Thus, the Alliance managers based their contribution on, for example, their expertise in managing an Alliance and in fostering and facilitating collaboration in communities. The 'academic' members of the Design Group based their contribution on, for example, their knowledge of research designs, group decision support and insight about collaboration gained through research. The members of the Design Group learned about each others' expertise through participating in this research process. This mutual exchange of knowledge as well as the ability to bring that to bear on the subject under study, is indeed a typical feature of Participatory Action Research and Action Research methods (Easterby-

Smith *et al*, 1991; Gill and Johnson, 1997; Whyte, Greenwood and Lazes, 1991). My own role in this process obviously differed from those of the other Design Group members. As with any form of Applied Research, in Participatory Action Research, the role of researcher is to act in a professional manner with regards to the design of the project, gathering data, creating systematic and well organised records of the data, analysing and interpreting the data and providing feedback to the client. In Participatory Action Research processes however, the clients become more involved in these research activities in particular with regards to the quest for information and ideas to guide their future actions (Whyte, 1991; Whyte *et al*, 1991). This project was designed in such a way that the Alliance managers were actively engaged in designing and conducting research events and in interpreting data.

Within the boundaries of this thesis, it would not be appropriate to provide a full description of all Design Meetings. The intention is to provide a methodological description by explaining the general nature of the meetings. In the early stages of the research, parts of the Design Meetings focused on discussion of specific substantive theoretical concepts about collaboration (for example, the concepts of Collaborative Advantage and Collaborative Inertia, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). The Alliance managers explored and developed theoretical concepts about collaborative processes and the 'academic' members worked towards explaining the concepts in a framework or a language suitable to a practitioner audience. Thus, theoretical concepts were discussed on the one hand, to inform managers in their collaborative activities and, on the other hand, as a means of assessing the practical appropriateness or applicability of each of the theoretical concepts themselves. During this process, therefore, new theoretical concepts have emerged and others have been refined for example pertaining to the definitional characteristics of collaboration and the concept of individuals' as representatives of organisations (Vangen and Huxham, 1998).

More significantly, the Design Meetings were devoted to exploring the issues that arise in trying to build these elements of collaboration theory into a process which can make them accessible, usable and useful to practitioners. Continual dialogues took place throughout the entire research process with the Alliance managers expressing their views on what would be suitable for example in terms of complexity of collaboration insight as well as possible *Transfer Means* and with the 'academic' members of the Design Group responding with possible *Transfer Means* options based on their understanding of the issues. Typically, an issue would emerge for which there would be some theoretical insight that could be of potential value to Partnership Support Workers. For example, the need to find ways of



dealing with multiple definitions of collaboration triggered the development of a *Transfer Means* (see Chapter 6) that would both build on individuals' experiences as well as theoretical insight about that topic.

#### **4.2.2 The research workshops**

As discussed above and illustrated in Figure 4.2, a total of 10 *Research Workshops* were designed and conducted as part of this research. Each Research Workshop is described in detail in Chapter 6.

The general purpose of the *Research Workshops* was to develop the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. As the deliberate design efforts described above gradually developed into possible designs for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, elements of that design were piloted with individuals who, in one way or another, were involved practically in collaborative activities (see Section 4.2). The *Research Workshops* were undertaken in an Action Research capacity and therefore learning about the design was to be gained through addressing issues of direct benefit to the participants. The methodological aim was thus to design the research events in such a way that elements of the design could be tested whilst simultaneously allowing the participants to benefit through addressing matters of genuine concern to them.

##### **4.2.2.1 The workshop participants introduced**

The first two events were designed for a total of 19 public and community sector employees and volunteers who are themselves members of different collaborative groups. The next three research events were aimed at exploring design implications pertaining to multiple definitions of collaboration and therefore deliberately comprised a mixture of collaborators (volunteers and employees) and partnership support workers. A total of 9 individuals attended these events. The last five events were designed for the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team. The Poverty Alliance received National Lottery funding for the team for 3 years, from April 1996. The team is comprised of 5 Partnership Support Workers and two support staff. The purpose of the team is to 'equip and support community activists to combat poverty locally'. One objective of the team is to 'promote and provide training for

local groups on effective collaboration with local authorities, health boards, enterprise companies and the private sector'. The team would therefore need appropriate support to undertake its tasks. Alliance Managers therefore wanted to include the team in this research. Thus a total of 34 individuals have been involved directly in this Action Research.

### **4.3 Analysis**

The aim of this section is to explain the analyses undertaken within the developmental design illustrated in Figure 4.1 towards the development of the *Design Principles* as illustrated in Figure 4.2 . The intention is thus to describe the processes and interpretative activities by which structure and meaning was brought to the data generated throughout the research process. As can be expected from this type of research design, the analyses did not proceed according to a linear, neat fashion but rather the process was cyclical, creative, fascinating, time-consuming, and at times perhaps even frustrating and ambiguous (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

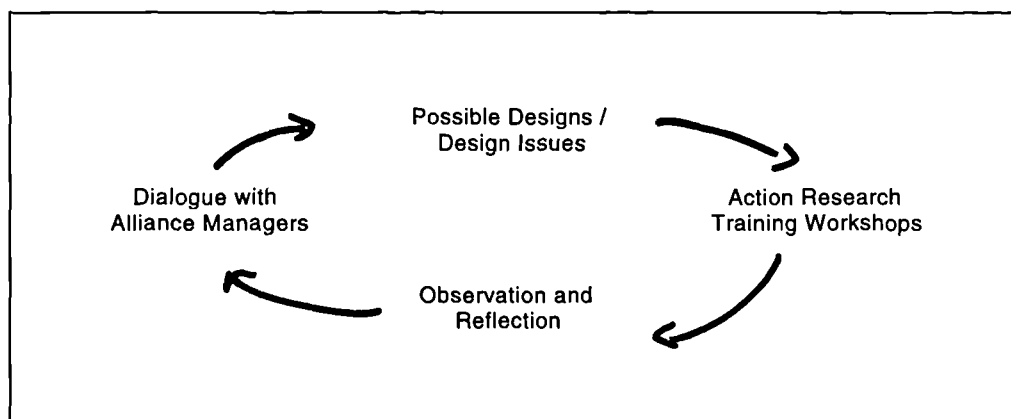
#### **4.3.1 The cyclical analytical process for developing emergent theory**

In general and as dictated by the phenomenological underpinnings, the developmental nature and the Participatory Action Research and Action Research methodologies within which this research was conducted, the data gathered were of a qualitative nature and the analyses undertaken were qualitative, inductive and developmental (Burrell and Morgan, 1997; Cassell and Symon, 1994; Gill and Johnson, 1997). The data collection and analyses were undertaken concurrently, in a developmental fashion, which promoted the emergence of theory grounded in empirical data (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). These inductive methods were particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, interpretation, understanding and explanation of subjective meaning rather than quantification. The concern of the research has thus been with attempting to describe, decode, translate and interpret in order to come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of phenomenon relating to the subject under study (Cassell and Symon, 1994).

Figure 4.3 provides a brief overview of the cyclical process through which the *Design Principles* gradually emerged. The initial set of Design Issues emerged from focused

discussions between Design Group members. An inductive analytical process based on these discussions resulted in the formation of concepts and generalisation expressed via the Design Issues (that is, emerging theory). The initial Design Issues were applied in the design of *Research Workshops* to explore whether adhering to them would enable the Transfer of Collaboration Insight to the participants of the workshops. The workshops were undertaken in an Action Research capacity and thus provided a concrete opportunity to apply, observe and reflect upon the Design Issues and thus evaluate the accuracy of the emerging theory. The outcome of that evaluation and further debate with Alliance managers generally led to retrospective change in the nature of the Design Issues. As discussed in Section 4.1.3 above, this cycle was repeated several times and the Design Issues gradually developed into a proposed set of *Design Principles* as illustrated in Figure 4.2. In other words, the *Design Principles* emerged gradually through an inductive cyclical process within which the *Design Principles* were also empirically tested in a deductive fashion.

From a methodological point of view, the process outlined above is typical of interpretative approaches. The interpretative methodology suggests that the actual data gathering process starts with specific observations and the collection of empirical, real world data about a specific course of events. The idea is that the researcher will attempt to make sense of a situation without pre-existing expectations. As specific issues begin to emerge, the researcher begins to draw on the literature as well as past experiences with the aim to identify general categories, dimensions and patterns (Gill and Johnson, 1997; Gummesson, 1991; Leiter, 1980; Patton, 1980; Whyte *et al*, 1991).



**Figure 4.3** Developing emergent theory for Transferring Insight to Practice

### 4.3.2 Data gathering and analyses

The views and opinions of the individuals participating in this research in a Participatory Action Research and Action Research capacity were obviously crucial to the development and validity of the research. The main principle adhered to during actual data collection and analyses was thus to capture and analyse participants' views and responses in an accurate manner. Records of all research activities undertaken were generated in several different ways. Records of Design Group meetings were generated through taking detailed notes of all issues discussed, decisions made and their implications on the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Copies were given to all Design Group members to allow verification. Detailed notes were taken regarding the design of each Research Training Event, how each event developed paying attention to, for example, what issues participants talked about, what they became engaged by, how they appeared to react to different *Transfer Means* and so on. Video recordings (with tape recordings as back-up) of the events were taken and transcribed. Records have also been kept of notes made by participants during workshops on post-its and flip-charts. Material generated by the participants during each event, was transferred into suitable formats and circulated to the participants after each event. All the individuals who participated in the events during Phase 1 and Phase 3 were also asked to provide feedback via questionnaires, thus giving them the opportunity to comment anonymously on every aspect of the sessions. Feedback was prepared for the individuals after each event. The feedback prepared for the Mobile Resource Team, reporting on all aspects of the events as they unfolded, is a particularly rich source of data due to the intensity of the research involving the team.

These various data records formed the basis of efforts aimed at developing process theory about *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The gradual development of the theory was necessarily incremental in nature and requiring the researcher to keep abreast with that incremental development (Eden and Huxham, 1996). The arrows in Figure 4.2 intend to indicate that incremental development through illustrating in a general way, how analyses of Design Meetings led to the development of Design Issues which informed subsequent Research Workshops, how the analyses of the Research Workshops led to incremental changes in Design Issues, how these changes were discussed in subsequent Design Meetings and so on. Thus, throughout the 3 Phases of the research, qualitative analyses were undertaken in the search for categories, themes and patterns. Such analytic processes

demand a heightened awareness of, and focused attention to, the data (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

The *Collaboration Themes*, *Possible Audiences*, *Transfer Mechanisms* and the initial set of *Design Issues* of Phase 1 resulted from inductive analyses of design meetings as well as research into support material currently available to collaborators. Subsequent analyses undertaken throughout the 3 Phases were aimed not only at assessing the research events' success in accounting for the Design Issues but also with the view to identify new patterns, issues and categories pertaining to the process of transferring insight. The research events were analysed in several different ways. The participants were asked to provide feedback via questionnaires which had been drawn up bearing the design issues for each event in mind. As such, the feedback forms tended to provide information about the events success or lack of success in accounting and addressing the emerging *Design Principles*. However, additional space was allocated in the forms for the participants to make any comment which they perceived to be relevant. Each event was also examined by the Design Group with the aim to explore general reasons influencing the outcome of individual events. The design group members' different views and interpretations of the research events as they unfolded provided additional insight to issues pertaining to the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

The analyses were undertaken on a continual basis but deliberate efforts were made at certain junctures to review and analyse data with the aim to discover, review and conceptualise issues important to the design. These intervals are illustrated by the *Design Issues / Design Principles* labels in Figure 4.2. At these junctures, all the individual data records were revisited with the view to identify from each what the key issues pertaining to the design were. Issues emerging from the various sources of data were compared and contrasted. At each juncture this resulted in a 'up to date' set of Design Issues / Principles. The *Design Principles* thus emerged as Design Issues and then gradually developed into *Design Principles* with ever increasing density and linkages. The emerging theory thus solidified as major modifications to the *Design Principles* occurred less frequently and they began to fall into established categories (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The *Design Principles* were thus generated from the data records and activities as outlined above and are as such 'grounded' in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). They did not emerge through the application of a systematic set of methods for collecting, coding and analysing data as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). They are nevertheless grounded in data in the sense

that, at least to the best of my ability, no initial preconceived, substantive questions influenced the general direction of the research and the accompanying data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The incremental, developmental process by which the *Design Principles* emerged is explored in Chapter 7.

The proposed set of *Design Principles* is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The nature of the *Design Principles*, as with any emergent theory, is such that if subjected to further research they may well be further developed and modified (Gummesson, 1991, Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Marshall and Rossman, (1989), argue that the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is probably that of discovering significant *classes* of things, persons and events and the *properties* which characterise them. Using this classification, it may be argued that the *Design Principles* are the classes of things. The properties which characterise the *Design Principles* are discussed in Chapter 8. Using Patton's (1980) terminology, the *Design Principles* may be classified as 'analyst-constructed typologies' in that they emerged from a process aimed at uncovering patterns, themes and categories but without reflecting research participants' own languages or categories. In contrast, the *Collaboration Themes* for example, may be classified as 'indigenous typologies' as they reflect collaborators' own views of what causes concern in collaboration. The discussion of the *Collaboration Themes* in Chapter 5 will aim to give a genuine reflection, including individuals' own language, of what collaborators typically say about each theme.

The collaboration themes were not identified from data generated from research activities undertaken as part of this project but from data generated during an MSc project (Vangen, 1992), the ESRC project mentioned in Section 4.1.1 two further workshops conducted by 3 colleagues (Barr, 1995). The specific manner in which the Collaboration Themes were identified is explained in Chapter 5. In the first two projects, individuals' views and experiences about collaboration had been gathered via in-depth interviews (Tull and Hawkins, 1987) and captured using cognitive mapping (Eden, 1989). The cognitive maps had been drawn keeping as much as possible of individuals' own choice of words to maintain individuals' ownership to the maps. In the last two cases, individuals had written their views and experiences about collaboration on post-its which were then hung on flip-charts on a wall and grouped according to the similarities of views and experiences expressed. Because the data genuinely captured individuals' views they were particularly

suiting to the identification of the *Collaboration Themes*. In both cases, the data were entered into the Graphics Cope Software (Ackermann, Cropper and Eden, 1992) which enabled cluster analysis to be undertaken as explained in Chapter 5.

#### **4.4 Methodological validity**

The above discussions have hopefully demonstrated the quality and rigour by which this research was designed and conducted. This final section of this chapter is a discussion of the validity of the research from a methodological point of view. Some difficulties encountered due to the chosen methodology are also discussed.

It was argued above that the phenomenological paradigm was appropriate because of the complexity of the subject under investigation as well as the exploratory nature of the research. It was also argued that the Participatory Action Research and Action Research methodologies were appropriate because the subject of the research was directly concerned with bridging theory and practice. The general soundness of this research design is therefore argued from the point of view that it took account of the exploratory nature of the research and the intention to investigate 'contemporary, naturally occurring activities' (Yin, 1984). In general, value may be placed on research which is perceived to be well planned and methodologically rigorous (Cassell and Symon, 1994; Karlsen, 1991). In view of the developmental nature of this research and indeed the nature of any qualitative, participatory action research and action research, it was not possible to define in detail, every single step of the research (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). However, the developmental design as discussed above may be judged according to whether it was likely to provide a thorough, precise and accurate understanding of the subject under study (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

##### **4.4.1 Scientific rigour versus relevance**

The main validity concern facing the Participatory Action Researcher and the Action Researcher is said to be the dilemma of rigour and relevance (Argyris and Schon, 1991; Gill and Johnson, 1997; Karlsen, 1991; Rapoport, 1970). It is argued that the relevance of the research gained through Participatory Action Research and Action Research may be offset against falling short of standards of rigour supposedly offered by positivist approaches. The

phenomenological argument of relevance is that explanations of naturally occurring phenomenon are relatively worthless unless they are grounded in observation and experience (Gill and Johnson, 1997). Emerging theory inductively developed out of systematic empirical research is thus argued to be more likely to be useful, plausible and accessible (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Gummenson, 1991).

In terms of the validity of the emergent theory, the arguments about relevance and rigour are in fact closely related. Whether or not the theory generated via this research is relevant depends amongst other factors on whether the views of the participants were accurately captured and accounted for in the development of the theory. It may be argued that the variety of data records generated, including the participants' ability to comment on the way in which their views had been captured (see Section 4.3.2) ensured that their views were accurately captured. Whether or not their views were thoroughly reflected in the development of the research relates to the way in which the data were analysed. The validity of the emerging theory thus relates to the methodological soundness and rigour by which the data were captured and analysed. Scientific rigour may be argued from the point of view that the Participatory Action Research and Action Research methodologies encourage the researcher to undertake a rigorous process of checking interpretation of meaning with the practitioners and in that respect, the standard of accuracy of emerging theories may be great (Whyte, 1991; Whyte, Greenwood and Lazes, 1991).

Participatory Action Research and Action Research is bound to be found wanting if it is measured against the criteria of positivist science although it is perfectly valid from a phenomenological viewpoint (Susman and Evered, 1978). For example, the grounded approach to theory development is far more flexible than the 'hypothesis testing' positivist approach and therefore less replicable and open to public scrutiny. Some people may treat emergent and grounded theory with suspicion because of the lack of clarity and standardisation of methods (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991). Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that researchers can respond to the traditional social science concern for replicability by keeping thorough notes about each research design decision and the rationale behind it as this would allow others to inspect their procedures, protocols and decisions. They also suggest that the researchers should keep all collected data in well-organised, retrievable forms and make them available if the findings are challenged or if another researcher would like to re-analyse the data. The orderliness applied to the undertakings of this research would certainly allow the above to take place. However, that



may not be a practical nor a satisfactory way of justifying the validity of Participatory Action Research and Action Research. It seems more plausible to demonstrate the validity of the research by discussing the steps taken to ensure the validity of the emergent theory.

#### **4.4.2 The validity of the emergent theory**

The debate about verification and falsification (Popper, 1959) within the positivist paradigm may provide some lessons for working within the phenomenological paradigm. For example, Reason (1988) highlights the importance of recognising one's own views and experiences without being directed by them. Reason (1988) put forth the idea that one should apply falsification by looking for evidence that might confirm or contradict what one currently believes to be true. The temptation to look for data which confirms one's current beliefs should be resisted. The failure to find disconfirmatory evidence will make the current view stronger. The *Design Principles* were applied in the design of the events and evaluation feedback questionnaires were aimed at discovering whether or not adhering to them had enabled theory to be transferred to the participants. In that respect, I was guilty of searching for confirmation. However, a range of measures were taken which would not only identify disconfirmation but which would also identify design issues not already accounted for. Specifically, each research event was reviewed by the design group and that discussion was not directed by the questionnaires. More generally though, the revisiting of the data at different junctures within the cyclical process as discussed below, should have ensured the validity of the theory.

In general, the *Design Principles* emerged through a cyclical process as discussed in Section 4.3. That process of rethinking both theory and practice strengthens both theory and practice and thus helps to ensure the validity of the theory (Eden & Huxham, 1996, Gill and Johnson, 1997, Whyte, 1991). The *Design Principles* were also developed by revisiting all the different data sources at different junctures as explained in Section 4.3.2. This revisiting of data sources within the cyclical process offered a powerful means of triangulating the data in a similar fashion to that proposed by Eden and Huxham (1996). The triangulation of data by multi-method approaches is believed to be essential to checking the validity of data in research concerned with complex processes involving a number of actors over time (Cassell and Symon, 1994). A traditional definition of triangulation involves the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point (Marshall and Rossman,

1989). The data from these different sources can then be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question. Within Action Research, triangulation can make use of observation of events, accounts given by participants and changes in these accounts and interpretations of events over time (Eden and Huxham, 1996). This is a new and different interpretation of triangulation unique to Action Research. In fact, the data are not expected to triangulate, rather it is suggested that the lack of triangulation should be used as a dialectical device for generating new concepts.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose two criteria for evaluating the quality of a theory. They suggest that the theory should be sufficiently analytic to enable some generalisation to take place but at the same time it should be possible for people to relate the theory to their own experiences, thus sensitising their own perceptions. Both theory which is of a substantive nature linked to the events studied and more formal generalisable theory is thus valid theory emerging from Participatory Action Research and Action Research.

Chapter 7 provides a description of all the *Research Workshops* undertaken in the course of the research. The chapter provides a description of the complexity of the process, the nature of the interactions with the participants and the emerging issues and how they were accounted for in the design of the events. The chapter aims to describe the nature of the data and the extent to which the emerging *Design Principles* were embedded in the data. This gives the reader another opportunity to assess the validity of the *Design Principles* and the extent to which they are generalisable in terms of transferring insight about collaboration to Collaborators and Partnership Support Workers. In other words, Chapter 7 will enable the reader to assess whether the *Design Principles* are valid within the parameters of that specific context.

The generalisation measure of usefulness and validity relates to the *transferability* of the theory (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). That is, the extent to which the emerging theory may be applicable to another context. The burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings rests more with the investigator who would make that transfer rather than with the original investigator (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Chapter 8 provides a general discussion of the characteristics and properties of the *Design Principles* with the aim to discuss to what extent these principles may apply to different audiences and different transfer mechanisms. The aim is to allow the reader to judge the relevancy of that generalisation in order to assess

whether or not the *Design Principles* may be applicable to other contexts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

#### **4.4.3 Some specific difficulties relating to the chosen methodologies**

In Participatory Action Research and Action Research methodologies, the relationship between the practitioners and the researcher(s) is obviously crucial and needs to be carefully managed. As discussed above, the Alliance managers and I had already been working together for a couple of years when the joint decision to embark on this research was made. As such, a working relationship was already well established and as far as I am aware, there have been no difficulties with this relationship. The Alliance managers thus became involved in the research because the subject was of genuine interest to them. One of the difficulties anticipated in this research however, was whether the target audience would perceive the relevance and be willing to pay attention to the collaboration insight and to participate actively in the research. As the workshops were undertaken in an Action Research capacity, they had been designed bearing the participants' potential benefit in mind. Beyond that, care was taken to ensure that they understood the purpose of the research and that their participation was greatly appreciated. The individuals participating in the Workshops during Phase 1 and Phase 2 seemed very enthusiastic and happy about their participation in the research.

The idea that the Mobile Resource Team (Phase 3) would participate in the research was conceived at the stage when funding was sought for the team. Thus, the Alliance had discussed the Mobile Resource Team's involvement in the research prior to the members taking up their posts and as such, the team members became involved in the research through their job descriptions. During the first two events with the team, very deliberate attempts were directed at explaining the purpose of, and gaining the Mobile Resource Team's interest in, the research. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, there were some difficulties which seem to relate primarily to the team's lack of interest in the research and a general suspicion to the usefulness of the research. Beyond the obvious provision of coffee, tea and snacks and appropriate feedback no reciprocity measures were taken (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). With the benefit of hindsight, perhaps more could have been done to gain the team's trust and confidence in the research and the members of the Design Group.

Further, some of the difficulties encountered stemmed from issues internal to the Alliance relating to for example, the director being in a close collaborative arrangement with the academic members of the design group. Other problems seem to be attributed to the team's preconceived ideas about the contribution of the researchers and the value of collaboration theory in informing the design and agendas of the events. Researchers finding themselves stereotyped as academics, which may have implications for the successful outcome of the work, is apparently a common difficulty associated with Action Research (Gill and Johnson, 1997). Retrospectively, it seems that the research involving the Mobile Resource Team did not start off on a 'good footing' which probably caused difficulties which could have been avoided if I had been able to anticipate them during the design phase of the research. The research had been discussed at length during the first two events with the Mobile Resource Team and it is not obvious how these difficulties may have been avoided. This has not necessarily affected the validity of the research but it may have affected the nature and specific type of theory generated. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 8.

#### **4.5 The structure of the research output**

The discussions throughout this chapter has hopefully provided the reader with an understanding of the design of this research and how the different activities undertaken relate together (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). A design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* has begun to take shape as a result of this research. That process is the subject of the remainder of this thesis. Throughout this chapter, numerous references have been made to all the other chapters of this thesis. Hopefully, this has begun to indicate that there are a number of components which together make up the shape of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The various components are obviously linked and must be understood in relation to one another. However, in order to explain the process in a linear format, it has been necessary to separate various sections and explain them in isolation but with reference to the whole of the process.

Chapters 5 - 8 are all concerned with research output. Chapter 7 is different in nature as it focuses on the *Action Research Workshops* that were designed and conducted specifically as part of developing the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* rather than focusing on specific theoretical output.

With reference to Figure 4.2, Chapter 5 is essentially a discussion of the research output generated during the first 9 months of the research prior to the design and conduct of the first *Action Research Workshop*. Chapter 5 thus provides a discussion of possible audiences for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, possible *Transfer Mechanisms* for addressing a chosen *Target Audience* and a set of *Collaboration Themes* dictating the agenda of possible insight to be transferred to a chosen audience. Chapter 5 also describes a set of initial *Design Issues* generated from activities undertaken throughout the first 9 months of the research project. The discussions of the possible *Audiences*, *Transfer Mechanisms* and *Collaboration Themes* relate directly to the development of the *Design Principles* but may also be regarded as valuable output in their own right.

Chapter 6 is a discussion of the means for transferring insight developed and used as part of this research. As can be seen from Figure 4.2, the *Transfer Means* were developed throughout the 3 Phases of the research. To facilitate ease of reading however, the *Transfer Means* are discussed separately in Chapter 6. Building on Chapters 5 and 6 as well as Chapter 1 and 2, Chapter 7 describes the research workshops which led to the development of the *Transfer Means* and the *Design Principles*. Finally, Chapter 8 aims to summarise the entire thesis through providing a detailed description of the set of *Design Principles* for *Transferring Insight to Practice* proposed as a result of this research.

The aim has been to demonstrate the developmental way in which the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* emerged. It has not been possible however, to describe every single aspect of the process in a chronological order. Further, detailed research notes taken throughout the duration of the research informed the writing of the thesis.

Nevertheless, my interpretation of the concepts developed as part of this research, has been influenced by knowledge gained through undertaking the research. Therefore, writing retrospectively about the research may have had an impact on the way in which specific components have been presented. Notwithstanding the importance of the developmental aspect of the research output, in terms of the contribution to knowledge, it is the final version of the output that matters. In summary, these are the *Target Audiences*, the *Transfer Mechanisms* and the *Collaboration Themes* as discussed in Chapter 5, the *Transfer Means* as discussed in Chapter 6 and the final set of *Design Principles* as discussed in Chapter 8.

## **CHAPTER 5 KEY PRELIMINARY DECISION AREAS IN THE PROCESS FOR TRANSFERRING INSIGHT TO PRACTICE**

### **5.1 Audiences for a process for Transferring Insight to Practice**

#### **5.1.1 The identification of audiences**

#### **5.1.2 A description of possible audiences**

#### **5.1.3 The choice of target audience**

### **5.2 Mechanisms for transferring insight**

#### **5.2.1 Key criteria for choosing transfer mechanisms**

#### **5.2.2 The choice of transfer mechanism**

### **5.3 Collaboration Themes**

#### **5.3.1 The Identification of Collaboration Themes**

#### **5.3.2 The characteristics of Collaboration Themes**

#### **5.3.3 A Description of Collaboration Themes**

#### **5.3.4 The role of Collaboration Themes**

### **5.4 Summary of key preliminary decision areas**

## CHAPTER 5 KEY PRELIMINARY DECISION AREAS IN THE PROCESS FOR TRANSFERRING INSIGHT TO PRACTICE

This chapter focuses on research output generated during the initial stages of the project, prior to the design of the first action research workshop. Three key decision areas are addressed; who is targeted, how and with what, in a process aimed at *Transferring Insight to Practice*. A discussion of the deliberate efforts aimed at identifying possible audiences for the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is given. The audiences identified are described and reasons for selecting the target audience given. Criteria identified as key to choosing possible mechanisms for the actual transfer of insight to an audience are then addressed. This is followed by a discussion of how these key criteria can guide the selection of an appropriate mechanism for transferring insight to the target audience. Further, the chapter provides a discussion of *Collaboration Themes*, that is, issues typically of concern to people involved in collaboration. The way in which these themes were identified is described. The general characteristic of the *Collaboration Themes* is then given followed by a brief description of each theme and their role in the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Finally, an initial set of Design Issues for the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, generated along with the research output described above, is introduced.

### 5.1 Audiences for a process for Transferring Insight to Practice

The clarity of who is targeted and why, is obviously fundamental to any process which aims to have a practical impact. The question of whom the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should be directed at, was therefore an initial design issue that had to be resolved. The reviews of 'the collaboration literature' (Chapter 2) and 'support currently available' (Chapter 3) do not provide clear indications. Much of the general research on collaboration (Chapter 2) seems to be aimed at an unspecified audience, most likely assumed to be other academics. The 'how to do it' guides (Chapter 3) are obviously aimed at those involved in collaboration, but it is often not clear precisely what role the reader is supposed to play (for example; convenor, facilitator or ordinary participant of a collaborative group). The material on group decision support (Chapter 3) is obviously targeted at group-process facilitators. As it was not self-evident who the audience would be, the *Design Group* invested deliberate efforts aimed at identifying possible audiences for the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

### 5.1.1 The identification of audiences

The transfer of collaboration theory to practice is the purpose of this research. Therefore, one key criterion for identifying a suitable audience was that addressing that audience would have a potential impact on practice. Thus, the theory on collaboration should inform the actions of those concerned with collaboration in practice. The broad aim was that the *Transferring Insight to Practice* process would raise that audience's awareness of difficulties of collaboration and transfer insight on effective collaborative practice. A second criterion, closely related to this, was concerned with identifying who would benefit most from being directly targeted. The third, and possibly most difficult to satisfy, criterion relates to the accessibility of an audience. As discussed in Chapter 1, individuals getting involved in collaboration are usually not aware of the difficulties associated with working across multiple organisational boundaries. They generally do not consider explicitly collaboration process issues and are not actively seeking information or training about how to manage their collaborative activities. A related issue is that collaboration activities are not generally seen to be fundamentally different from other organisational activities. There are of course exceptions. For example, staff of the Poverty Alliance undertake a range of field work and community development activities with their members and others, which also tend to put collaboration processes issues onto the agenda for individuals, groups and organisations involved in collaboration. Thus, individuals' perceived need for more information or training may be initiated through other activities. Nevertheless, the general lack of perceived need to consider collaboration processes is a major obstacle to the transfer of insight to practice and therefore a key criterion in identifying a suitable audience for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The *Design Group* identified this as the problem of 'getting in'. This will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8. The consideration of these criteria led to the conclusion that simply targeting the audience which would benefit most from practical help was not enough. There was a need to identify the audience which could be most easily addressed.

Initial audiences were identified by considering individuals, groups or organisations known by members of the *Design Group* to be concerned, in one way or another, with collaborative activities. For each individual, group, or organisation identified the question as to whether or not that individual, group, or organisation represented a generic audience was asked. If a generic audience had not been identified then the *Design Group* considered whether there were nevertheless process issues of importance to that specific audience which would also



be important to others. The identification of possible audiences was typically followed by a discussion as to what could be done and how, with specific references to each audience. This process of identifying an audience also began to identify a range of key issues that would have to be integrated in the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* for different audiences. For example, the process should; encourage thinking and debate rather than prescribe; deal with people's demands for answers; promote an educational approach; deal with different peoples' idiosyncratic behaviours, deal with complexities and be flexible enough to assist users to address a number of issues as well as account for their different levels of 'collaboration maturity'. The fact that such issues kept emerging led to a discussion as to whether the 'target audience' should be decided first, followed by a discussion of 'issues the process must allow for and handle' in light of the chosen audience. Alternatively, these key issues could be discussed independently of the audience. Although it may not be feasible to target all possible audiences, the argument in favour of discussing the issues independently was that it would possibly have identified a range of generic issues pertaining to a range of audiences. However, pragmatic reasons, such as the need for tangible progress, led to a decision that the audience should be identified first.

Thus, in practice, a cyclical process was adopted by the *Design Group*. For each new audience identified, the deliberate consideration of possible aims, specific benefits and possible transfer mechanisms along with the implicit consideration of emerging key issues, in turn generated new audiences. This led to the identification of a range of possible audiences as listed in Figure 5.1.

<b>POSSIBLE AUDIENCES</b>	
<b>1)</b>	<b>Actual members of collaborative groups;</b>
a)	Individuals
	i) according to individuals' roles
	ii) according to types of individuals
b)	Collaborative groups
	i) community collaborations
	ii) inter-organisational collaborations
	iii) multi-sectoral collaborations
<b>2)</b>	<b>Facilitators;</b>
a)	Administrator type / partnership support workers
b)	Group-process facilitators
<b>3)</b>	<b>Policy makers or governments</b>
<b>4)</b>	<b>'The world'</b>

**Figure 5.1** Possible audiences for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*

### **5.1.2 A description of possible audiences**

This section gives a description of each of the audiences identified above, along with possible aims for targeting each of those audiences.

#### **1) Actual members of collaborations**

Perhaps the most obvious audience for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is that of actual members of collaborative groups. This broad audience was found too wide to be effectively targeted as a group and was therefore divided into sub categories. A distinction was made between targeting individuals or targeting whole groups as this would account for a range of obvious design implications such as whether or not the process would have to account for specific group dynamics and whether or not the individuals in the audience are likely to be concerned about a common strategic issue. It was also considered useful to recognise typical differences between individuals participating in collaboratives. Thus, two possible sub categories were suggested as, types of individuals and, the roles individuals typically play in collaborations. Similarly, as the nature of collaborative groups may be heavily influenced not only by the issues over which the collaboration takes place, but also by the type of members participating in them, a distinction was made between different types of collaborative groups. Three possible sub categories were suggested as community groups, inter-organisational collaborations and multi-sectoral collaborations. These five sub categories of the Actual Members of Collaborations audience are discussed below.

A general aim identified for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* targeting actual members of collaborative groups was to raise the collaborators' awareness of the complexities of collaboration. More specifically, the ultimate aim was to get beyond helping people to understand the situation they are in by providing them with direct help, perhaps some tools for, the management of their collaborative activities. The provision of theoretical insight along with concepts that capture that insight (for example, Collaborative Advantage and Collaborative Inertia as discussed in Chapter 2) could enable collaborators to articulate their knowledge about collaboration. This could in turn increase their ability to share their experiences and insight with other individuals in their collaboration.

**a) Individuals**

Targeting individuals according to their roles as for example, convenors, initiators or group members, was perceived to be useful because a process could be designed that could aim to convey specific insight according to specific tasks or activities to be undertaken by an individual. One idea was to produce a self-facilitative pack which would suggest that those who have, or wish to have, a certain role should concentrate on certain pages of the pack. For example, 'If you wish to be a good convenor; pick out the yellow pages' and; 'If you are an initiator pick out the blue pages'. The notion was that rather than suggesting; 'Have an initiator' (Winer and Ray, 1994) this process would suggest; 'Be an initiator' along with an additional question; 'Are you sure you want to be an initiator?', recognising the specific difficulties an individual in that role may expect to encounter.

The *Design Group* also perceived a need to distinguish between individuals in terms of for example, their professions. In particular, the *Design Group* identified a need to distinguish between community representatives and officers of statutory organisations. This perceived need stemmed from a number of statements made by individuals involved in collaboration, such as; 'I'm tired of being shouted at by community groups' (an officer) and 'I'm tired of being talked down to by officers' (a community representative) (Vangen, 1992).

**b) Collaborative groups**

'Community groups comprising community activists only', was seen as a possible sub category of Collaborative Groups. Frequently, probably due to problems of a similar nature to those described above, members of community collaborations decide consciously not to include employees of statutory and other organisations in their collaboration (Vangen 1992; Barr and Vangen, 1994). Additionally, viewing community groups as an unique audience might be helpful because the collaboration process issues facing them may differ from those facing for example, inter-organisational collaborations.

In contrast to the community groups audience, another possible sub category is concerned with 'inter-organisational collaborations comprising employees representing their organisations and agencies only'. This category was identified because frequently, even when concerned with issues of great interest to the community, members of these collaborations decide that it is not

appropriate to include community representatives (see for example, Winer and Ray, 1994 and Vangen, 1992). As with community groups, viewing this type of collaboration as a unique audience might be helpful because the collaboration process issues facing them may typically differ from those facing for example, inter-organisational collaborations.

A final sub category of the collaborative groups audience, 'mixed groups', was identified as a combination of the above two, comprising both community activists and employees.

Collaborations of this nature frequently report particular problems relating to for example, backgrounds, culture and language barriers (Vangen, 1992; Barr and Vangen, 1994). It may therefore be advantageous to build insightful theory on the *Collaboration Themes* compromise and communication (see Section 5.3.3 below) into the design of a process targeted at this audience. Similarly, the differences in background, culture and language will have implications on the design of the process both in terms of the complexity of the theory to be transferred and the method by which it is transferred.

## 2) Facilitators

Another possible audience identified for the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* comprises individuals who are not themselves actual members of collaborations but who are involved with collaboration through their role as facilitators (see Chapter 3). A process targeting facilitators could therefore ultimately benefit those directly involved in collaboration. A distinction was made between 'Partnership Support Workers' and 'Group Process Facilitators' as explained below.

A process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* targeting facilitators could raise facilitators' awareness about collaboration and provide theoretical concepts that would enable them to better explain collaborative activities. The aim would be to develop their understanding about the complexity of collaboration as well as to provide them with tools and techniques to enhance their ability to facilitate collaborative groups. As such, the ultimate aim of a process targeting facilitators would be to help indirectly collaborators to better manage their collaborative activities.

The Partnership Support Workers sub category comprises individuals who have a role to aid collaboration among others. Partnership Support Workers are often employed by public

organisations, Local Authorities and by organisations like the Poverty Alliance which through their 'umbrella role' aim to foster and enable partnership amongst others. These individuals often act as facilitators in the sense that they provide not only help and advice with the substantive purposes of the collaborations, but also administrative back-up and help in convening the collaboration.

Another sub group of individuals who may be concerned with fostering collaboration amongst others are Group Process Facilitators. These facilitators are concerned with group processes in general rather than specifically with collaboration processes. However, as Group Process Facilitators may occasionally also work with collaborative groups, it is possible that they too may derive benefits from a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

### **3) Policy makers or governments**

A possible audience which is more distant from actual members of collaborations compared to the facilitators described above are Policy Makers or Governments. Collaboration is frequently actively promoted, sometimes even required, by Governments, yet they show little awareness of the difficulties inherent in the activities they promote and consequently give little help in carrying out the collaboration.

The aim of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* targeting Governments and Policy Makers would be to raise their awareness about collaborative processes and the efforts required in order to collaborate successfully. The ultimate aim could be to persuade government that when organisations are being forced into partnerships they need training and / or support on how to manage collaborative processes. This could, for example, lead to governments allocating funding for the hiring of facilitators who can provide help as described above. Therefore, a process targeting Governments and Policy Makers may indirectly help individuals actually collaborating.

#### 4) The world

One final possible audience identified by the *Design Group* was 'The World'. Taking 'The World' as an audience would incorporate all the sub groups as discussed above in addition to the 'general public'. However, the nature of a process targeted at 'The World' would obviously be very different to those aimed at smaller sub groups. A general low profile of collaboration as involving activities fundamentally different from other working arrangements as discussed in Chapter 1, was what generated the notion of 'The World' as an audience.

A process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* targeted at The World could raise the general awareness and profile of collaboration. The aim would be to reduce ignorance at a general level rather than provide detailed understanding. This could in turn ensure that individuals begin to recognise collaboration as a novel and unique approach to work.

#### 5.1.3 The choice of target audience

As discussed above, the audience comprising actual members of collaborations can usefully be divided into five sub categories which would aid the effective targeting of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The main problem with targeting the Actual Members of Collaborations audience however, is that although they frequently struggle to act effectively, many do not recognise collaborative activities as being fundamentally different from any other activity they undertake (see Section 5.1.1). For perfectly understandable reasons, they often have a sense of urgency to 'get on with' addressing the substantive purposes of the collaboration and a discussion of the process tends to be seen as a time-wasting diversion. As a potential audience therefore, they are neither likely to be actively seeking information about how to manage collaborative processes nor likely to be easily receptive to a *Transferring Insight to Practice* process. If this audience were to be the target, then gaining their interest would have to be a central part of the design.

The need for a first step of gaining interest would not be so prominent for Partnership Support Workers since their role is to facilitate collaboration amongst others. Therefore, they tend to be actively seeking help with ways of doing that. A similarly receptive group would be Group Process Facilitators working with collaborative core groups. Individuals in

this profession tend to be aware, actively seeking knowledge on the topic and looking out for new tools to help them in their tasks. The availability of Group Process Facilitators seems to vary in different parts of the world, but in general, collaboration core groups cannot rely on having a facilitator available.

Targeting the two more distant audiences, Policy Makers or Governments and The World, could also, as discussed above, have a positive, albeit more indirect, impact on collaborative practices. In the *Design Group's* view, all these audiences are important and ultimately need addressing. However, the Partnership Support Workers audience seemed to be most appropriate for initial focus because they are not only likely to benefit from a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*, but are also likely to be interested in and close to, collaborative groups. They are thus likely to be the most accessible audience and likely to provide leverage for pragmatic impact.

Thus the *Design Group* concluded that the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should target Partnership Support Workers who have a role to develop collaborative responses. Partnership Support Workers in this category are not likely to be professional facilitators and may see themselves as having the role of servicing others. They do not normally themselves take part in a collaboration but are likely to be at arms length of collaborators. Typically, they will be working with people who have started a collaborative process and may depend on collaboration amongst others to achieve their own aims. For example, staff of the Poverty Alliance fit this category and they do depend on collaboration amongst others to achieve their aim of developing collaborative responses to poverty. However, as explained in Chapter 4, some of the research that informs this thesis has been conducted with individuals involved in different collaborations as well as Partnership Support Workers.

## **5.2 Mechanisms for transferring insight**

The choice of transfer mechanisms is another key design issue for a process aimed at transferring theoretical insight to practice. This section reflects on the deliberate efforts aimed at identifying possible means by which collaboration insight may be transferred. The choice of audience, as discussed above, will naturally determine the appropriateness of any transfer mechanism. It was concluded above that the process for *Transferring Insight to*

*Practice* should target initially, Partnership Support Workers. The discussion below however, will include possible key criteria for choosing an appropriate transfer mechanism irrespective of target audience.

### 5.2.1 Key criteria for choosing transfer mechanisms

As argued above (Section 5.1.3), individuals do not usually view their collaborative activities to be any different from activities undertaken within the boundaries of a single organisation. Therefore, individuals are not necessarily aware that they need to learn how to manage collaborative activities and are therefore not seeking any source of knowledge on the topic. Any transfer mechanism ought therefore to be as attractive as possible to try to encourage initial use. As such, one possible criterion for choosing transfer mechanisms is that it should *encourage usage*.

The second criterion identified by the *Design Group*, is of a rather obvious character and relates directly to the aim of having an impact on practice. Thus the process must *be educational*, and hence of benefit to its audience. The individuals in the audience should feel more knowledgeable about collaboration activities as a result of having been exposed to the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The *Design Group's* view was that to meet this criterion, the process should stimulate individuals' thought processes.

A third criterion identified was that the transfer mechanisms ought to have a *flexible* rather than a rigid structure. The flexibility criterion emerged for several reasons. Firstly, regardless of audience, individuals within it are likely to differ for example, in terms of academic ability and knowledge of collaborative activities. The transfer mechanism should therefore allow for individuals' different levels of learning capacities as well as different levels of understanding of collaboration. Secondly, because individuals are keen to pursue their substantive tasks, it would be advantageous if the transfer mechanism could allow for a combination of the consideration of the substantive issues over which collaboration occurs with consideration of how to manage collaborative processes. A third concern relates to the way in which the theory is structured and subsequently conveyed. For example, it is fairly common to promote a step-by-step approach as though collaborations should go through fixed stages or processes (see for example, McCann, 1983; Gray, 1989; Kanter, 1994 as well as discussion on guide books in Chapter 3). However, the nature and needs of



collaborations can vary greatly depending on their membership, how they were initiated, what they were set up to do, where they are in their evolution and so on. Therefore, steps or processes adopted successfully by one collaboration may be highly inappropriate to another. A different approach, which is indeed fundamental to the design of the proposed process, is to focus on issues pertaining to collaborative processes rather than on processes per se. Thus the design focuses on exploring and developing the practical implications underlying issues of concern to individuals involved in collaboration (see discussion on *Collaboration Themes* Section 5.5.3 below) rather than on highly prescriptive processes. The transfer mechanism must therefore be flexible enough to allow this.

The 'encourage use' criterion above suggested that any transfer mechanism must be as attractive as possible to encourage initial use. In practice, this tends to mean that a relatively clear and hence simple, picture of what collaborators need to do would have to be presented. This is the approach taken by most authors of the 'how to do it' guides discussed in Chapter 3. It was argued in Chapter 2, however, that achieving success in collaboration is far from simple. Presenting a simple picture of collaboration may thus be done at the expense of practicality. For example, whilst it is useful to point out that the development of trust between participants is important, a guide which provides no clues about how to develop trust is unlikely to be viewed as helpful. In practice, the ability to develop trust will be affected by participants' skills at managing the diversity of goals, communicating across professional and natural language barriers, working across a diversity of organisational cultures and procedures and so on. The management of collaboration activities is not likely to be found to be straightforward even by highly sophisticated managers. Presenting a simplified picture of collaboration alone may thus be unhelpful either because the detail of how to manage a specific situation is missing or because a simple piece of advice may actually be misleading. One particularly important challenge in the design of the process has been that of balancing the need to capture and transfer the complexities pertaining to collaboration against the need for simplicity in understanding and ease of use by each audience. Hence, the ability to *Balance Complexity versus Simplicity*, was identified as a key criterion for choosing a transfer mechanism.

A final criterion, *Balance Experience versus Theory*, relates to the educational criterion and is concerned with ensuring that people 'take on board' theoretical insight. One key concern in that respect relates to working with multiple definitions of collaboration. Collaboration can mean a range of different things to a range of different people (see Chapter 1). For

example, for a number of community activists, collaboration seems to mean ‘community participation’ whereas for employees of public agencies collaboration might mean ‘working across organisational boundaries’. Collaboration suggests ‘community empowerment’ to some and ‘conflict resolution’ to others. For some it involves little more than the sharing of information while for others it involves implementing joint actions. To ensure that the insight makes sense to a chosen audience therefore, it is important to incorporate into the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* individuals’ own interpretation of collaboration. The implication of this is that the process has to be designed to work with different definitions of collaboration. The range of possible definitions or interpretations of collaboration points to the importance of exploring participants’ own views and experiences of collaboration. This is a principle that, in itself, Alliance staff regard as a priority. In addition, it seems likely to be easier for participants to take on board theoretical insight if this is reviewed and interpreted in the light of their own experiences (Bothams, 1992).

Related to the above arguments about balancing experience and theory is the issue of the ‘academic’ versus the ‘practical’ view. Theory is often perceived by practitioners as being too academic and not related to practice. As explained in Chapter 4, the theory aimed to be transferred via the process emerged through the study of collaboration in practice. Thus, if the theory is not practical then it is not valid theory. The participatory and action research capacity within which the process was designed further ensure the validity of the theory. A key design consideration has nevertheless been to find a way of conveying the theory so that it is perceived as practical.

The above discussion implies a process which both captures and builds on experiences and draws on theory in a way that appears overtly practical. In addition, the previous argument of simplicity versus complexity suggests that the theory must not only be practical, but must also be accessible in the first instance. The challenge is to find the right balance between working with and according to individuals’ experiences and introducing the theory on collaboration.

## **5.2.2 The choice of transfer mechanism**

Modern technology enables insight to be transferred by a range of different means. The transfer mechanisms considered by the *Design Group* to be viable options in view of

resource constraints were; written text, software (purpose designed for the process), training events and other perhaps more general means, such as academic courses, conferences, newspapers and newsletters. Another possible transfer mechanism considered briefly was facilitation, but this was ruled out as an option because the aim was to design a process that ultimately could be independent of those involved in the original design. Figure 5.2 aims to illustrate, in general, the range of considerations that need to be taken into account in choosing transfer mechanisms for a given audience. It is thus suggested that possible transfer mechanisms are assessed against the five key criteria discussed above bearing in mind the target audience and the specific aim of targeting that audience. The *Design Group* did not formally evaluate all the transfer mechanisms against all the possible audiences as a decision had been made to target the Partnership Support Workers audience. However, as illustrated in the remainder of this section, the criterion, including comparisons across other audiences, were used to guide the identification of an appropriate mechanism for targeting Partnership Support Workers.

Partnership Support Workers are likely to be conscious about their need to understand collaboration process issues in order to help others to collaborate. As such, they may be interested in using a variety of transfer mechanisms including for example, written text and software. Actual members involved in collaborative activities may as suggested above, be more reluctant to seek any information on collaboration process issues because they are primarily concerned with the substantive task at hand. Further, it may be reasonable to assume that training events, for example, would be more attractive than literature to actual members as well as Partnership Support Workers because they are interactive and can even be viewed as social events with other individuals in similar situations. The advantage with written text over training events is that it can be used by an individual whenever convenient. In terms of initially attracting an audience, rather than making it convenient for the audience to use it however, training events would be better. A purpose designed software package is likely to appear attractive only to individuals who are familiar with, and have available to them, the use of computers. As with written text therefore, it may be fair to assume that the software option is more suitable for targeting Partnership Support Workers than individuals as it cannot be assumed that all community activist for example, have access to computers. Thus, training events seem to be preferred over written text and software but there may be a limit to the number of training events that can be provided and also a limit to how many events an individual can attend. Perhaps the ideal solution would be to use training events in combination with written text.

<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>Collaborators, Individuals</b>	<b>Collaborators, Groups</b>	<b>Partnership Support Workers and Group Process Facilitators</b>	<b>Policy Makers and Governments</b>	<b>The World</b>
<b>AIMS OF TIP</b>	Provide direct help with management of collaborative activities	Provide direct help with management of collaborative activities	Enhance understanding of in collaboration, provide help and tools	Raise awareness of collaboration & efforts required to collaborate successfully	Raise general awareness and profile of collaboration
<b>TIP SHAPE</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>				
<b>Written Text</b>	Encourage Use Educational Flexible Balance Complexity vs. Simplicity Balance Experience vs. Theory				
<b>Software</b>	Encourage Use Educational Flexible Balance Complexity vs. Simplicity Balance Experience vs. Theory				
<b>Training Events</b>	Encourage Use Educational Flexible Balance Complexity vs. Simplicity Balance Experience vs. Theory				
<b>Academic Courses Conferences Newspapers Books etc.</b>	Encourage Use Educational Flexible Balance Complexity vs. Simplicity Balance Experience vs. Theory				

**Figure 5.2** Guidance matrix for choosing Transfer Mechanisms

It was stated above that the transfer mechanism must be educational. All the transfer mechanisms under consideration can be designed to provide education to a chosen audience. Perhaps intuitively however, most individuals would regard software and guidebooks as tools whereas training events imply education. Also, the *Design Group's* view was that an interactive transfer mechanism would be better able to stimulate individuals' thought processes and hence provide education. It may also be fair to assume that it is easier for an individual to identify with a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* which has been designed according to their specific needs. In terms of being educational therefore, training events may be preferred to written text.

The extent to which the transfer mechanism needs to be flexible in structure depends on the target audience and the purpose of targeting an audience. For example, if the process is targeted at collaborators who are keen to pursue their substantive tasks then it would be advantageous if the transfer mechanism could allow for a combination of the consideration of the substantive issues over which collaboration occurs with consideration of how to manage collaborative processes. This trade-off would not be required if the process was targeted at policy makers with the aim of raising their general awareness of collaboration. Partnership Support Workers, although often not themselves involved in collaboration, are likely to have quite different backgrounds, different learning capacities and different interpretations of collaboration. A transfer mechanism with a flexible structure would be able to incorporate those differences in experiences and hence stand a better chance of influencing support workers' practices. Of the transfer mechanisms under consideration, the training event option offers the greatest flexibility.

The extent to which complexities may be explained and transferred depends greatly on the type of transferring mechanism chosen. The review in Chapter 3 suggests that whilst it is possible to discuss a range of tasks and issues through guidebooks, is not easy to capture, discuss or convey the extent to which collaborative processes are complex. The confinement of linear text form leads to simplification and hence loss of complexity. Guidebooks may therefore not be the best means of developing peoples' consciousness about the complexities inherent in collaboration. The software option has not yet been explored but based on the flexibility of presentation format and the possibility of designing interactive software, it may be reasonable to assume that it would be possible to capture and transfer more of the complexities using a software package compared to written text. Similarly, whilst written text may be designed to allow some complexity to be captured and

transferred, for example, through worked examples and exercises, it is likely to be easier to achieve this through training events because the format is entirely flexible and training events can be easily designed to be interactive.

The aim of targeting Partnership Support Workers is to develop their understanding about complexities in collaboration and to provide them with tools and techniques to aid facilitation of collaboration. The ultimate aim is to enhance their ability to provide collaborators with direct help in managing their collaborative activities. Hence the more understanding about the complexity that is transferred to this audience, the greater the potential that the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* will have positive pragmatic impact. If, on the other hand, Policy Makers or The World were to be targeted, then the aim would be to raise awareness of collaboration. The aim would be to communicate that collaboration is difficult and complex rather than provide detail description of complexities. Therefore, it would be possible to convey the message via written text. The problem of encouraging use would of course still remain.

The extent to which it is possible to balance working with and according to individuals' experiences and introducing theory on collaboration depends on the transfer mechanism. The extent to which it is important to strike this balance depends on the target audience. For example, if the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* was aiming to raise general awareness of The World, then achieving this balance would not be necessary. If, on the other hand, the process was aiming to influence the actions of collaborators with a great deal of experience of collaboration, then getting the balance right would be crucial. Partnership Support Workers are also likely to have different experiences and interpretations of collaboration. Thus, a transfer mechanism which would allow taking account of their experiences whilst simultaneously introducing theory would be preferred.

Guidebooks can encourage individuals to think hard about their own experiences and apply them in solving designed exercises through which theory may be introduced. Similarly, a software package may possibly be designed to be interactive and able to respond to individuals' search for answers, for example, triggered by words commonly used in association with *Collaboration Themes* (see Section 5.3 below). If the authors of such books and software have been successful in anticipating and building individuals' experiences into their designs, then it is possible that a balance between experience and theory might be found. However, it is likely to be a lot easier to achieve this ambitious balance through training events where the

flexible structure can incorporate a range of different exercises and where individuals can share and build on each others' insights and experiences.

The considerations of the criteria as discussed above lead to the conclusion that the 'training events transfer mechanism' would be adopted for the 'Partnership Support Workers audience'. The view was that individuals in this audience could be encouraged to use the training events and that they would find using these more stimulating and fun compared to that of using a software package or reading a guidebook. The training events could provide collaborative insight and thus be educational. Training events could also be designed to be interactive. They could to a certain extent incorporate specific needs and allow a balance between providing ease of understanding with that of introducing complexity. Furthermore, they could provide a forum for individuals to share their insights and experiences whilst at the same time find a balance between building on individuals' experiences and introducing theory. The training events option therefore had the potential of meeting all the five criteria discussed above.

### **5.3 Collaboration Themes**

The final key decision area to be discussed in this chapter is concerned with the particular collaboration issues for which insight might usefully be transferred to the target audience. The topic of this section is thus *Collaboration Themes*, which essentially means categories of issues typically of concern to people involved in collaborative practices. There were a number of reasons why it was desirable to identify such themes for the purpose of transferring collaboration insight to practice. Firstly, the complexity of collaboration (see Chapter 1) suggests that there may be a need to break the subject into manageable chunks. A focus on topical themes could serve that purpose. Using a list of themes would also allow a focus on issues pertaining to processes, rather than step by step processes *per se* (see Section 5.2 above) and would therefore provide more flexibility. A list of themes was also believed to be more inclusive than for example, a list of 'success and hindrance factors' (see Chapter 2) as there may be issues preying on collaborators' minds that do not fall within either the success or the hindrance categories. Also, an issue that was identified during the design phase and which was important to the Alliance managers, was that the process for

*Transferring Insight To Practice* should build on people's own experiences. A list of *Collaboration Themes* would provide an insight to what individuals' experiences would typically be.

### **5.3.1 The Identification of Collaboration Themes**

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the *Collaboration Themes* were identified by analysing 4 isolated research events. The four research events were as follows:

- 1) A case study on 'Local Anti-poverty Strategies - A focus on Collaboration' involving 4 community collaborative groups throughout the former Strathclyde Region in Scotland, concerned with tackling poverty in their area (Vangen, 1992, Vangen, 1995 and Barr and Vangen, 1994).
- 2) Action Research with the Strathclyde Poverty Alliance's (SPA) Children and Families Poverty Working Group. Chris Huxham, Colin Eden and I worked intensively with this group over a 2 year period. The aim was to help the core group members develop their ability to manage their collaboration effectively as a way of developing and promoting a strategy for tackling child poverty in the former Strathclyde Region (Huxham, Eden and Vangen, 1997).
- 3) A workshop on 'collaboration between social agencies' run by 3 colleagues, initiated by SPA and attended by 23 SPA members. The aim of the workshop was to explore ways of improving the quality of collaboration between agencies committed to tackling poverty (Barr, 1995).
- 4) A workshop on collaboration run by Chris Huxham and Catherine Barr and attended by approximately 20 individuals. A specific focus of the workshop was the promotion of community involvement in collaboration (Barr, 1995).

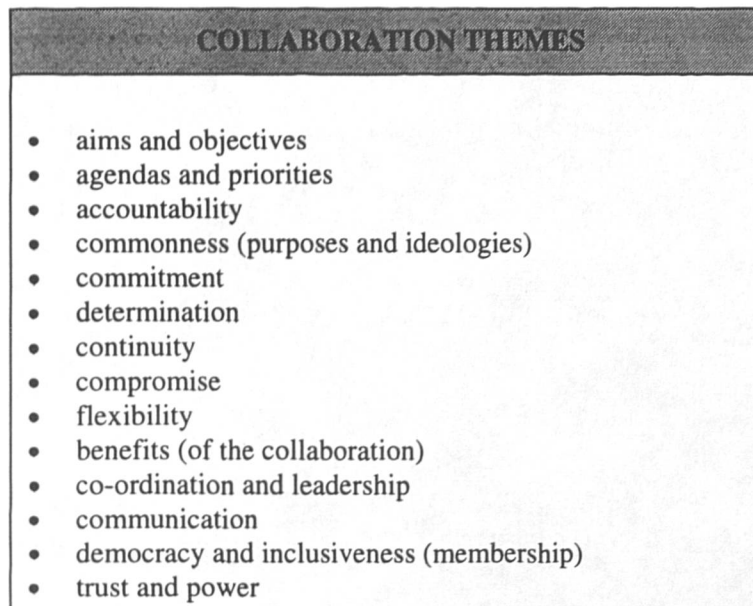


As will be clear from the above, the four events had quite different purposes and hence structures. However, the initial stage of all the events involved bringing out the views and experiences of collaborative practice of the individuals involved. This rendered the data suitable for the identification of the themes. As explained in Chapter 4, in all four cases, the data had been clustered and analysed using the Graphics Cope Software.

These analyses of a relatively large number of individuals' views and experiences of collaborative practice then formed the basis for identifying the issues typically of concern to people involved in collaborative activities. The issues were identified by examining each cluster of issues from the four cases. Issues that were common across the four case studies were brought together and categories of issues emerged. The word or words most frequently used by individuals in reference to each category were chosen as labels in an attempt to ensure that the resulting list of themes (Figure 5.3) was one which a large number of individuals could identify with. The analyses resulted in maps of each category showing comments made with reference to each theme and a summary map showing how the themes link to one another. These analyses were not intended to be exhaustive but rather they were intended to give a good idea of the type of issues that might be of concern to people involved in collaboration.

### **5.3.2 The characteristics of Collaboration Themes**

The *Collaboration Themes* represent categories of issues typically mentioned by individuals who have been encouraged to talk about collaborations that they have been involved in. The theme labels / headings are those that typically first 'spring to mind' as opposed to, issues identified and conceptualised from the literature of collaboration. In interpreting the content and the significance of the themes however, the literature is obviously important. The *Collaboration Themes* provide valuable indications of the issues which individuals say are problematic. As mentioned above, the themes are not 'success or hindrance' factors though they represent the type of difficulties and experiences that may cause collaborative inertia (Huxham and Vangen, 1994). The themes are generic issues pertaining to the processes of collaboration rather than substantive issues over which collaboration take place. Thus, characteristically, the *Collaboration Themes* are process oriented, generic and indicative of issues causing concern or reward in collaborative practices. The labels people most commonly use in reference to the themes are listed in Figure 5.3.



**Figure 5.3 Collaboration Themes as identified by people involved in collaboration**

### 5.3.3 A Description of Collaboration Themes

A full discussion and interpretation of the *Collaboration Themes* can be found in Huxham and Vangen (1996). The purpose of this section however, is merely to clarify what individuals involved in collaboration themselves typically say and mean when they talk briefly about these themes. This discussion is deliberately kept simple because the purpose is to identify the types of issues that people say are problematic and which will instantly strike a chord. The following is thus a brief and rather superficial description of each of the *Collaboration Themes*.

With regards to the theme *aims and objectives*, people say they are concerned about having clarity of purpose and objectives as that allow them to be clear about why the collaboration is undertaken and why they are a part of it. It is typically argued that clarity of aims minimises false expectations and misunderstandings of the tasks to be undertaken. Individuals are also concerned about the nature of aims, with some arguing that the remit is too wide and others that is too narrow. Individuals often claim that cohesiveness and task orientation is needed for the collaboration to move forward. Individuals also say that they have difficulties with the aims of the collaboration because the reality is such that

organisations participating in the collaboration have different aims. Further, aims have to be set in light of the availability of funding and resources as opposed to requirements.

Closely related to aims and objectives is the theme *agendas and priorities*. Some individuals say that organisations' agendas and priorities should be incorporated into the collaboration's agenda and others say that there is a need to compromise on different agendas. These concerns tend to suggest that the collaborators need to develop a realistic agenda as a group, which would both ensure that organisations are able to participate whilst at the same time, avoid members pushing their own agendas.

In relation to the theme *accountability*, people are concerned with issues such as who or what members represent when they participate in the collaboration and the possible tension of accountability to the collaboration versus accountability to their employer organisations. This theme is obviously closely related to the issues of incorporating organisations' agendas as discussed above.

The theme *commonness* aims to capture that a lot of individuals seem to say that whilst it is important to recognise that there are differences in terms of views, aims, agendas and priorities, it is important to emphasise what the members have in common both on an individual and an organisational basis.

The theme *commitment* is one which, when asked to reflect on their experiences, individuals are almost certain to say something about. Some will say that commitment to the collaboration is needed in the shape of genuine support of partnership. Others see commitment as being about the substantive purpose of the collaboration and that all individual members must be dedicated and committed to the aims and philosophy of the group. Others again say there is a need to have members who are able to commit on behalf of their organisations. Finally, individuals sometimes recognise that commitment is bound to vary and that there is a need to resolve different levels of commitment.

With regards to the theme *determination*, people say that there is a need to be persistent and to have the right attitude to collaborating. Being committed, accepting that partnerships evolve over time and that collaboration can take a lot more time than anticipated are all believed to be important attitudes for individuals to have.

The theme *continuity* relates to people saying that there is a need to gain continuity both in terms of attendance at meetings and between meetings. Individuals have argued that members should be encouraged to make time for meetings and only individuals who will have the time to attend most meetings should be involved. It is argued that continuity will avoid time being wasted by having to back track at meetings and that a slowing down of the process is avoided thus making progress and keeping a driving-force going.

In relation to the theme *compromise*, individuals say that a range of compromises are required on different agendas, work practises and standards, styles of working, organisational cultures and the specific nature of different organisations.

The theme *flexibility* aims to capture views that flexibility is needed both in terms of membership characteristics so as to participate across age, class and sex boundaries, and in terms of structure to enable the collaboration to react to changes in its environment.

The theme *benefits* is the only theme which is not about difficulties and relates to people saying that it is important to realise that a collaboration can produce outcomes which are more than the sums of the parts. Arguments supporting this view range from helping each other being more effective at creating a potential for innovative work, positive change within organisations and wider strategic planning.

The theme *co-ordination and leadership* captures a range of issues such as having a constitution and an appropriate structure of the collaborative group, addressing working processes by working out how to work together and addressing effectiveness, progress and evaluation. The theme also includes comments about leadership and indications of the dilemma of there often being a lack of overall responsibility with leadership being required but without allowing anyone to take over.

The theme *communication* captures a wide range of comments which in summary say that good communication is needed between the core members of the collaboration, between the collaboration and the member organisations and between the collaboration and the wider community.

The theme *democracy and inclusiveness* captures a range of comments to do with who to include as members, the nature of membership, the size of the group and the need for democracy and equality between members.

Finally, the theme *trust and power* captures a large number of concerns about the need to build trust between members, the need to deal with mistrust between organisations, the need to minimise inter-agency hostility and to deal with power differences. The large number of comments associate with this theme suggest that trust is indeed an important issue in collaboration. Trust is also an issue which recently has been given much attention by researchers (see Chapter 2).

The above description was aimed at identifying the types of issues that people involved in collaboration say are problematic. The aim was also to use language typically used by individuals involved in collaboration. As such, the description may reflect the level of understanding of collaboration process issues that collaborators can, at best, be expected to have (unless they have studied collaborative processes in detail). In terms of the process for *Transferring Insight To Practice* therefore, this description should give clues as to what might be sensible starting points for transferring insight and thus help in preparing the theory and the level at which to pitch the complexity. The comments are generally superficial in many respects. For example, although they give clear indications of the type of issues that cause concern to people involved in collaboration, they do not generally provide any suggestions about how to manage these issues. The themes are obviously closely related and often also in tension with one another. The tensions are not immediately obvious. For example, in the interest of *democracy and inclusiveness* it may be desirable to include all those with a stake in the issues tackled by the collaboration whereas in the interest of *continuity* it may not be feasible to include all stakeholders. Regardless of their superficial nature however, because the themes represent key areas of concern, they provide an agenda upon which the process for *Transferring Insight To Practice* must be built.

### **5.3.4 The role of Collaboration Themes**

As suggested above, the themes are very superficial in nature and other research (see Chapter 2) suggests that there is a lot more substance underlying the themes than is immediately obvious. However, because the themes represent issues of concern to

individuals involved in collaboration, their primary role in the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* is to be an agenda upon which insight may be transferred. This is based on the understanding that an initial focus on the themes would pave the way to gaining an understanding of the complexity that lies under their surface. The focus on themes has a significant impact on structure both in terms of balancing theory with experience and simplicity with complexity as discussed above. The significance of themes in the proposed process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* will be returned to in Chapter 8.

#### **5.4 Summary of key preliminary decision areas**

This chapter has addressed three areas of key concern to the process of *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Possible audiences for the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* were identified as; Collaborators addressed as individuals or as groups; Partnership Support Workers; Group Process Facilitators; Policy Makers and Governments and The Word. It was concluded that the initial target audience for the *Transferring Insight to Practice* process should comprise Partnership Support Workers. This target audience was selected because Partnership Support Workers would not only be likely to benefit from a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* but would also be likely to be interested and hence accessible. Further, Partnership Support Workers would provide a potential impact on practice because they work closely with collaborative groups. Secondly, it was concluded that insight should be sought transferred to Partnership Support Workers by means of training events rather than other possible mechanisms such as written text or software. Training events were chosen because they could meet the key criteria identified as important in choosing a transfer mechanism. Thus, it was concluded that the audience could be encouraged to use the training events transfer mechanism and that training events could provide collaboration insight and be educational. Furthermore, training events could be flexible rather than rigid in structure and thus allow a balance to be achieved between simplifying (to aid initial understanding) and conveying the complexity of collaboration. Training events could also allow a balance to be achieved between building on individuals' experiences and introducing theory on collaboration. Finally, key issues of concern to collaborators, *Collaboration Themes*, were discussed. The themes identified were aims and objectives, agendas and priorities, accountability, commonness, commitment, determination continuity, compromise, flexibility, benefits, co-ordination and leadership, communication, democracy and inclusiveness and trust and power. It was concluded that the *Collaboration*

*Themes* should set the agenda upon which insight may be transferred and thus pave the way to providing Partnership Support Workers with an understanding of the complexity in collaboration.

In addition to these three key areas of research output, the research efforts described in this chapter also led to the identification of an initial set of Design Issues. The Design Issues are issues that would have to be integrated or accounted for in the design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. As discussed in Section 5.1.1, although no deliberate efforts were devoted solely to identifying 'issues the process must allow for and handle', such issues naturally emerged during the *Design Group*'s discussions about possible audiences, transfer mechanisms and collaboration themes. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, the inductive analytical process applied to the focused discussions of the *Design Group* members led to the formation of concepts expressed via Design Issues. Although they were not listed in this format at that stage of the research process, the design issues are captured in notes taken at meetings. This initial set of Design Issues thus informed and influenced the design of the first two training events as discussed in Chapter 7. As they relate directly to the discussion in Chapter 7, the Design Issues in question are listed in Figure 7.2 rather than here. In the following chapter, specific means for transferring insight to practice developed as part of this research are discussed. Both these *Transfer Means* and the Design Issues discussed above are central to the discussion of the research workshops in Chapter 7.

**CHAPTER 6 A DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC MEANS FOR TRANSFERRING  
INSIGHT TO PRACTICE**

- 6.1 Exercise on Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration
- 6.2 Elaboration on Clusters generated via exercise on Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration
- 6.3 Interactive Lecture on Collaboration
- 6.4 Defining collaboration exercise
- 6.5 Case Study based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration
- 6.6 Case Study Based Elaboration on Collaboration Barriers
- 6.7 Summary of means for Transferring Insight to Practice



## CHAPTER 6 A DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC MEANS FOR TRANSFERRING INSIGHT TO PRACTICE

A central and integral part of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* was the design, development and use of specific *Transfer Means* as discussed in Chapter 4. The *Transfer Means* were designed in order to enable Collaborators and Partnership Support Workers to explore collaboration process issues and take on board collaboration insight. Six distinctively different *Transfer Means* were developed and tested as part of the series of *Research Workshops* which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The design of the *Transfer Means* built on design issues emerging as part of the research process. In addition, familiarity with Group Decision Support (GDS) techniques informed the development of all the *Transfer Means*. Some of the *Transfer Means* use GDS exercises previously developed and used for other purposes. The focus here is on the *Transfer Means*' ability to transfer collaboration insight, as part of training workshops on collaboration, to Collaborators and Partnership Support Workers. The *Transfer Means* are thus an integral part of the *Research Workshops*. They are however discussed separately in this chapter in order to facilitate ease of reading and understanding of both these specific *Transfer Means* and the *Research Workshops*.

The purpose of this chapter is thus only to describe the design of each of the *Transfer Means* and their intended role in the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The integration of these means in the design of the training events and the participants' responses to them will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### 6.1 Exercise on gathering individuals' experiences and views on collaboration

As the name suggests, *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* is an exercise designed to enable participants (those undertaking the exercise) to share their own views and experiences on collaboration. It is intended to enable all participants to contribute with their own views anonymously and provide a picture of the collective views and experiences of all the participants. The exercise was designed to be an efficient way of gathering a first impression of the extent and nature of participants' experiences and what angle they are approaching the subject from. The exercise was thus not designed to create

an in-dept view of participants' experiences although this is possible if the number of participants is not too large and time is sufficient to allow discussion of the issues identified during the exercise. No insight on collaboration is injected into the exercise. However, as the exercise provides an initial impression of the participants' views and experiences of collaboration it can help a facilitator decide how to proceed with transferring collaborative insight to the participants.

The exercise makes use of flip-charts hung on a wall and post-its or oval shaped cards. In brief, the exercise encourages the participants to express their views and experiences by responding to three very general questions about collaboration; what makes collaboration work; what are the difficulties in collaboration; and in what ways can difficulties be overcome. Drawing on their own experiences, the participants are asked to write one idea per post-it, being as specific as possible, including personal experience and opinions and if possible, using action statements. The post-its are put on flip-charts hung on a wall. A view put forth by one individual typically triggers reactions from other individuals and so on. The participants are asked to cluster their post-its by putting those with similar ideas together in a group. The use of post-its or ovals and blue-tack facilitate this process as the post-its or ovals may be easily moved around and hung so that they slightly overlap. The participants continue writing ideas as long as they have something new to contribute or until the allocated time has run out. Finally, the participants label each cluster by deciding on a keyword or two that best describes the theme of each cluster. In this way, the participants begin to build their own story of collaboration. This process is similar to that described by Ackermann (1993).

Experience of running the exercise on a number of occasions suggests that individuals usually enjoy the exercise and that it can therefore be an excellent 'ice-breaker' between individuals as well as a 'warm up' to talking about collaboration. Usually, a group of 6 individuals will generate around 9 clusters with 4 - 11 ovals in each. The labels will typically be among the list of *Collaboration Themes* as discussed in Chapter 5. The exercise may be run as a self-managed exercise and an 'idiot's guide' to the exercise was prepared for that purpose (see Appendix 1). Accompanying notes for facilitators wanting to use the exercise were also prepared.

As mentioned above, this exercise was not designed to provide theoretical insight of collaboration. The next two *Transfer Means* discussed immediately below however, were

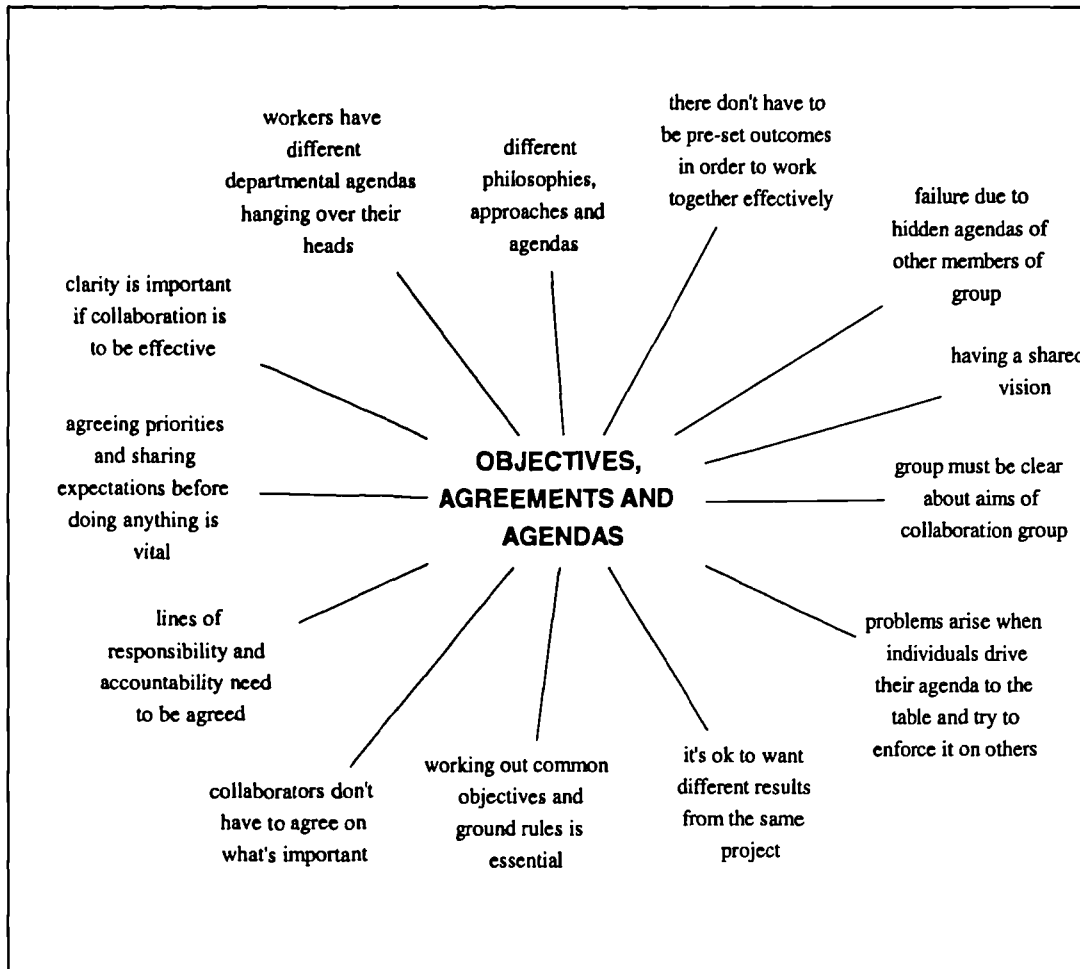
both designed explicitly to transfer insight whilst building on the participants' experiences as expressed in this exercise.

## **6.2 Elaboration on clusters generated via exercise on gathering individuals' experiences and views on collaboration**

*A Transfer Means, Elaborating on Participants' Experiences Expressed via Clusters* as generated by the exercise on Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration discussed above, was developed. This *Transfer Means* is intended to provide participants with insight of collaboration whilst building directly on their own experiences as expressed via the clusters.

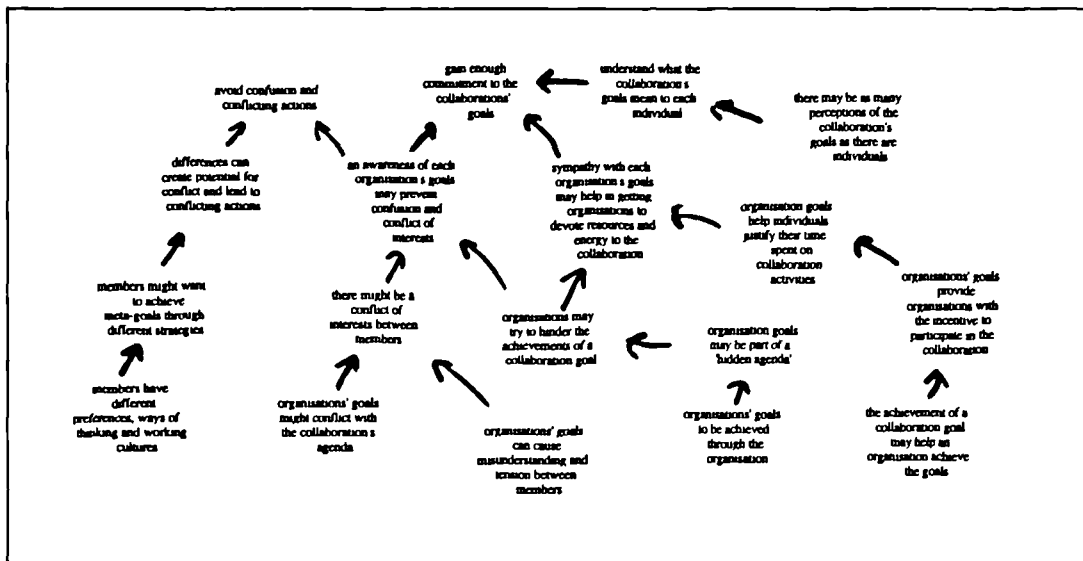
Briefly, the technique entails a facilitated discussion around a chosen cluster. The discussion and facilitation is heavily influenced by theory on Collaboration (see Chapter 2) in relation to a chosen cluster. The participants are asked to develop the chosen cluster in view of that specific theory. In designing this *Transfer Means*, the 'single concepts and links' technique used in constructing 'cause maps' was utilised. The use of this technique may facilitate ease of understanding through simplifications made by breaking the theory into single concepts or ideas. At the same time, the genuine complexity (see Chapter 1) of collaboration may be implied through building links between the concepts.

This *Transfer Means* is perhaps best illustrated by an example. The theme 'aims and objectives' always seems to one that collaborators struggle with and it is also an obvious starting point for most collaborators. The exercise on Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration will therefore usually result in a cluster on aims and objectives. Therefore, the attempt at using this particular *Transfer Means* was tried with an exploration of this theme. The content of a group's cluster on this theme is reproduced in Figure 6.1 below (each of the concepts in the figure will be written on an oval).



**Figure 6.1 One group's cluster on 'aims and objectives'**

The goal-taxonomy described in Chapter 2 forms the basis of the discussion aimed at transferring theoretical insight. The ideas captured by the goal taxonomy are conceptualised and summarised as illustrated in Figure 6.2 below (each of the concepts in the figure will be written on an oval). Enlarged versions of both the goal-taxonomy and Figure 6.2 are hung on a wall for all participants to view as and when necessary. Accompanying support material would also be a flip-chart on *Collaboration Themes* which would serve to illustrate that in developing one or two chosen clusters only a few of the issues that are important in relation to collaboration are elaborated.



**Figure 6.2** Concepts capturing complexity of goals in collaboration.

This specific means presents the participants with the opportunity to make a link between 'theory' and 'practice' by comparing their own views on this issue (an example of which is captured in Figure 6.1) with that suggested by theoretical insight (as presented by the goals taxonomy and Figure 6.2). The participants would be encouraged to develop their own cluster in view of the theory by taking as many of the theoretical concepts as they would like and adding them to their own cluster. Thus, in view of their own experiences on this specific theme as captured by the cluster exercise, participants would be able to take on board or reject the arguments captured by the goal taxonomy. The *Transfer Means* is intended to allow participants to take on board the complexities of the situations at their own pace and when relevant and to relate the gained insight directly to that experience.

The elaboration of a cluster in view of theory on that cluster could increase participants awareness of the complexity of collaboration processes and help them to gain a vocabulary for example, by adopting the use of concepts such as *Collaborative Advantage* and *Collaborative Inertia*.

### 6.3 Interactive lecture on collaboration

The second *Transfer Means* designed explicitly to transfer insight whilst building on the exercise on *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* was developed as an *Interactive Lecture on Collaboration*. The lecture aims to ensure that specific collaboration insight which research suggests may be valuable, may be transferred to collaborators. The lecture was designed to be interactive in that the audience is encouraged to interrupt to ask questions and to comment and elaborate on any of the concepts conveyed in the lecture. The lecture was also designed to build on the participants' experiences by, throughout the lecture, deliberately making as many links to the participants' clusters as possible and to encourage the individuals to elaborate on the issues in view of the theoretical concepts introduced via the lecture.

The collaboration theory upon which the interactive lecture was designed was explained in detail in Chapter 2. Only very brief references to that conceptual material will be made here. Thus, the lecture started with an explanation of the notion of *Collaborative Advantage* arguing that the concept is useful because it legitimates collaboration and hence legitimates a discussion about collaboration. This was followed by an explanation of the concept of *Collaborative Inertia* and some reasons why inertia happens such as factors slowing down the output rate. This was followed by some definitional concepts to do with the incentives to collaborate and the level at which collaboration may take place, i.e. individual versus organisational level. The notion of *Balancing Tensions* was introduced as a way of managing collaboration. The concept of *Collaborative Capability* was explained as it relates closely to the complexities of working together. The interactive lecture was concluded with a discussion of the *Goal Taxonomy*.

Thus, the interactive lecture was designed to provide the audience with insight to a range of issues in collaboration. The advantage of delivering insight in this fashion is that its content and sequence can be prepared in advance of the training event. Its success however, depends greatly on the audience's readiness and willingness to pay attention to its content. The issue of an audience readiness to pay attention to collaboration process issues was discussed in Chapter 5 and will be returned to in Chapters 7 and 8.

The next *Transfer Means* discussed immediately below is an exercise which is aimed at both gathering individuals experiences and at the same time, transfer specific insight on collaboration.

#### **6.4 Defining collaboration exercise**

The *Defining Collaboration* exercise was designed on the basis that different individuals will have different views on what collaboration actually is (see Chapter 1). It was therefore designed originally as a way of discovering how different people view collaboration. The exercise aims to enable participants to tease out and explore different definitional characteristics based on their own experiences of collaboration. It also aims to allow individuals to gain ownership over the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as a whole.

Briefly, the exercise is divided into three parts. Part 1 is concerned directly with individuals' experiences and asks individuals to consider different collaborations that they have been involved in and to chose one which they can describe briefly to the other participants. Part 2 aims to enable participants to identify specific characteristics of their chosen collaborations by each in turn, answering questions about membership, structure and purpose. Incidentally, the challenge in designing this part of the exercise was to identify ways that would enable individuals to describe their 'world taken for granted' and so begin to identify characteristics. Huxham's (1996d) work on 'characteristics of collaboration' where she builds on her own and others' research into collaboration provided guidance in designing this part of the exercise. Thus, appropriate questions were identified by examining Huxham's proposed characteristics with the view to discover what questions would have to be asked in order to arrive at the various definitional characteristics. Part 3 is concerned with identifying general definitional characteristics by elaborating on Part 2 and building more directly on the theory. Each participant is asked to identify definitional characteristics by reviewing their flip-charts and suggesting what it is that makes their chosen collaboration a collaboration. In order to make the characteristic as specific as possible, the participants are encouraged to define opposite poles on each definitional characteristic. Finally, to further encourage individuals to identify definitional characteristic and to build more directly on the theory, the participants are asked to apply the definitional characteristics table, reproduced in Figure 6.3, to their chosen collaboration. Thus, the

participants are asked to choose a point on each line which best described their collaboration. Again, the table of definitional characteristics in Figure 6.3 was informed mainly by Huxham's (1996d) work on definitional characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS TABLE	
Voluntary .....	Mandated
Informal .....	Formalised
Individual Member .....	Full organisation
Few communication links .....	Many communication links
Coalition .....	Competition
Vertical .....	Symbiotic .....
Strategic .....	Horizontal
Information Sharing .....	Operational
Information Sharing .....	Joint Action
Ideological .....	Enhancing another's capacity
Changing Power Relationships .....	Instrumental
Advancing a shared vision .....	Effecting task based change
Organisations working together .....	Resolving Conflict
Empower the weak .....	Community Participation
	Increase own power

**Figure 6.3 Definitional characteristics of collaboration identified from literature**

Thus, the exercise aims to draw general learning from description and discussion of collaboratives that individuals have been involved in. The exercise tends to unravel the complex nature of collaboration and can, as such, enhance insight to the collaborative process and aid the development of a conceptual framework about collaboration.

Experience of running the exercise suggests that individuals usually enjoy it and find it informative and helpful. The exercise may be suitable as a self-managed exercise and accompanying notes for facilitators wanting to use the exercise were prepared (see Appendix 2).

Unlike the *Transfer Means* discussed above, the final two means discussed below were developed in response to two case studies capturing specific collaborations that participants of the *Research Workshops* during Phase 3 had been involved in. The case studies were prepared by the participants for the purpose of this research.



## 6.5 Case Study based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration

This particular *Transfer Means*, a *Case Study based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration*, was developed as a way of facilitating discussion of a specific case study presented by the workshop participants as will be discussed in Chapter 7. However, the development of this *Transfer Means* was driven mainly by insight on collaboration and may as such, be applicable to the discussion of collaborations in general. Theoretical insight on collaboration (see Chapter 2) suggests that it would be sensible to facilitate a discussion about a collaboration by asking the participants to elaborate on the membership of the collaboration and the reasons why members are involved. Questions about incentives for being involved in a collaboration lead naturally to a discussion about goals in collaborations. As mentioned in Section 6.2 above, the theme 'aims and objectives' always seems to be one that collaborators face difficulties with. The case presented by the workshop participants also incorporated a range of difficulties relating to goals. This *Transfer Means* may indeed be seen as a way of elaborating on the 'aims and objectives' theme generated via the exercise on *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* as discussed in Section 6.1.

The development of this particular *Transfer Means* therefore drew greatly on the theoretical concepts captured by the goal-taxonomy. The specific technique makes use of this 'goals material' in two different ways; as input in the same format as that used for an interactive lecture to ensure that certain key points are communicated; and as a framework for discussing the particular collaboration under focus directly, thus attempting to show the relevance of the theoretical material to a specific collaboration. Exploring the collaboration and 'lecturing' are done in parallel.

The participants are asked to try to identify collaboration goals as well as organisation and individual goals for each of the organisations and individuals involved in the collaboration under discussion. The table reproduced in Figure 6.4 below is drawn on flip-charts hung on a wall to provide a framework for individuals to think about the questions. Their specific responses to these questions and other general ideas expressed during the discussion are captured on flip-charts. These responses may then be transcribed and given to the participants as a record of their discussion.

GOALS	For the collaboration	For Org 1	For Org 2 .....	For Org n	For Individ. 1..	For Individ. n
Explicit						
Assumed						
Hidden						

**Figure 6.4 Goal Categories Table**

This *Transfer Means* aims to generate a focused discussion about a range of concepts pertaining to goals, membership and structures. Gaining an understanding of these issues should enable participants to view collaborations in a more analytical fashion. Gaining an understanding of the complexities relating to goals in collaboration may enhance participants' awareness that agreeing on goals for the collaboration may be far from simple. An understanding of these issues may also provide pragmatic benefits relating to participants' ability to understand collaborators behaviours based on an understanding of their possible goals.

## **6.6 Case study based elaboration on collaboration barriers**

This *Transfer Means*, a *Case Study Based Exploration of Collaboration Barriers*, was also prepared as a way of facilitating discussion of a specific case study presented by workshop participants, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. In comparison to the Case Study Based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration discussed above, this *Transfer Means* builds less directly on collaboration theory. In fact, the aim was to provide minimal direct theoretical input and rather aim to transfer collaboration insight indirectly by suggesting a method for exploring issues raised by a case study. The choice of issues to emphasise on, among those raised in the case study, was informed by theory. Although the *Transfer Means* was proposed in view of a specific case study, it is likely to be useful for the discussion of other collaborations not least because the technique itself is based largely on the well tried and tested development of cause maps.

The particular case study presented by the participants raised a range of issues typically causing concern for people involved in collaboration and concluded by identifying seven barriers to collaboration. This led logically to proposing a method which would allow the

participants to explore these barriers. This resulted in a 2 Part exercise for exploring collaboration barriers. The 'cause maps' technique was utilised because 'cause maps' can both be easily built up by individuals working together in groups and can also provide an effective illustration of important issues.

Briefly, Part 1 of the proposed exercise asks participants to build 'cause maps' relating to each collaboration barrier using flip-charts and post-its. The exercise asks the participants to start by choosing which blockage they wish to explore. The name of each blockage chosen is placed in the middle of two flip-charts and in light of the specific case study and any other experience, the participants build a picture of the barrier that they would be prepared to share with the others. The participants are asked to use the specific case study or any other relevant experiences but to write generically to relate to collaboration in other situations rather than only specifically to the case study under investigation.

It may be easier to explore collaboration barriers using 'negative phrases' as typically, individuals can more easily recall negative experiences than positive ones. If the participants have chosen to use negative phrases during the first part of the exercise, then they may be encouraged to change them to positive statements during the second part of the exercise, to make the example more constructive.

The purpose of Part 2 of the exercise is to make the picture action oriented. The participants are asked to enhance the picture built during Part 1 by building responses to the barriers. In addition to turning phrases into positive ones, the participants are asked to elaborate the picture with the aim to show what can typically be done by collaborators in response to each issue. Thus, the participants are encouraged to make the example constructive and action oriented. An example of a picture built by one group is reproduced in Figure 6.5 below.

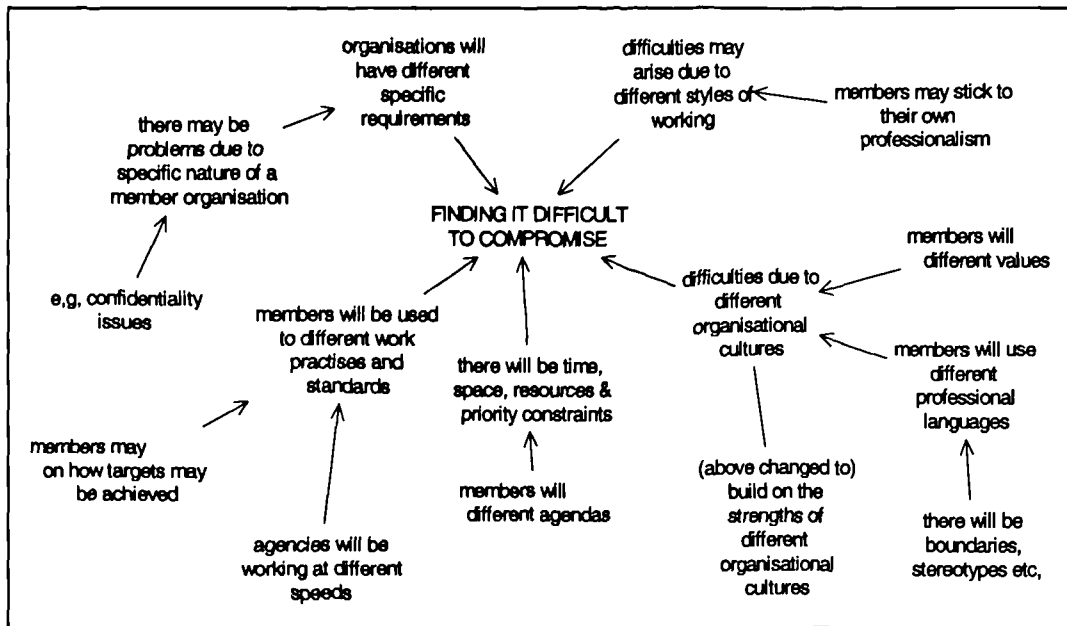


Figure 6.5 'Cause map' example on collaboration blockage

A group of three individuals is probably ideal for building cause maps. When more individuals are attending training events, they may be advised to work in groups of three, each group addressing different barriers. If this is the case, then the groups may share their pictures with one another between Part 1 and Part 2 of the exercise.

Yellow post-its may be used during the first part and green post-its during the second part of the exercise in order to distinguish between general issues and responses. The green post-its would then indicate possible tools that could be developed in response to issues of concern in collaboration.

## 6.7 Summary of means for Transferring Insight to Practice

The purpose of the research which is the subject of this thesis was to develop ways of *Transferring Insight to Practice*. This chapter has discussed six specific *Transfer Means* developed as part of that research. A key design principle adhered to was to build on individuals' own experiences whilst aiming to transfer insight on collaboration. The extent

to which the means build directly on individuals' experiences and the extent to which they transfer insight directly vary greatly. For example, whilst two of the *Transfer Means* provided ways to tease out individuals' views and experiences, another two were designed retrospectively based on individuals' experiences as expressed via their own case studies. Similarly, one of the means was designed as an interactive lecture, directly transferring insight to the audience, whereas another was designed to transfer insight entirely indirectly by suggesting a technique for participants to explore difficulties in collaboration as identified by themselves through a case study.

In summary, the specific *Transfer Means* developed were as follows. The *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration Transfer Means* which aims to enable participants to share their views and experiences on collaboration rather than provide individuals with insight on collaboration. The two means which were designed to build on this were; the *Elaborating on Clusters generated via Exercise on Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* which aims to provide participants with insight to collaboration on specific issues relating to their own experiences; and the *Interactive Lecture on Collaboration*, which aims to transfer insight on collaboration as a whole whilst referring to individuals experiences. The *Transfer Means; Defining Collaboration*, aims to tease out individuals' views and experiences on what collaboration means as well as transfer theoretical insight on collaboration with regards to how collaboration may be defined. The two *Transfer Means* developed in specific response to participants' own case studies were; the *Case Study based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration* which aims to enhance individuals' awareness of the complexity of collaboration and the difficulties of agreeing on goals; and the *Case Study Based Exploration of Collaboration Barriers* aims to enable participants to explore barriers to collaboration and suggest ways of overcoming them.

The way in which these *Transfer Means* were applied in the *Action Research workshops* and the way in which they were received by the participants is discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH WORKSHOPS**

- 7.1 Phase 1 - Research Workshops with Collaborators
  - 7.1.1 Research Workshops with Collaborators (events 1 and 2) as designed
  - 7.1.2 The Research Workshops with Collaborators as they unfolded
  - 7.1.3 Research output from Research Workshops with Collaborators
  
- 7.2 Phase 2 - Defining Collaboration Research Workshops (events 3, 4 and 5)
  - 7.2.1 The design of the Defining Collaboration Research Workshops (events 3, 4 &5)
  - 7.2.3 The Defining Collaboration Research Workshops as they unfolded
  - 7.2.4 Research Output from the Defining Collaboration Research Workshops
  
- 7.3 Phase 3 - Research Workshops with the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team (events 5 - 10)
  - 7.3.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 1 as designed
    - 7.3.1.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 1 as it unfolded
    - 7.3.1.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 1
  
  - 7.3.2 Mobile Resource Team, Event 2 as designed
    - 7.3.2.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 2 as it unfolded
    - 7.3.2.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 2
  
  - 7.3.3 Mobile Resource Team, Event 3 as designed
    - 7.3.3.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 3 as it unfolded
    - 7.3.3.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 3
  
  - 7.3.4 Mobile Resource Team, Event 4 as designed
    - 7.3.4.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 4 as it unfolded
    - 7.3.4.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 4
  
  - 7.3.5 Mobile Resource Team, Event 5 as designed
    - 7.3.5.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 5 as it unfolded
    - 7.3.5.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 5
  
- 7.4 Summary and implications for Design Principles

## CHAPTER 7 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

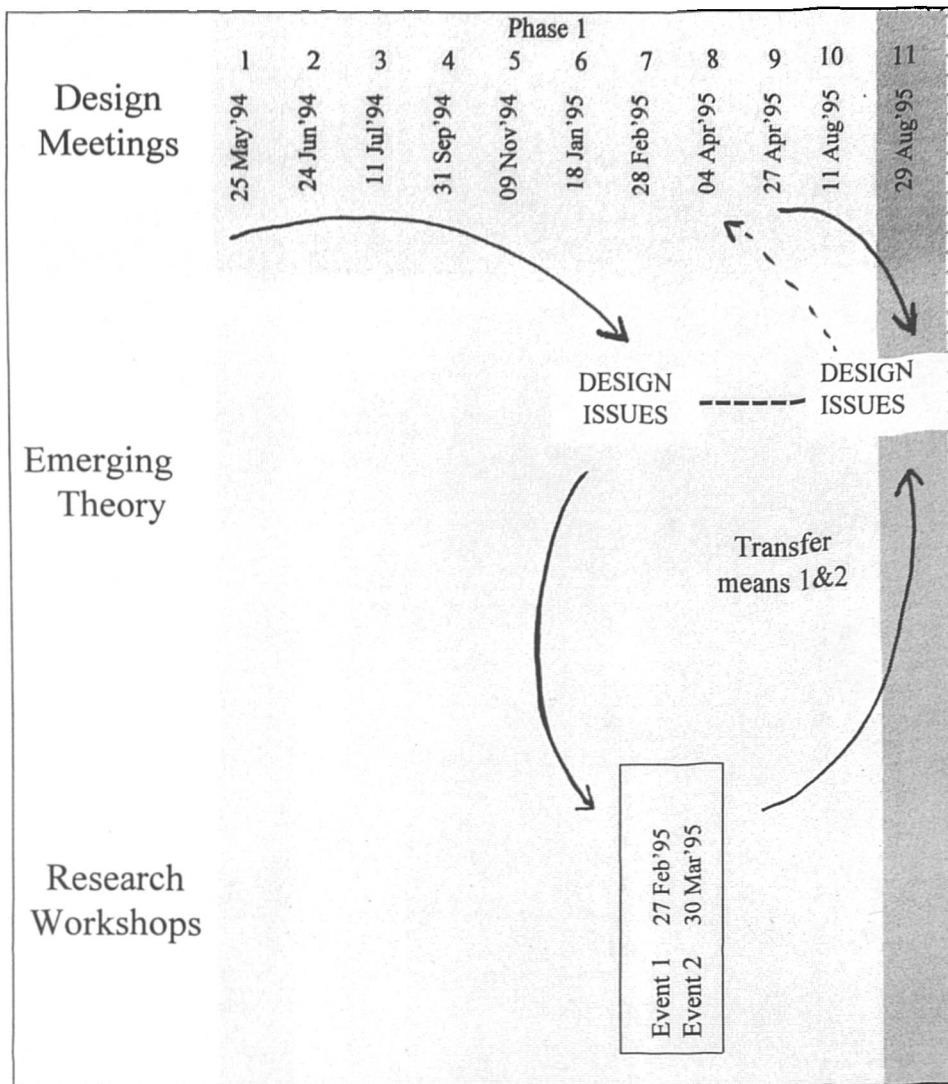
This chapter provides a brief account of all the Action Research Workshops which were designed deliberately with the purpose of developing the process for *Transferring Collaboration Insight to Practice*. The intention is to illustrate the development of the research events which produced the insight from which the *Design Principles* for *Transferring Insight to Practice* gradually emerged. The aim is to provide an insight to the general nature of the research data, rather than describe the entire data gathered. The emphasis is on the design, conduct and analyses of each *Research Workshop*. The *Transfer Means* discussed in Chapter 5 were developed as an integral part of the *Research Workshops*. The focus is thus on the research process that generated the *Design Principles* rather than on the *Design Principles* per se. The final set of *Design Principles* developed as part of this research is the focus of the next chapter.

The methodological underpinnings and the various components of the research were explained in Chapter 4. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the development of the research may be seen to have developed over three main phases. This Chapter is divided into three main sections, each addressing a phase of the research.

### 7.1 Phase 1 - Research Workshops with Collaborators

Figure 7.1 below illustrates Phase 1 of the research and indicates that the research had been ongoing for nine months prior to the design of the first two research events. A total of 6 design meetings had been conducted and research had been undertaken to identify possible *Target Audiences*, *Transfer Mechanisms* and *Collaboration Themes* as discussed in Chapter 5. It was concluded that initially, *Partnership Support Workers* should be targeted using the *Training Events Transfer Mechanism*. However, the first research event was designed in response to an invitation, to Chris Huxham from Strathclyde Regional Council Community Education Services, to conduct such an event for a number of Community Education Area Officers. The second event was influenced by circumstance in that members of a *Communities Against Poverty Network* set up and co-ordinated by Janet Muir of the *Poverty Alliance* had expressed a need for training on collaboration. Therefore, in true action and participatory research spirit, the first two *Research Workshops* were influenced by circumstance and opportunity and were in fact designed and conducted for individuals who

are themselves members of different collaborative groups rather than Partnership Support Workers.



**Figure 7.1 Research Phase 1 - Research Workshops with Collaborators**

As discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4), the research efforts undertaken prior to the design of the first two research events had also led to the identification of a number of specific *Design Issues* that a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* must take account of. These *Design Issues* are summarised in Figure 7.2 below. The discussion throughout this chapter will seek to illustrate how these *Design Issues* were implemented in the design of the Research Workshops and how they were altered in view of the learning gained from each of these events.



## DESIGN ISSUES per February 1995

**In summary, the design issues identified at this stage were that the process should:**

1. promote an educational approach and stimulate individuals' thought processes,
2. encourage thinking and debate rather than prescribe,
3. assist individuals to address a number of issues,
4. deal with peoples' demands for answers
5. ensure that the insight makes sense to a chosen audience by incorporating into the transfer process individuals' own interpretation of collaboration and hence,
6. work with different definitions of collaboration,
7. deal with individuals' idiosyncratic behaviours and different levels of learning capabilities and knowledge of collaborative activities,
8. explore participants' own views and experiences of collaboration as an important principle in itself but also because it is likely to be easier for participants to take on board theoretical insight if this is reviewed and interpreted in the light of their own experiences,
9. focus on issues pertaining to collaborative processes (i.e. collaboration themes) rather than on processes *per se*
10. explore and develop the practical implications underlying themes in collaboration rather than on highly prescriptive processes,
11. convey the complexity of collaboration issues (the need to do so depends on target audience)
12. balance the need to capture and transfer the complexities pertaining to collaboration against the need for simplicity in understanding and ease of use by each audience,
13. allow for a combination of the consideration of the substantive issues over which collaboration occurs with consideration of how to manage collaborative process issues,
14. let consideration of process issues fall out of the consideration of the substantive issues.

**Figure 7.2 Design Issues per February 1995**

A description of each research event is given below. The intention has been to explain the aims of each event, the design of each event in view of these aims and the *Design Issues* listed in Figure 7.2 above, how each event unfolded, and finally the research output gained from the evaluation and analysis of each event.

### **7.1.1 Research Workshops with Collaborators (events 1 and 2) as designed**

The first research event was held for eight Community Education Area Officers of Strathclyde Regional Council Community Education Services, Lanark Division, on 27 February 1995.

The Community Education Area Officers are expected to work together both across different sections of the Department of Community Education and across different organisations, in particular community organisations. The second research event was held for members of the Community Against Poverty (CAP) Network on 30 March 1995. The CAP Network comprises 44 local authorities and organisations represented by policy makers, officers, and individuals from local communities in the West of Scotland. The CAP Network members are not in collaboration with each other but they are all members of a collaboration. The aims of both events were to raise awareness of collaboration and provide training on collaborative working. Both events were designed for a duration of 4 hours.

As mentioned above, the invitation to design the event for the Region's Community Education Services had come from the Region rather than the participants being asked to attend a training event for research purposes. There was also a fee to be paid from the Region. Therefore, although the event provided an opportunity to explore a possible design for research purposes it was imperative to ensure that the educational requirements of the participants' were met. As the CAP Network members had been invited to attend a research event, it was possible to experiment more with the exact design.

The way in which the Design Issues listed in Figure 7.2 informed the design of both the events are indicated by the numbers in brackets below. A general design aim was that the events should be participative and interactive (*issues 1 - 4*). Therefore, both exercises and discussions were incorporated into the design of the events. The events had to be designed to allow for individuals' different opinions on what collaboration means (*issues 5 and 6*). This was overcome by working with a deliberately vague definition of collaboration (collaboration involves working across organisational boundaries) whilst at the same time building into the design a brief explanation of alternative definitions commonly used by other researchers (see Chapter 1). As discussed in Chapter 5, a focus on *Collaboration Themes* as opposed to *Step-by-step Processes* (*issue 9*) makes it possible to design an approach which can apply to a wide range of collaborations with different purposes and structures. Therefore, working with a vague definition of collaboration was feasible.

The events were structured to incorporate and build on individuals' own experiences (*issues 7 and 8*). Effectively and genuinely incorporating individuals' experiences into the design of the events meant that the introduction of Collaboration Theory had to follow an exploration of individuals' views and experiences. The dilemma is that good quality input

of theory requires preparation of theoretical input. The *Collaboration Themes* provided a means of ‘anticipating’ the participants’ experiences and hence a guide to what theoretical input to prepare. The intention therefore was to design a way of bringing the *Collaboration Themes* into focus (*issue 9*) to provide an agenda upon which to transfer insight.

The Design Issues listed in Figure 7.2 also put a number of additional constraints on the theoretical content of the events in that it had to be such that the participants could consider substantive issues over which collaboration occurs as well as collaboration process issues pertaining to *Collaboration Themes (issues 9 and 13)*. In addition, the consideration of process issues had to be done in view of the substantive issues (*issue 14*). The theoretical content had to be simplified enough to facilitate understanding but at the same time the genuine complexity of collaboration had to be conveyed (*issues 11 and 12*). The challenge was to enable the discussion to go beyond the superficial level (*issue 10*).

In view of these *Design Issues* then, the events were designed to incorporate a brief introduction, followed by an exercise aimed at *Exploring Participants’ Experiences*, followed by a session on *Transferring Insight to Practice* aimed at suggesting how collaboration issues identified by the participants themselves through undertaking the above exercise could be managed. The purpose designed exercise on *Gathering Individuals’ Experiences and Views about Collaboration* described in Section 6.1, was used as a way of exploring participants’ experiences. The session on *Transferring Insight to Practice* posed the greatest design challenge. Two different approaches were tried. For the CAP network, the *Elaboration of Participants’ Experiences Expressed via Clusters* exercise, as discussed in Section 6.2, was used. For the Community Education Area Officers, an *Interactive Lecture on Collaboration*, as discussed in Section 6.3 was used.

### **7.1.2 The Research Workshops with Collaborators as they unfolded**

This section is based on my own observations made and notes taken during the events and post events review through examinations and transcripts of video recordings. As explained above, both events began with a brief introduction followed by an exercise aimed at gathering the participants’ experiences. Some of the individuals from the CAP Network appeared not to have understood the aims of the event. Although some of the individuals partook in the *Gathering Individuals’ Experiences and Views about Collaboration* exercise,

others seemed unwilling to devote sufficient energy to it. The clustering of post-its was very difficult to undertake with this group as most of the individuals did not readily become involved. The clustering therefore required substantial intervention from the facilitators but care was taken to ensure that the resulting clusters did represent the views of the participants (for example, through reading out what was written on post-its and asking them whether they thought there were other post-its with similar or related ideas). By contrast, the Community Education Area Officers seemed enthusiastic about the event and contributed willingly throughout the exercise. There was a lot of laughter throughout, an indication that the individuals enjoyed the exercise. Figure 7.3 below shows the cluster labels generated by the exercises. As anticipated, most of the clusters capture the *Collaboration Themes*, though different labels were used. For example, the ideas and views included under the *networking* and *team-work* labels are concerned with; issues to do with leadership; the need to learn how to co-ordinate activities as well as other efforts required to get beyond liaison towards working effectively together as a team. These ideas are similar to those captured by the *co-ordination & leadership Collaboration Theme*.

Collaboration Themes	CAP Network	Community Education Services
aims & objectives	objectives & agreements	common aims & objectives
agendas & priorities	agendas	hidden agendas
accountability		
commonness (purposes/ideologies)		differing ideologies
commitment		willingness
determination	attitudes	
continuity		
compromise		
flexibility		
benefits (of the collaboration)		
co-ordination & leadership	networking	team-work
communication	communication	
democracy & inclusiveness (membership)	participation	
trust & power	power & credit trust	credit & trust
	resources empowerment	maximising resources top down staff development overcome difficulties personal relationships

**Figure 7.3** *Collaboration Themes Compared to Participants' Cluster Labels*

To have anticipated the type of issues that the participants were concerned with was significant in terms of having prepared the right type of theoretical support material to further facilitate discussions of these issues. Moving on from exploring experiences to introducing the insight was nevertheless quite difficult.

The use of the *Transfer Means, Elaboration of Participants' Experiences Expressed via Clusters*, in the CAP event was not successful when judged against the design. There are several possible reasons why this was the case. For example, collaboration seemed to mean 'community participation' to some of the participants and because they were encouraged to speak freely the agenda was skewed towards talking about empowerment. The dilemma was that, because the agenda was skewed away from collaboration, the theory on collaboration could not provide any insight to the management of the issues and views expressed. This dilemma may be illustrated by Figure 7.4, which lists views and experiences captured by a cluster on empowerment generated at the event; trying to get rid of a government for example, is not a general collaboration issue. As the event was designed to allow the participants to express their views freely it was generally very difficult for the facilitators to focus the discussion on the intended agenda and keep it constructive. This shift in agenda brought up differences in opinion among the individuals in the audience which seemed to generate anger rather than constructive discussion.

EMPOWERMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• empowerment</li> <li>• whatever done gov't don't listen</li> <li>• present time affects negefact</li> <li>• can't get rid of the government</li> <li>• collaboration can only begin when authorities listen to the people</li> <li>• I believe the 'in phrase' is communitarianism - please let the people tell you what they want</li> <li>• maintaining local participation</li> <li>• after 4 years of verbal assault out of the entire Regional, National and European network we have cracked it by job creation of 1</li> </ul>

**Figure 7.4 Cluster on Empowerment as created by participants**

The large number of individuals attending the event may also have contributed to some of the difficulties encountered. For example, it was impossible for all the eleven individuals to simultaneously read what had been hung on the walls (for example, the information on the

post-its). This may also be one of the reasons why they had difficulties with the cluster exercise as explained above. It is also generally difficult to facilitate and encourage an effective dialogue between such a large number of individuals. As explained in Section 6.2 the intention had been to elaborate on the group's 'aims and objectives' cluster using the goal taxonomy and theoretical concepts supporting the taxonomy. However, the problems relating to the large number of individuals coupled with the individuals' differing ability to conceptualise, meant that it was probably not feasible to carry out the plan. However, a modest attempt was made at elaborating the aims and objectives theme and some new concepts, some of which were taken from the prepared ovals, were added.

In the event designed for the Community Education Area Officers, the *Interactive Lecture on Collaboration* followed a pre-planned sequence covering a range of theoretical concepts as explained in Section 6.3. Throughout the lecture, links were made to the participants' clusters and the individuals were encouraged to talk about the issues. The following examples are intended to illustrate how the lecture unfolded though a lot more discussion took place than what is represented in this brief summary. For example the introduction on *Collaborative Inertia* triggered a great deal of discussion. A cluster labelled 'top down', which the group had generated, suggested that at least some of the participants perceived collaboration to have been forced upon them and a link between this and *Collaborative Inertia* was discussed. The participants agreed that they could indeed see a link between the concept of inertia and being *forced to collaborate*. The participants themselves made a link between the concept of inertia to problems they have experienced when asked to work with individuals with *different value bases* and *different organisational purposes*. The discussion on *Collaborative Capability* triggered a discussion on *maturity, trust, culture and power differences*. When discussing the *goal taxonomy*, the participants argued that for them *collaboration is often a goal in itself* rather than the goal being an expected output of the collaboration. Another individual tuned into the idea of *personal goals* and said that as an individual he might value being a participant in a collaborative venture but that organisationally there may not be any evidence of output of his attendance at meetings. However, since he finds the discussions stimulating he would *create a symbolic role in order to justify his attendance* at the collaborative meetings. After the discussion of the goal taxonomy the participants seemed clearer about why 'having common goals' as suggested in their clusters is not straight forward. They kept nodding as the concepts were explained to them. At the end of the session they said that they had found it beneficial to see collaboration in a wider context.

### 7.1.3 Research output from Workshops with Collaborators

This section is based on feedback provided by the participants via questionnaires, observations made and notes taken during the events and post events review through examinations and transcripts of video recordings. The analysis and evaluation of the events were the subjects of three Design Group meetings as illustrated in Figure 7.1 above. The intention is to illustrate the research output in terms of the Design Issues listed in Figure 7.2.

Although the *Interactive Lecture* seemed more successful than the exercise conducted with the CAP network, in terms of transferring insight as discussed above (section 7.1.2), the feedback forms from the events suggested that the participants showed a preference for exercises and discussion rather than listening to a lecture or presentation on collaboration theory. The participants of both events reported that they found the output produced by the exercise, *Exploring Participants' Experiences*, useful, informative and interesting and that they liked undertaking the exercise because it was participative, enjoyable, anonymous, a good ice-breaker as well as a good thought trigger. However, some of the participants found the clustering part of the exercise difficult. Depending on the specific target audience, therefore, this particular exercise may be too complex. Most of the individuals also reported that they would have enjoyed even more discussion. In general, the belief that such training events ought to be participative and interactive was supported (*issues 1 - 4*).

The events also suggested that there is a need to consider different starting points both in terms of different definitions of collaboration, different levels of experiences, as well as analytical ability (*issues 5 and 6*). Thus, the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* must allow for different starting points in terms of the complexity of theory that can be expected to be comprehensible to different individuals.

As mentioned above, a deliberately vague definition of collaboration had been applied in the design of these events because the *Collaboration Themes* are generic in character and not too sensitive to specific definitions of collaboration. The design of the events were also based on the notion that in order to succeed with *Transferring Insight to Practice*, it would be important to understand from what angle each participant approaches collaboration. In particular the confusion surrounding the discussion at the CAP Network event however (section 7.1.2 above), suggested that there is a need to be prepared to work with multiple definitions of collaboration. Yet there might also be a need to define collaboration with the participants to

avoid, for example, the agenda being skewed towards addressing issues not commonly perceived as 'collaboration issues' and therefore not addressed by the relevant literature. The Design Group concluded that it would be imperative *to explore possible ways of dealing with multiple definitions of collaboration (issues 5 and 6) rather than simply work with a vague definition of collaboration.*

My own observations made at the events as well as comments provided by the participants via the feedback forms reinforced the view that building on individuals' experiences is important because participants enjoy and find it helpful to discuss their own experiences. Although the exercise on exploring individuals' views and experiences allowed the participants to explore their own experiences, comments made by participants suggest that participants' would like to pursue their own experiences more thoroughly (*design issues 7, 8, 13 and 14*).

The two events also indicated that the richness of the picture created and the type of themes identified via the exercise on exploring individuals' views and experiences will depend on the mix / type of audience undertaking it. However, as discussed above, it is possible to anticipate the general type of issues that will be important to individuals attending such training events (*issue 9*). It is not possible to anticipate with certainty however, what issues will be of highest priority to any given group. For example, the Community Education Officers did not identify a cluster on democracy, inclusiveness and power differences whereas the CAP Network members did, indicating that those issues are important to collaborative groups comprising both community representatives and employees of statutory organisations. Thus if genuine and clear links are to be made between themes identified in a cluster exercise (i.e. own experiences) and the transfer of collaboration insight, then support material pertaining to all *Collaboration Themes* would have to be prepared.

The feedback forms suggest that most of the participants of both events found the *Transferring Insight to Practice* sessions informative and helpful and believed that the events had provided them with learning, raised their awareness and broadened their thinking. My opinion formed through observing the participants at the events and by viewing the video recordings is that some of the individuals were able to comprehend, reflect upon and discuss the theoretical issues raised during the events as opposed to only discussing their own experiences (*issues 10, 11 and 12*).



The events clearly highlighted however, that the ability to transfer theory to an audience depends greatly on the ability to structure the events so that the introduction of the theory follows a logical structure. For example, the structure imposed upon the event by the *Interactive Lecture on Collaboration* meant that one topic logically followed another which in turn enabled insight to be transferred to the audience. As discussed above, however, the *Elaboration of Participants' Experiences Expressed via Clusters* exercise, allowed the participants to influence the agenda and decide the content of the discussion. Consequently, there was no logical sequence to which theoretical material could be brought into the discussion. The way in which the event with the CAP Network members developed meant that neither the participants' experiences was elaborated upon nor was the 'story of the theory' conveyed. The general dilemma seems to be that, if the aim is to elaborate upon the participants' experiences, then it may not be possible to follow a prepared structure. The inability to follow a prepared structure means that the benefit of the research may be lost as it is not possible to prepare 'surprise findings' or convey a meaningful structure of the insight. On the other hand, if the prepared structure drives the agenda then there is a risk that the individuals' experiences are not sufficiently taken into consideration. In other words, if the intention is to transfer theoretical insight then that needs to be done in a dominant fashion which contradicts with building on participants' experiences. The difficulty is that of balancing working on individuals experiences and introducing theory.

The analyses raised the question about the size and length of such training events. One consideration in that respect relates to the practicality of facilitating a discussion among a large number of individuals and enabling them to bridge theory and practice. In view of the difficulties encountered at the CAP Network event, the Design Group concluded that a smaller event would be preferable. Another pragmatic point raised by the two events was that it seems practically impossible to identify and elaborate on a range of issues in the short time span of four hours. Even during the event with the Community Education Officers where the *Interactive Lecture* meant that the event had a fixed structure and agenda, it was not possible to address a large number of issues in any detail. The feedback forms suggest that the participants felt that the length of the events was about right but that they would be interested in follow-up events. Thus, if the aim is to be able to address a number of issues with any target group, then a series of events would probably be required (issue 3). This obviously relates to the point about the need to prepare the theory pertaining to all the *Collaboration Themes* as mentioned above.

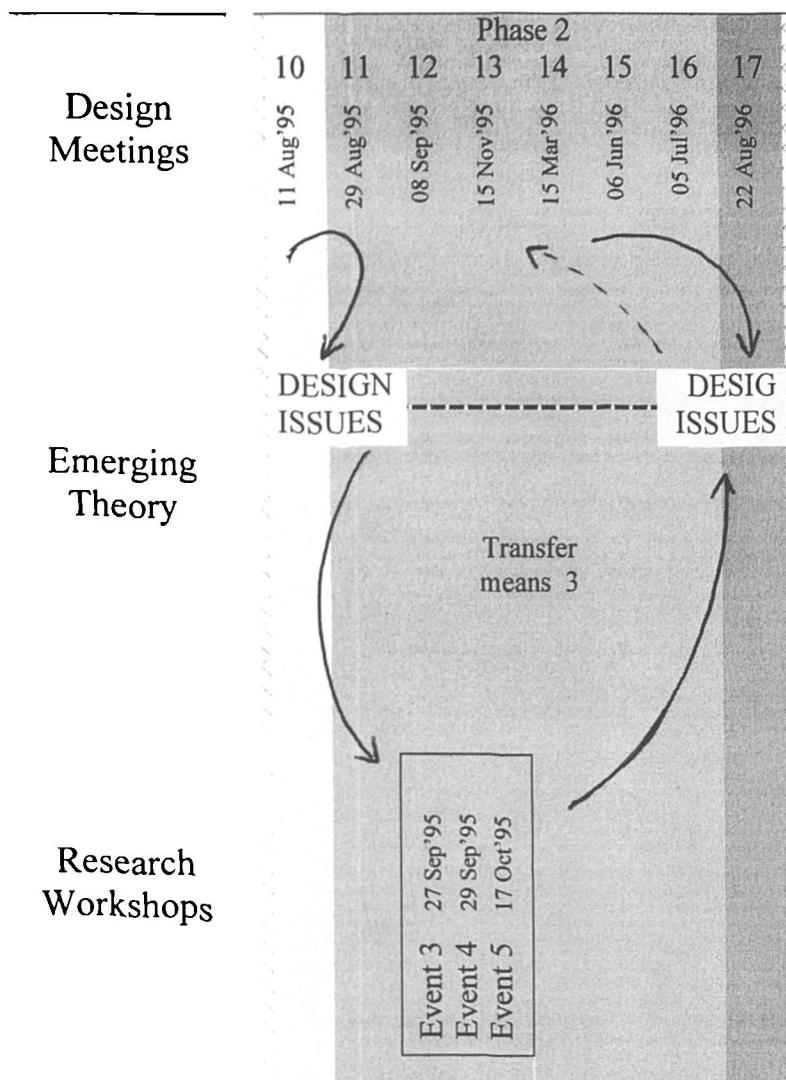
In summary, the research output gained from these two events suggests that, to some extent, the educational aim of the events may have been met and that the events may have been successful in transferring collaboration insight to at least some if not all of the participants. In terms of the *Transfer Means*, the Design Group concluded that the techniques ought to be 'democratic' meaning that they should be accessible to all participants. The design of such events should ensure that the techniques are not too complex and that all participants can readily 'pick-up' the language of the techniques. The transfer techniques should also enable all the participants to get close enough to the technology to enable them to get fully involved. This last point relates to the size of a training event. The Design Group concluded that these events had been too large and that smaller events would be more manageable. On another pragmatic note, the Design Group concluded that it would be necessary to conduct a series of events with any target group if a significant number of collaboration issues were to be addressed. The events also suggested that building on individuals' experiences could perhaps be done more explicitly, for example, by asking individuals to talk about a specific collaboration experience that they have been involved in. The focus on *Collaboration Themes* and genuine exploration of participants' experiences require more theory to be developed in support of all the *Collaboration Themes*. The Design Group also concluded that it would be necessary to find ways of balancing working with and according to individuals' experiences and introducing the theory on collaboration. Finally, the need to explore design implications relating to the multiple definitions of collaboration was identified. This became the focus of Phase 2 and hence, 'Defining Collaboration' is the topic of the next section.

The above discussion has hopefully illustrated the type of learning gained from the first two research events, regarding the implementation of the design issues listed in Figure 7.2. The research events did not result in any significant alterations to the design issues themselves though an additional Design Issue (*issue 15*) regarding the need to carefully balance working with participants' experiences and introducing theory was defined.

## **7.2 Phase 2 - Defining Collaboration Research Workshops (events 3, 4 and 5)**

As concluded above, the purpose of Phase 2 of the research was to explore the design implications relating to the many different ways in which collaboration may be defined (see also Sections 1.1 and 6.4). The intention was to explore how a knowledge of different

definitions of collaboration would influence the design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* targeted at Partnership Support Workers. Figure 7.5 below illustrates Phase 2 of the research and aims to indicate the development of the Design Issues and the general analysis and design efforts influencing the design of the workshops on Defining Collaboration.



**Figure 7.5 Research Phase 2 - Defining collaboration research workshops**

Although the intention of Phase 2 was to specifically address *design issues 5 and 6*, in general, the Design Issues listed in Figure 7.2 influenced the design of the *Research Workshops* in similar ways to those of the design of the workshops of Phase 1. The events were intended to provide learning about how to deal with multiple definitions of collaborations in the design of the transfer process rather than the design of the events becoming part of the transfer process.

### **7.2.1 Defining Collaboration Research Workshops (events 3, 4 & 5), as designed**

As the intention was to explore the many different way in which collaborators may define collaboration, these specific *Research Workshops* were deliberately designed for groups of individuals from mixed audiences rather than Partnership Support Workers. The chosen group of participants thus comprised actual members of collaborative groups, both employees of statutory organisations and community activists, as well as Partnership Support Workers, managers, and policy makers. The workshops were intended to enable the participants to explore the topic in detail based on their own experiences and as such it was not feasible to hold such a workshop for a large number of individuals. Also, one of the conclusions made from Phase 1 was that it would be beneficial to run smaller events. The number of participants was therefore limited to three individuals. However, because the intention was to explore a range of possible views on the topic, three identical events were designed.

Influenced by the learning gained from the first two events, one specific design aim was to enable participants to build directly on their experiences by telling a story about a collaboration that they had been involved in. A second design aim was to balance the need to build on participants' experiences with the need to introduce theory about collaboration. An exercise was designed that was influenced by the theory on collaboration both in the way in which it was designed and also through asking the participants to make direct use of collaboration theory in elaborating on a collaboration of their choice. Finally, to further facilitate the transfer of relevant collaboration insight, the events were designed to be more structured than either of the first two events. These design efforts resulted in the *Defining Collaboration* exercise discussed in section 6.4.

### **7.2.3 The Defining Collaboration Research Workshops as they unfolded**

The events were designed to be identical and in fact, the actual ways in which they unfolded were remarkably similar. The first two parts of the exercise unfolded as intended by the design of the exercise and generated a great deal of discussion about purposes of collaborations, membership characteristics, roles played by different members, incentives for members to become involved, members' motivations for being involved in a collaboration, and about different structures of collaborations (see Vangen and Huxham,

1998a for a discussion of these membership characteristics). Possibly because the participants were encouraged to elaborate on a collaboration of their choice, the discussions also tended to include an elaboration on substantive issues. For example, in one of the events, the discussion of how members relate to each other generated a lot of discussion about substantive issues as opposed to collaboration process issues. The participants became very engaged in the issues and seemed to enjoy, using Damian Killeens's words; 'realising some frustration'.

The third part of the exercise was more difficult for the participants to undertake possibly because it required them to move from specifically describing a collaboration to trying to conceptualise general characteristics of their chosen collaboration. The discussions tended to develop into describing what makes collaborations successful, or not, rather than describing characteristics. However, some probing from the facilitator, such as asking whether a collaboration has to take place between organisations or whether it can take place between individuals, seemed to enable the individuals to begin to identify characteristics. Figure 7.6 shows examples of some typical characteristics generated at these events and illustrates that the characteristics are perhaps not very helpful in defining collaboration. In fact, most of the characteristics do not generally describe collaborations but rather issues relating to collaboration such as trust, roles and responsibilities. With regard to the characteristics generated by the literature on collaboration (see Figure 6.3, Section 6.4), the participants were able to identify with some of the characteristics but they found some of them difficult to comprehend and others not helpful.

CHARACTERISTICS GENERATED VIA 'DEFINING COLLABORATION' EXERCISES	
working towards common goals .....	meeting of varied agendas
goals that everyone owns .....	
the common goal leads to other .....	short term single issues collaboration goals through the coming together
common aim .....	short term roles
different benefits to different members (common aim helps individual empowerment)	
start from common aim .....	start from conflictual position (co-operative)
organisations working together .....	individuals
individuals as accountable representatives .....	non-accountable individuals
project oriented .....	strategic
long-ish term .....	short term - specific aim
physical coming together .....	networking
(not manipulated)	
partnership / equal basis .....	needs provider relationship (not selling everything out)
trust through individuals finding ways of working together .....	trust through organisations working together
guidelines on responsibilities to collaboration .....	implicit ground rules (eg. minutes)

**Figure 7.6** Definitional characteristics generated by participants

#### 7.2.4 Research output from the defining collaboration research workshops

My impression from observing and taking notes at the events suggest that the participants found the exercise enjoyable and useful (*issues 1-4*). All the participants said that they

enjoyed taking part in the exercise and hearing others' points of views (*issue 13*). Individuals' participating in the event also typically commented; 'oh that was useful' and 'oh, that was interesting'. Many of the participants also said that the exercise encouraged them to think about the way in which they carry out their collaborative activities in practice (*issues 10 and 14*).

In terms of the specific design issues, *5 and 6*, which these events were intended to address, the exercises was not particularly effective in generating definitional characteristics and did not provide many specific clues about how to deal with multiple definitions of collaborations in the design of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. However, the fact that the participants found the exercise helpful and said that it encouraged them to think about their collaborative actions suggest that a balance between building on individuals experiences and introducing theory on collaboration had been found (*issues, 7, 8, 10 & 15*). The Design Group concluded that irrespective of whether or not the exercise meet its intended purpose, it could be a worthwhile exercise in terms of contributing directly to the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The exercise can introduce the complex nature of collaborations as well as imply possible structures for understanding that complexity (*issues 11 and 12*). The exercise may be effectively used as an introduction to considering collaboration processes issues (*issue 9*) perhaps followed by the exercise on *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* (Section 6.1). The *Defining Collaboration Exercise* may be used as a vehicle for developing a conceptual framework because it unravels the complex nature of collaboration which the above mentioned exercise was not designed to do. The exercise may help an individual enhance their insight of collaborative processes.

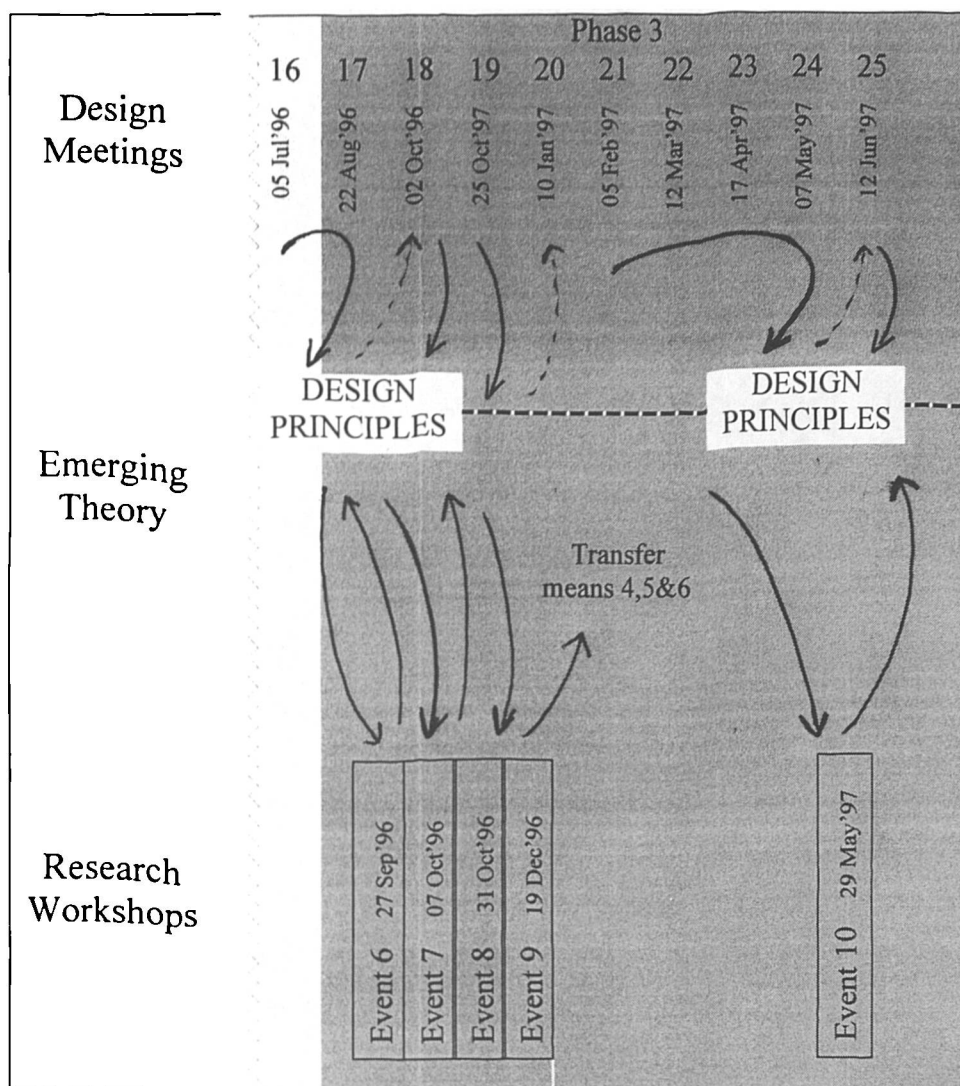
At this stage there was a 6 months break in the research as I was on maternity leave. However the Design Group met once in March 1996 to plan the future involvement of the Mobile Research Team. The research with the Mobile Resource Team is the subject of the next section.

### **7.3 Phase 3 - Workshops with the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team (events 5-10)**

As mentioned above, Phase 3 of the research was concerned with a series of Workshops undertaken with the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team. The research plan agreed with the Mobile Resource Team leader in July 1996, was to conduct a series of workshops to develop over three stages. Stage 1 was intended to involve the members of the team in workshops aimed at enhancing their understanding of collaborative working arrangements. The workshops would incorporate purpose designed exercises and build on theoretical frameworks discussed in Section 2.3. Stage 2 was intended to build on learning gained during Stage 1 and would comprise a series of workshops aimed at developing processes, tools and material for the team members to use directly with community groups. The aim was to encourage the team members' to reflect and design their interventions in light of the understanding gained during Stage 1. Finally, Stage 3 was planned as an evaluation of the workshops and the processes, materials and tools developed during Stage 2. Each workshop would incorporate a review of what has been achieved so far including the team members' experiences of using the tools in practice. As will be discussed below however, the research did not proceed as envisaged. This section reports on the total of 5 *Research Workshops* which, to date, have been carried out with the Mobile Resource Team.

Figure 7.7 below illustrates Phase 3 of the research. Whereas the workshops conducted during Phase 1 and Phase 2 were isolated events, designed for different groups of individuals, the workshops conducted during Phase 3 were designed in a developmental fashion for the Mobile Resource Team, with each event building directly on the previous event. As such, Phase 3 of the research was more intensive due to the analysis required to facilitate continuity as well as the development of the *Design Issues*. Other development workers employed by the Poverty Alliance were also invited to participate in the events, and two individuals chose to do so.





**Figure 7.7 Research Phase 3 - Workshops with the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team**

Prior to the reconvening of the Design Group in June, 1996, a thorough review of the entire research process was undertaken and an interim paper (Vangen and Huxham, 1997) as well as research grant applications were written. These research review and writing efforts contributed to clarifying the Design Issues (the methodology underpinning these efforts was discussed in Section 4.3.2). Based on these efforts, the *Design Principles* listed in Figure 7.8 below were drawn. The *Design Principles* are essentially a development of the Design Issues listed in Figure 7.2 based on the development of the research as discussed above. They inform the design of each event with the Mobile Resource Team discussed in the remainder of this section. The *Design Principles* will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8 and therefore no further elaboration is given here.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES PER JUNE 1996

1. 'Tool up' partnership support workers whose role is to be concerned about collaborative processes, rather than being directly aimed at collaborators involved in collaboration whose role is to achieve some substantive end.
2. Allow for potentially immense differences in culture, background, education and motivation of community collaborators.
3. Account for individuals' inevitably very different conceptions of what collaboration actually is.
4. Acknowledge that a sound theoretical understanding of the complexities of collaboration will enhance collaborative practice.
5. Convey insight in a way which is instantly meaningful to those whose main concern is to get on with the job as quickly as possible.
6. Recognise that the instantly meaningful picture will ultimately be too simple to provide real practical guidance and hence allow practitioners to explore the complexities of collaboration.
7. Draw on practitioners' own experiences of collaboration as a way of both ensuring and demonstrating the relevance of the theoretical material to the individual.
8. Address (1) to (8) by providing a means to explore the themes in collaborative practice which are repeatedly of concern to collaboration practitioners, rather than, through a prescriptive approach.
9. Allow Partnership Support Workers to develop appropriate behaviours, tools or other responses for themselves - albeit prompted by suggestions from the transfer process - rather than give highly prescriptive advice on these.

**Figure 7.8** Design principles per June 1996

### **7.3.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 1 as designed**

The first event with the Mobile Resource Team was held on 27 September 1996. The planned aim of the initial series of workshops was to raise the team members' awareness about collaboration process issues. The first event was thus to be designed in such a way that this primary aim would be met over the series of planned workshops. Informed by the *Design Principles*, the first event was designed with the aim of beginning to raise the team members' awareness about collaboration process issues and to build an agenda upon which future awareness raising workshops could be designed. In addition, and in view of the developmental, longer term involvement envisaged with the Mobile Resource Team, a

supplementary aim was to provide the team with a thorough understanding of the research process and the stage at which they had become involved. Their potential role in the research, the potential benefit of the research to the Alliance and the team and the proposed plan for future workshops were discussed. As mentioned above, the research process had been agreed with the team leader and he had been involved in a pre-briefing session.

In an attempt to meet these aims, the first event was designed as a full day event to allow a description of the research as well as to begin to undertake that research. The event was designed to comprise an introduction about the research and the envisaged benefit to the Alliance and the team followed by the two exercises on *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* and *Defining Collaboration* discussed above.

Very briefly, the introduction was intended to provide the team with a thorough description of, the background and the history of the research including the role taken by the Poverty Alliance, the development and emergence of the collaboration theory upon which the future workshops were intended to build, the purpose of exploring ways of making collaboration theory useful to those trying to make collaborations succeed, the reasons for choosing Partnership Support Workers as a target audience and hence why their participation in the research had been sought. The experimental nature of the research was emphasised as was the fact that the research was intended to be a joint process between the team members, other staff of the alliance and the researchers.

The exercises were used in the belief that they would satisfy *Design Principles 2-8*. Design Principle 9 was not intended to be directly addressed in this initial series of workshops. Also, the exercises were used because they would provide a sense of the experience and understanding of collaborative processes existing between the team members and thus provide a basis upon which to design future events. In view of the length of the *Defining Collaboration* exercise, the team was split into two groups for that part of the event.

#### **7.3.1.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 1 as it unfolded**

The event started by providing information about the research as explained above. The individuals did not ask a great deal of questions and when queried responded that they were clear about the aims of the research and the event.

The *Defining Collaboration* exercise unfolded similarly to that experienced when running the exercise during Phase 2 of the research. The discussion among the team members however, was not as enthusiastic as it had been during the Phase 2 events. The *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* exercise was undertaken as a 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) exercise by all the team members working together in one group. Most of the members did not seem motivated to participate enthusiastically in the exercise perhaps because it was fairly late in the day and they were tired after having undertaken the *Defining Collaboration* exercise. As shown in Figure 7.9 below, some of the cluster labels generated by the team were also unexpected. Although three of the cluster labels are among the *Collaboration Themes* headings, very surprisingly there was no single cluster on 'aims and objectives'. However, an examination of the clusters showed that the team had generated as many 15 post-its on this theme. Some of these were allocated to the 'planning' cluster others were allocated to the 'conflict and power' cluster. In view of the event being a full day event and the consequent demand put on the participants' energy, it is very likely that the team would have benefited from more help from the facilitators rather than being expected to undertake the exercise in a DIY capacity.

Collaboration Themes	Mobile Resource Team's Cluster Labels
aims & objectives	
agendas & priorities	
accountability	
commonness (purposes & ideologies)	
commitment	commitment
determination	
continuity	
compromise	
flexibility	
benefits (of the collaboration)	
co-ordination & leadership	
communication	communication + information
democracy & inclusiveness (membership)	
trust & power	conflict + power
	planning impositions negotiation

**Figure 7.9** *Collaboration Themes Compared to Participants' Cluster Labels*

### 7.3.1.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 1

Despite the difficulties mentioned in the previous paragraph, the members of the Design Group were of the opinion that the exercises had been reasonably successful in drawing out individuals' experiences and views. The outputs of the exercises, which were summarised and handed back to the individuals at the second event also suggested that the exercises generated insight which it could have been useful for the participants to discuss further and upon which future awareness raising events could be designed.

The feedback provided by the participants via questionnaires however, was rather negative. The participants reported that they had not learned anything. They said that they did not enjoy the *Defining Collaboration* exercise, were unclear about its purpose in particular with regard to whether collaboration should or could be defined and alternatively how it could be defined, did not find the exercise useful and felt that the exercise was not needed and therefore did not want to suggest ways of modifying it. The participants appeared to be responding to the exercise purely from the point of view that it was intended to generate a definition of collaboration rather than generally bringing out their views and experiences about collaboration and what collaboration means.

Similarly, the participants generally did not perceive the *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* exercise useful, thought the exercise was merely a game, did not seem to understand its purpose although two of the participants said it allowed sharing of experience and practice and negotiation and finally, that the exercise did not generate a picture of their collective ideas. Finally, the participants also said that the event was too long in general and that too much time was spent on the exercises.

In view of the above, it appeared that none of the aims of the event had been met. There seemed to be a range of possible reasons why this was the case.

One possible reason was that the event was a classical example of the 'getting in' problem mentioned in Chapter 5; unless the team could be presented with and work on an issue of significant importance to them at that moment in time, then the general insight on collaboration would not have any relevance to them. The research problem posed by this then was whether or not to appear to respond to their current needs or try to continue with the research as designed (see Section 7.3.1). The Action Research methodology informing

this research (see Chapter 4) suggested that the appropriate response would be to respond directly to the concerns expressed by the team.

The negative responses to the *Defining Collaboration* exercise suggest that perhaps the exercise should be modified to emphasise its intention to allow individuals' to explore their own experiences rather than generate a definition of collaboration. With regards to the *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* exercise, the problem seemed to be that the team did not gain the full benefit of the exercise because they did not carry it out as intended. In retrospect, the team should have been given more help with the exercise. The intention had been that the output of the exercises would provide the agenda for future awareness raising workshops. The fact that the participants' were not given an immediate chance to work with the output of the exercises did not help them towards recognising whether they had learned anything from the event. Also, since the team members found the entire event rather negative, they could not perhaps be expected to recognise that they had learned anything, even if they did.

In view of the development of the research with the Mobile Resource Team, it was decided to aim to respond directly to the concerns expressed by the team members. Prior to the design of the second event, the team leader was consulted with the aim to ensure that the views of the team members would influence the design of the event.

### **7.3.2 Mobile Resource Team, Event 2 as designed**

The second event with the Mobile Resource Team was held on 7 October 1996. The key design issue for the event was to respond to the concerns of the team members as described above. The purpose was to gain the team's interest and subsequent participation in the research. As such, the second event was not designed as a Training event aimed at raising the team members' awareness about collaboration and therefore no specific attention was paid to the *Design Principles*.

The agenda agreed with the Mobile Resource Team leader was; to have an open ended discussion about collaboration; to examine reasons why addressing the subject of collaboration is at the core of the Alliance's remit; to look at some of the research activities which the Alliance has been involved in over the last four years and; to clarify the role that

the Mobile Resource Team was taking in relation to the Alliance's work on collaboration processes. The intention was to reintroduce the importance of the research to the Alliance and hopefully gain the team's enthusiasm for the research.

### **7.3.2.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 2 as it unfolded**

The event began by the Senior Officer, Janet Muir, talking about the Alliance's interest in the current research. Factors highlighted were; the need to develop an understanding of collaborative processes; the Alliance's aim of helping Local Community Groups through equipping them to function well in local collaborations; the Alliance's need to develop evaluation measures to ensure that its structure helps to foster collaboration. The role of the Mobile Resource Team was addressed by referring to a survey which concluded that a Mobile Resource Team could provide help with training in collaboration.

The introduction was followed by a general discussion to which all those present participated with their views. The discussion brought up a range of collaboration issues pertaining to the need to define collaboration and the types of support that the team might want to offer to community groups. The researchers did deliberately not interfere in the above discussion in order to enable the team members to express their views freely. However, as the intensity of the discussion subsided, questions were asked with the view to bringing collaboration insight to the discussion and gain the team's interest in the research. The team members' attention was brought to the fact that they may become involved with collaborations at various points of their evolution, requiring them to respond to a range of highly different situations which in turn would require the team to have available sophisticated support tools to enable it to deal with the various situations.

Towards the end of the event, the future plan for the research was brought into the discussion. The team members were determined that they would like to start creating tools immediately as opposed to devoting time to understanding more about collaboration process issues. In view of this, it was decided that mutual awareness raising and the creation of tools would be addressed in parallel. *It was agreed that a particular issue or problem that at least one of the members had been involved in could be prepared as a case study by the team. This case study could then be worked on during a workshop.* The intention was that designing a workshop based on a description of a case study that the members could relate

to would enable the participants to perceive the relevance of the theoretical material. It was also agreed that some initial efforts could, if possible, be devoted to developing tools for the team members to use in their work, but bearing in mind that it could be necessary to return to the preliminary tools at a later stage in the process. Both the problem solving and the tool development would be done simultaneously with general awareness raising.

### **7.3.2.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 2**

The main research outcome of the second event was thus a change in the purpose, as perceived by the participants, of the future workshops. The team wanted to place greater emphasis on developing tools rather than concentrate on developing their general understanding of collaboration issues. However, an understanding of the collaboration theory would suggest that the team members would benefit from raising their awareness about collaboration prior to embarking on developing tools. The ability to develop appropriate tools would require a good awareness of collaboration process issues and the complexity of those issues. A compromise had been agreed in that the third event would be designed based on a case study prepared by the team as discussed above.

The intended research agenda had been to work with the team to explore ways of transferring insight on collaboration to practice rather than helping the team solve a problem based on the facilitators' understanding of collaboration. From a research perspective, a key issue for future events would therefore be to find a balance between designing the events around something that would 'engage the team' whilst at the same time ensure that understanding of collaboration would be transferred to them. This should be aimed at meeting the intended purpose of the research by continuing to explore ways of transferring insight on collaboration into practice to Partnership Support Workers and at the same time improve their own ability to develop tools.

The feedback provided by the participants via questionnaires was also not entirely positive although the event had been deliberately designed to take account of the team members' comments after the first event. The participants reported that they had found the discussion useful but the reasons for finding it useful ranged from having; clarified the aims of the research; helped to move the theoretical to the practical realities of collaboration (whatever that means); and, clarified aspects of collaboration practice. One of the participants said



that they did not find the event useful because it should have been more structured and one of the participants said that they did not find it useful because their own goals with respect to their engagement with the research had not apparently been given equal discussion or importance.

### **7.3.3 Mobile Resource Team, Event 3 as designed**

The third research workshop with the Mobile Resource Team was held on 31 October 1996. As discussed above, the event was designed based on a case study prepared by the team. In a similar fashion to the design of the previous training events, the design of the event was informed by the *Design Principles* listed in Figure 7.8. Thus, the event was designed to be participative and interactive, paying attention to theoretical complexity versus simplicity and so on. From a research perspective, the aim was to continue to explore ways of transferring insight on collaboration into practice to Partnership Support Workers whilst at the same time respond to the issues raised by the case study. The transparency by which theory was to be transferred was an issues both in terms of exploring the effectiveness of the *Transfer Means* and as a way of enabling participants to recognise their learning. Thus, a design issue was to ensure not only that theoretical insight would be transferred to the team but also, that the team would recognise the insight transferred to them.

The description of the case study provided by the team was very brief, in particular with regards to explaining the purpose of the collaboration. The description did give a sense of difficulties relating primarily to the uncooperative behaviour of one of the members. Based on this and the design considerations mentioned above, the *Transfer Means, a Case Study Based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration*, as described in Section 6.5 was developed and used at the event.

#### **7.3.3.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 3 as it unfolded**

The *Transfer Means, a Case Study Based Exploration of Goals in Collaboration*, seemed successful in generating a focused discussion of the case study which led to discussing a number of collaboration process issues. One of the facilitators concentrated on facilitating the discussion and the two other facilitators concentrated on capturing the discussion on flip

charts and ovals. All the participants became engaged in the discussion. The identification of collaboration, organisational and individual goals for the collaboration under focus led the participants to discuss a range of general collaboration issues relating not only to goals but also, for example, to different roles taken by members, how to deal with personalities, sensitive issues and credit and ownership of the output of the collaboration.

### **7.3.3.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 3**

Observations made during the event and examinations of the output generated from the event suggest that the event had provided a useful structure upon which to explore the case. In the written feedback, all the participants said that they had found the theoretical material useful and it appears that the *Transfer Means* had been sufficiently transparent for the participants to recognise the insight transferred to them.

In terms of the aim of balancing exploring ways of transferring insight on collaboration to Partnership Support Workers and at the same time, responding to the issues raised by the case study, the success of the event was less clear. Three of the participants responded positively to the *Transfer Means*'s ability to 'raise awareness of collaboration issues' whereas two of the participants responded negatively. One individual argued that there was no relationship between the 'discussion on the specific example' and the 'lecture material'.

The participants did not provide many clues with regards to how the *Transfer Means* could have been altered. One of the respondents said that the event should have been 'less one-sided with more balance'. It is difficult to ascertain what the individual meant by that statement. Another respondent said that they would feel that 'this partnership was more equal if the comments / framework / insights arose out of the discussion around the specific example, rather than being pre-prepared and seeming rather inflexible'. Thus, this individual did still not acknowledge that the theory about collaboration had any value. This is a 'getting in' problem as discussed in Section 7.3.1.2 above.

In conclusion, at least some of the participants found the exploration of the case study both enjoyable and helpful. The extent to which the participants found the *Transfer Means* helpful was less clear. The team members said that they would also like the next event to be designed around a specific case.

### **7.3.4 Mobile Resource Team, Event 4 as designed**

The fourth research event with the Mobile Resource Team was held in December 1996. As discussed above, this event was also designed based on a case study provided by one of the participants.

In general, the design issues were the same as those for Event 3. However, in view of the team's apparent lack of recognition of the value of, or even aversion to, the theory, one aim was to make less direct use of collaboration theory. Thus, whereas one design concern of Event 3 had been to ensure transparency of the *Transfer Means* so that the participants would recognise the theoretical insight being transferred to them, Event 4 involved experimenting with a *Transfer Means* aiming to make indirect rather than direct use of the theory. The account of the case was very well elaborated and highlighted a number of issues typically causing concern to people involved in collaboration and concluded by an identification of seven barriers to successful collaboration. The obvious conclusion was to allow the team to explore each of the seven barriers identified. In view of this, the *Transfer Means* described in Section 6.6 was developed and used for Event 4.

#### **7.3.4.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 4 as it unfolded**

Following a brief introduction whereby the individual who had prepared the case gave a summary of the study, the participants embarked on the exercise as described in Section 6.6.

The participants were split into two groups of three participants. Each group chose 4 barriers to elaborate on. The participants were recommended to use the proposed method as elaborated in Section 6.6 but it was stressed that they could use whatever method they preferred.

The participants seemed fairly enthusiastic about undertaking the exercise. During the first part of the exercise, one of the groups chose to use the proposed method whereas the other chose to list issues under headings on flipcharts. After Part 1 of the exercise, the groups reported their findings to each other. It was interesting to note that the group who had not adopted the proposed method during the first part of the exercise, started to do so after they had shared findings with the other group.

Towards the end of the event, the participants were asked what their opinions of the event were. Comments were made along the lines of finding it useful to look at issues in isolation and being surprised by some of the issues that kept emerging. This suggested that the proposed method was an efficient way of exploring issues, identifying priorities and hence identifying issues which they would need tools to deal with. Thus observations made during the event and comments made by participants at the end of the event suggested that they had enjoyed the event and found it useful. However, feedback provided by the participants shows that the majority response was far from positive.

#### **7.3.4.2 Research Output from Mobile Resource Team, Event 4**

Although one of the participants was extremely positive about both the structure and the content of the event, most of the participants did, in general, not find the event enjoyable or useful. However, they did not provide many clues as to how the event could have been different.

The key research lessons seemed to be the same as those gained from the previous 3 events. Thus, in general the participants found building on their own experiences via the case study enjoyable but argued that the structure should have allowed more 'equal share of input' (presumably between facilitators and team members). The 'getting in' problem was still very prominent with the participants arguing that the limited theoretical input was positive. One of the participants even said that they could just as easily have managed to explore the case study themselves without external facilitators or managers present.

As the final event with the Mobile Resource Team, to be discussed in the next section was an evaluation event, the main lessons learned from the first 4 events with the team are summarised briefly as follows. The key research output from the 4 Events with the Mobile Resource Team as discussed above seemed to be that the team did not acknowledge the value of the research in terms of the facilitators being able to relate collaboration theory or provide sensible structures for exploring collaboration issues. Whilst the participants seemed to respond positively to the opportunities to explore their own collaboration experiences, they did not seem to appreciate the aim of the research, the value of the collaboration theory or their own need to learn about collaboration process issues. Regardless of structure provided, some of the participants seemed unhappy. Complaints

were made about the structures provided for event 1,3 and 4 and the lack of structure provided for event 2.

### **7.3.5 Mobile Resource Team, Event 5 as designed**

The fifth event with the Mobile Resource Team was planned as an evaluation event with a view to assessing the development of the research from the team's as well as the Design Group's point of view. The intention was also to plan the future agenda for the process. Due to the way in which the research had developed and the Mobile Resource Team's unhappiness with what they saw as the 'unequal balance' of the events, the team suggested that this event should be designed jointly by the team and the Design Group. To that end, two members of the team met with three members of the Design Group to discuss the design of the event.

Prior to the meeting, the Design Group had prepared a detailed proposal for the event which in brief, would allocate separate time slots for both the Design Group and the team to have an input reflecting on the development of the research, followed by a discussion on how to take the research forward. However, the Mobile Resource Team members felt that the input given via the proposed structure could become too negative and that it could result in the Mobile Resource Team and the Design Group talking about two different things. The team members were concerned that every single individual should have an equal amount of input to and air-time in the event. The Mobile Resource Team members also insisted that the event should put emphasis on the future agenda of the research rather than be an evaluation of the past. Thus, effectively the Mobile Resource Team members overruled the intended purpose of the event, and effectively therefore, no attention was paid to the *Design Principles*.

The design of the event followed, but did not necessarily reflect, a discussion about objectives for the event. It was agreed that the event should be divided into three sessions of one hour each. Each session in turn was aimed at clarifying what each individual, including the Design Group, thought their roles were when the research including the Mobile Resource Team began, what each individual thought their current roles were and finally, what each individual would like their future roles to be. At each session, every individual would be given 4 minutes to talk about their own views of their role in the research process.

Prior to the event, each individual was asked to prepare cards with brief statements expressing what they perceived their roles to be; when the process started; as well as currently. Statements expressing perceived future roles were intended to be prepared during the event to take account of the discussion during the first two sessions. Each session was chaired by a different individual presumably to avoid giving a different status to an individual.

#### **7.3.5.1 Mobile Resource Team, Event 5 as it unfolded**

On request from two of the participants, the first session was not video recorded. The reason why they objected is not clear. However, after the first session, one of the individuals who was against the recording said that unless anyone else objected, the video recording could now take place. The event unfolded as planned with every individual in turn stating their views of their roles. The views expressed during the event highlighted once again that there were a range of misunderstanding in terms of the research process in particular with regards to the fact that it was intended to be research and not just a collaboration on developing tools for community development. The event can only be described as extremely successful in clearing the air between the Design Group and the Mobile Resource Team. The lessons learned from this event relate at least as much to Action Research as to a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

The event concluded with a discussion which suggested that every individual present would like to be involved in future research provided that the research process could be negotiated and a satisfactory agreement could be met in terms of meeting the perceived needs of all concerned. Two of the team members have since met with members of the Design Group to discuss some of the 'substantive output' (i.e. emerging theory about collaboration rather than process theory) generated by the events and to contribute to a grant proposal submitted to the Economic and Social Research Council. As no funding has as yet become available to take this research forward, no further events have been designed for the Mobile Resource Team.

#### 7.4 Summary and implications for Design Principles

This Chapter has discussed the design, development and learning gained of all the workshops designed with the purpose of developing a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. As has been illustrated, the research events during Phase 1 and Phase 2 did not pose any major difficulties in terms of design and conduct. The research events during Phase 3 however, were fraught with difficulties. Some of the possible reasons for these difficulties are discussed below. The discussion of *Design Principles* in Chapter 8 will also return to some of the difficulties encountered with specific reference to each Design Principle.

One of the main problems was that the Mobile Resource Team did not identify with the intended purpose of the awareness raising workshops. The team members were of the view that it would be more useful to them to address the development of tools rather than concentrate on developing their general understanding of collaboration activities. The Design Group members understanding of collaboration however, suggested that any tool development would require a thorough understanding of the complexity of collaboration. If this understanding were correct, then addressing the team's perceived needs would not necessarily be of benefit to the team in the long run. On the other hand, unless the team members were genuinely interested in the subject addressed in the events then they would also not benefit. This could then have a negative affect on the validity of the research (see Chapter 4). The issue was further complicated by the fact that the Alliance managers were also clients in this research *and* had been participating in the design of the research. Simply addressing the team's need to develop tools therefore would not necessarily produce the type of research output that the Alliance managers were seeking. In the end, an agreement was reached whereby the development of tools and addressing the original research agenda were done in parallel. This issue about whether the aims of the joint work will be concerned primarily with problem solving for the practitioners or with producing generalisable theory is often raised within *Participatory Action Research and Action Research methodologies* (Gill and Johnson, 1997).

Many of the difficulties encountered in the events with the Mobile Resource Team seemed to relate to the notion of research in general as well as the specific purpose of this research. Thus, some of the problems may be attributed to the struggle to distinguish between Action Research and Collaboration. For example, some of the team members were of the view that

the relationship was primarily a collaboration in which everybody had to be 'equal partners'. As it transpired, they had not acknowledged the fact that they were involved in research and consequently, they did not recognise that myself, for example, had a different role to play in terms of the necessary research activities that had to be undertaken. According to Gill and Johnson (1997), this ambiguity associated with roles is typical of Action Research.

The Mobile Resource Team wanted to play a greater role in designing the events and consequently in determining the agenda. Indeed, in designing the events, serious attention was given to the feedback provided by the participants via questionnaires and via the team leader. This significantly altered the agenda of the events. Despite these efforts however, many of the participants reported that they did not find the events useful and enjoyable. However, as discussed above, the last event was designed as an evaluation of previous events. It transpired that the team needed to talk about the role played by the researchers as well as what roles they themselves were expected to play. This discussion served to clarify a range of misunderstandings and indeed despite having been negative, the Mobile Resource Team could see a role for themselves in a future research.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the focus has been on the research process that generated the *Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice* to be discussed in Chapter 8. Whereas there were no obvious problems during the first two phases of the research, a number of problems were encountered during the last phase. As stated in Chapter 4, these problems are not likely to have affected the validity of the research but they are likely to have had an impact on the type of output produced. This will be reflected in the discussion of the *Design Principles* in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 A discussion of Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice
- 8.2 A discussion of the characteristics of the Design Principles
  - 8.2.1 The general applicability of the Design Principles
- 8.3 Conclusion
- 8.4 Suggested future research

## CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses on the set of *Design Principles* developed as a result of the research discussed in this thesis. In effect therefore, this chapter may be seen as a summary of the entire thesis. The aim is to discuss the general characteristics and properties of the *Design Principles* for a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

The set of *Design Principles* discussed in this chapter has emerged gradually through research involving a number of individuals as outlined in Chapters 4 and 7. The nature of the *Design Principles* is such that they may develop and change through further research (see Section 4.3.2). At this point in time they nevertheless capture a range of significant aspects of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the research involving the Mobile Resource Team did not develop according to the research plan. This obviously influenced the type of research output produced. In actual fact, the research involving the Mobile Resource Team did not generate any new *Design Principles per se*. Rather, the team's involvement generated a great deal of insight pertaining to each of the *Design Principles* listed in Figure 7.8 (that is, representing the *Design Principles* at the start of the involvement of the Mobile Resource Team). As the research with the Mobile Resource Team led to an elaboration on that set of *Design Principles* rather than new *Design Principles* (see Figure 8.1), the discussion in this chapter is structured so as to discuss each Design Principle with reference to the Mobile Resource Team. Therefore, although this chapter in a sense summarises the entire research, not all the learning gained with reference to each *Design Principles* has been captured here (the learning is focused on the Mobile Resource Team).

The chapter also includes a discussion on the extent to which these *Design Principles* apply to audiences other than Partnership Support Workers and using other transfer mechanisms. It concludes by discussing the validity of the *Design Principles*, focusing on the usefulness of the research to those who have been involved directly, as well as the potential usefulness of the *Design Principles* beyond this specific research.

## 8.1 A discussion of Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice

This section provides a description of each Design Principle. The descriptions aim to capture what each Design Principle is intended to reflect in terms of collaboration activities and in terms of a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. Specific suggestions on the way in which issues captured by each Design Principle may be implemented in the design of the transfer process are given. The *Design Principles* are listed in Figure 8.1 below.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSFERRING INSIGHT TO PRACTICE
1. 'Tool up' partnership support workers whose role is to be concerned about collaborative processes, rather than being directly aimed at collaborators involved in collaboration whose role is to achieve some substantive end.
2. Account for individuals' potentially immense differences in culture, background, education and motivation.
3. Account for individuals' different conceptions of what collaboration actually is.
4. Draw on collaboration theory to convey that a sound understanding of the complexities of collaboration will enhance collaborative practice.
5. Convey insight in a way which is instantly meaningful to individuals in the target audience.
6. Balance the need to capture and explore the complexities of collaboration against the need for simplicity in understanding and ease of use by collaboration practitioners.
7. Allow individuals to explore the complexities of collaboration in the context of their own experiences.
8. Balance working with and according to individuals' experiences and introducing the theory on collaboration.
9. Address (1) to (8) by providing a means to explore the themes in collaborative practice which are repeatedly of concern to collaboration practitioners, rather than, through a prescriptive approach.
10. Allow Partnership Support Workers to develop appropriate behaviours, tools or other responses for themselves - albeit prompted by suggestions from the transfer process - rather than give highly prescriptive advice on these.

**Figure 8.1** Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice

**1 'Tool up' Partnership Support Workers whose role it is to be concerned about collaboration processes, rather than, target collaborators involved in collaboration whose role it is to achieve substantive ends.**

This design principle reflects very deliberate attempts at identifying possible audiences at which the transfer of collaboration insight could be effectively targeted (see Chapter 5). Prime concerns in this respect were to identify the audience which could not only have the greatest potential benefit from practical help but which would also be most easily addressed and through which a wide pragmatic impact on collaborative practises could be gained. The possible audiences identified and considered were; actual members of collaborations either as individuals or as core groups; partnership support workers who, through their job descriptions, aim to encourage and assist others to collaborate; group-process facilitators working with collaborative core groups; policy makers or governments and 'the world'. There are good reasons for targeting all these audiences, though with different aims.

The target audience believed to be most suitable were *Partnership Support Workers*. The main reason for choosing Partnership Support Workers was that they are usually concerned about collaborative processes whereas, for example, individuals involved in collaborations are usually concerned with achieving substantive aims. As such, partnership support workers may be actively seeking more understanding about collaborative processes. They would therefore be more easily accessible, would benefit greatly from having tools to help them actively convey and use that understanding and would be providing leverage as they potentially work with a large number of practitioners and hence ultimately provide a wider impact. Thus, the first design principle attempts to capture the idea that the audience that would identify most closely with the prime concerns of benefit, access and impact was that of partnership support workers.

The implication of this Design Principle is thus that initial efforts on designing, developing and delivering a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should be targeted at Partnership Support Workers.

**Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

The Mobile Resource Team had been identified as an ideal audience with which to take the research forward and develop the *Design Principles* (see Chapter 4). The issue of 'getting

in' - gaining enough initial interest for the audience to pay attention - had been identified as a likely problem regardless of audience targeted (see Chapter 5 and 7). The evaluation of the process indicated a number of possible reasons for the 'getting in' problem such as; general resistance to intervention (from both facilitators and managers); resistance to the research process as a whole, including trying out exercises and acknowledging the potential value of theoretical input. The main problem however, appeared to be rooted in the fact that the team members were being required by their employer to take part in the research rather than voluntarily wanting to take part. Some of the comments made by the team members, reflecting that view were:

*'I felt like a guinea pig - that I am part of a process for which I had no control... that I was being experimented on and I did not like that feeling and that made me not want to participate very much or not at all in some respects';*

*'.. felt like a guinea pig and that things were being done to me as part of an exercise';*

*'felt that I was not part of the process and that it was a top down process with things being done to me';*

*'felt that I was part of an experiment, a blank canvass to be painted on and the disempowerment that that entails';*

*'feeling of going along because it was my job rather than wanting to be involved';*

With perceived views and feelings like those quoted above, it is not surprising that the 'getting in' issue was a great problem. This has obviously had an impact on the research with the Mobile Resource Team as suggested by the discussion in Chapter 7. Bearing that in mind however, valuable insight can nevertheless be drawn from the research involving the Mobile Resource Team.

Firstly the involvement of the Mobile Resource Team has demonstrated the difficulties of targeting an audience with insight on collaboration when the individuals in the audience are not actively seeking such insight. Unless the individuals in the target audience have themselves experienced difficulties commonly found in collaborative working arrangements, they are unlikely to be readily accessible to a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to get an audience's attention simply by explaining the extent of difficulties that normally abound in collaborative working arrangements.

A second point relates to the difficulties of addressing a team versus that of addressing individuals. The *Design Principles* listed in Figure 8.1 emerged out of process design efforts aimed at individuals rather than teams. Though aware of this shift in audience, no actual changes were made to the design of the process prior to the involvement of the Mobile Resource Team. For example, one of the members was perpetually negative to the research. As this individual was also very confident and outspoken, this individual may have had a significant impact on the way in which the members acted as a *team*. For example, from comments made during the evaluation event, it is apparent that they preferred being addressed as individuals as opposed to a team. Yet, they were seen as a team by the Alliance, they had been through team building exercises immediately prior to their involvement in the research and indeed acted as a team. If the target audience comprises teams of individuals rather than individuals then that must be incorporated into the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as discussed in Chapter 5.

**2. Account for individuals' potentially immense difference in culture, background, education and motivation.**

Collaboration takes place not only across organisational boundaries but also across the community, public and private sectors and sometimes across national boundaries (Chapter 1). Therefore, collaboration tends to involve people from highly different educational, professional and cultural backgrounds. The extent to which such differences are present will obviously vary from one collaboration to another but any individual involved in any collaboration is likely to experience difficulties which stem from individuals' differences in culture, background, education and motivation. If the aim is to raise awareness of collaboration activities therefore, these individual differences need to be accounted for in the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

The implications of this *Design Principle* are that the theoretical material must be prepared and transferred in such a way that it can be useful to a range of individuals with different experiences. This affects the level of sophistication and complexity at which the insight can be transferred. Further the means by which the insight can be transferred must also be appropriate to a range of individuals with possibly highly different skills and incentives. Regardless of target audience chosen, individuals within it are likely to have different experiences, incentives and skills. The challenge therefore is that individual differences will

have to be accounted for at the same time through the same transfer mechanism. In practice therefore it may, for example, not be possible to take full advantage of modern technology (such as interactive computer software) with an audience that comprise a mixture of community activists and managers of statutory organisations.

### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

The Design Principles listed in Figure 7.8 dictated the design of the events with the Mobile Resource Team and hence how theory was attempted transferred (see Chapter 7). As an integral part of the entire research process, specific *Transfer Means* were also developed (Chapter 6). In general, a great deal of effort was directed at designing a process which was sophisticated in terms of transferring insight and at the same time designed to suit a range of individuals. For example, apart from an overhead projector, no electronic tools or sophisticated computer software was used. The aim was that every individual, regardless of their background, should be able to use the *Transfer Means* and feel comfortable and able to benefit from the design of the events. The insight attempted transferred to the Mobile Resource Team was at a fairly 'advanced level' (for example in terms of the discussions of the complexity associated with goals in collaboration) but care was taken to keep the complexity manageable (see also design principle 6). This relates both to the language used and the type of concepts conveyed.

The comment below, made by one of the team members, suggests that the approach taken may not have been entirely successful with regards to accounting for their individual differences:

*'There was a problem in that we were seen as a bunch - like a bunch of bananas - and we all come from very different backgrounds with very different experiences some very sophisticated experiences of various collaboration processes. It was disempowering not to have that recognised'.*

This comment relates more to the way in which theory was transferred rather than what type of theory was transferred with regards to level of complexity and so on. The individual was emphasising their skills as a facilitator rather than their knowledge of collaboration. Thus, if the process is aimed at Partnership Support Workers, then the design may have to enable the

participants to use their own facilitative tools rather than provide them with tools that they can use.

### **3. Account for individuals' different conceptions of what collaboration actually is.**

A single universally accepted definition of collaboration does not exist. Since collaboration tends to pull together a range of different individuals with a range of different backgrounds (*Design Principle 2*) it is perhaps not surprising that collaboration means a range of different things to different people. For example, collaboration may mean community participation to some and working across organisational boundaries to others. Thus, this *Design Principle* aims to convey that individuals within any target audience are likely to have very different perceptions of what collaboration actually is.

The implications of this *Design Principle* is that there is a need to ensure that people are able to understand and use the theory by incorporating into the transfer process individuals' own interpretations of collaboration. The design of the transfer process must therefore be such that, in practice, it becomes possible to work with multiple definitions of collaboration. The need to account for individuals' different conceptions of what collaboration actually is, suggests that it may be more sensible to focus on *Collaboration Themes* (Chapter 5) rather than on highly prescriptive recommendations. This is based on the understanding that highly prescriptive processes will necessarily have to be specific with regards to the type of collaborations the recommendation pertain to. *Collaboration Themes* on the other hand are issues typically causing concern or reward in collaborative practices regardless of the specific nature of a collaboration.

#### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

The *Defining Collaboration* exercise as discussed in Chapter 6 was the first exercise that the members of the Mobile Resource Team were asked to undertake. This was done in an attempt to build on their different experiences and to begin to identify their different conceptions of what collaboration actually is.



The exercise itself and discussions spurred by it, generated insight as to the individuals' views on what collaboration is, whether or not individuals recognise that they are involved in a collaboration, whether or not collaboration needs to be defined, what a definition might look like and how it may be generated. The comments suggested that there are highly different, and sometimes contradictory, views on this issues. The event demonstrated the difficulty of how to deal with different definitions of collaboration in a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice*. The meeting between members of the team and members of the Design Group after the last event, as mentioned in Chapter 7, dealt with the substantive theoretical output generated with reference to multiple definitions of collaboration. The team was provided with a 5 page long document summarising this output. The team members' intention was to attempt to turn that insight into a tool which they themselves can use when they provide training on collaboration in the community. It has not been possible to assess whether or not they were successful in doing so. This is however, an example of how Partnership Support Workers can be provided with insight to enable them to develop tools for themselves (see *Design Principle 10*).

#### **4 Convey that a sound understanding of the complexity of collaboration will enhance collaborative practice**

This *Design Principle* aims to convey that working across organisational boundaries is complex (Chapter 1). Individuals, in particular those who have not themselves experienced a great deal of exposure to collaborative activities, are not necessarily aware that collaboration is complex. They may therefore not give due attention to how they manage their collaborative activities. This *Design Principle* therefore suggests that an understanding of the complexity of collaboration may prepare individuals for the challenge that it implies. Thus, the theory must be conveyed in ways which will provide insight to the reasons why collaborative practices are difficult and provide pragmatic suggestions for addressing them.

#### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

This Design Principle relates to the issue of 'getting in' (see *Design Principle 1*) with respect to the audience being aware that collaboration is difficult and therefore actively seeking more understanding about collaborative processes. Some of the Mobile Resource

Team's comments listed below seem to suggest that they were generally not aware of the complexity of collaboration:

*'[collaboration is] something we do without thinking';*

*'I have doubts about talking collaboration and have felt as if you are trying to complicate something that is straight forward';*

*'a task for future events should be to find more straight forward ways of explaining collaboration'.*

The extent to whether an individual is ready to seek more understanding of collaboration processes, and able to grasp the value of theory seems to relate directly to the amount of exposure they have had to collaborative activities and hence the chance that they have experienced how difficult it can be. Indeed, one of the participants who has been employed by the Alliance much longer than any of the others was generally very positive about the process and seemed far better able both at explaining and grasping theoretical concepts.

The other team members said that they had not learned anything from the events but that they had found the feedback from the events useful. The substantive collaboration output generated from each event suggests that the events ought to have provided them with learning. Also, if they were able to benefit from the feedback on the events then presumably they ought to have learned something at the events as well. It is possible that the individuals simply did not recognise that learning because they were not genuinely motivated to learn.

##### **5. Convey insight in a way which is instantly meaningful to individuals in the target audience**

Individuals involved in a collaboration are usually concerned with achieving progress with regards to the subject of the collaboration rather than being primarily concerned with the collaborative processes *per se*. This *Design Principle* therefore suggests that individuals are not likely to pay any attention to the theory of collaboration unless it is instantly obvious that it will enhance their progress with regards to the substantive aims of the collaboration (see Sections 5.1.3 and *Design Principle 1* above).

The implication of the above is that regardless of transfer mechanism chosen, individuals would have to be encouraged to use it. The theory must thus be presented in a way which

instantly grabs the attention of individuals in the target audience. In practice, this usually means that the theory must be presented using clear and simple concepts which individuals can easily identify with. Presenting a simple picture of collaboration is the approach taken by most authors of guide books to collaboration (see Chapter 3).

The individuals' ability to relate to theoretical concepts relates to their experiences of collaboration. Thus, the picture presented may be more sophisticated the more experiences of collaboration the individuals in the target audience have. For example, individuals who have themselves been exposed to the difficulties of collaboration are likely to identify with the concept of *Collaborative Inertia* (Chapter 2). In general, theoretical concepts which reflect collaboration in practice are likely to grab individuals' attention provided that the individuals themselves have had enough exposure to collaboration activities. This obviously relates to the way in which theory on collaboration has been generated (Chapter 4).

#### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

The research with the Mobile Resource Team suggests that at least some of the members had difficulties relating to or appreciating the value of the theory. Some of the comments made were:

*'the 'characteristic table' was vague and confusing and the definitions were very 'jargony'';*

*'the theory serves to confuse';*

*'theory input gives a feeling of being 'talked at' rather than being part of an equal partnership'.*

*'it [less theoretical input] made the event less tedious'.*

It is possible that an explanation of what theory grounded in practice means and indeed how practical it can be, could have been beneficial to the work with the Mobile Resource Team. It is also possible that a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should avoid using the word theory as it may imply an academic rather than a practical use. Instead, words such as insight or understanding may be more suitable.

Further, as discussed in Chapter 7, the Mobile Resource Team members were keen to design practical tools for use in the community rather than pay specific attention to gaining a better understanding of the theory on collaboration. This sense of wanting to 'get on with' the substantive task at hand was expected. The team members were seeking practical tools because they were in need of them. They did not appear to accept that they may not have had enough 'structured knowledge' of collaborative working to actually design the tools. This is likely to have contributed to their resistance to pay attention to the theory.

**6. Balance the need to capture and transfer the complexity of collaboration against the need for simplicity in understanding and ease of use by collaboration practitioners.**

This Design Principle aims to convey that, taken together, *Design Principles 4* and *5* presents a dilemma. Presenting a clear and adequately simple, picture of collaboration (*Design Principle 5*) can be very misleading and lacking in complexity and detailed information about how collaborators may manage their activities (*Design Principle 4*). Thus, the instantly meaningful picture will ultimately be too simple to provide real practical guidance and hence allow practitioners to explore the complexities of collaboration. There is thus a tension which arises out of the need to present a simple picture of collaboration and the need to convey the complex reality of collaboration.

The implication of this Design Principle is that there is a need to find ways of balancing complexity versus simplicity. It may be worthwhile to note that this Design Principle is concerned with the theory to be conveyed rather than the means by which the theory is conveyed (ref. *Design Principle 2*). The focus on the *Collaboration Themes* may facilitate the balance between simplicity and complexity. By focusing on *Collaboration Themes*, the theory is effectively broken into manageable chunks which may provide the necessary simplicity. An elaboration of any one of the *Collaboration Themes* can provide a holistic picture of issues pertaining to that theme. This can provide an individual with valuable insight without at once having to gain a full understanding of the complexity of collaboration. An appreciation of the complexity may be gained by elaborating the extent to which and the way in which the themes are inter-linked. Thus, a holistic understanding of collaboration can be gained gradually and incrementally by elaborating on a single or a few *Collaboration Themes* as and when the individuals in the target audience perceive it to be relevant. The relevance relates to exploring themes as identified by individuals' own

experiences as discussed below (*Design Principle 7*). Thus, the focus on *Collaboration Themes* may provide the necessary balance between providing a simple and useful picture and at the same time conveying the complexity of collaboration.

### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

As explained in Chapter 7, the intention had been to enable the Mobile Resource Team to identify their own set of themes to explore through undertaking the *Gathering Individuals' Experiences and Views on Collaboration* exercise. That set of themes was intended to provide an agenda upon which to transfer insight during future workshops. As outlined in Chapter 7, that development did not take place as planned. However, the *Collaboration Themes* informed the design of the workshops in a variety of different ways. In general, the *Collaboration Themes* generated by the individuals were referred to at each event with the aim of illustrating how the theory to be explored in that event related to the team's own experiences. More specifically, the identification of issues to be explored in the *Case Study Based Exploration of Collaboration Barriers* exercise for example, were informed by the list of *Collaboration Themes*.

#### **7. Allow individuals to explore the complexity of collaboration in the context of their own experiences.**

This design principle attempts to address the issues captured by design principles 2, 3 and 4. It suggests therefore that, not only should individuals be encouraged to explore the complexities of collaboration (*Design Principle 4*), but they should be able to do so *in the context of their own experiences* so as to account for their differences in culture, background, education and motivation (*Design Principle 2*) and different conceptions of what collaboration actually is (*Design Principle 3*). Building on individuals' actual experiences is also something which Alliance staff regard as highly important and fundamental to the way in which they conduct their field work. Theory on learning also supports the belief that it is likely to be easier for individuals to take on board theoretical insight if it is reviewed and interpreted in the light of their own experiences (Bothams, 1984). That is, people make sense of 'new' concepts by relating them to 'old' experiences.

The implication of this Design Principle is that the transfer process needs to be designed in such a way that it explicitly enables the target audience to consider the theory in view of their own experiences. The theoretical material must thus be structured in a way which enables the link to be made between theory and practical experiences. This may in turn put restrictions on the means by which theory may be conveyed. For example, it may be argued that written text does not provide the flexibility required to build on individuals' experiences. However, the use of themes will not only ensure that individuals can, as a minimum, recognise that some of the theory has a direct link to their experiences but will also provide a great deal of flexibility in terms of preparation of the theory, the sequence by which it may be transferred and the means of transferring it.

### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

As discussed in Chapter 6, all of the specific *Transfer Means* developed as part of this research builds on individuals' experiences. The research with the Mobile Resource Team seems to confirm that enabling individuals to consider the theory in view of their own experiences is indeed valuable. Specific comments by Mobile Resource Team members which support this view include:

*'it helped to move the issue from the theoretical to the practical realities of collaboration and what it can mean in practice';*

*'spending so much time analysing a practical example helped me clarify links between practice & theory';*

*'experience based discussion makes the theoretical framework more alive'.*

It is less clear what the appropriate *means* of enabling individuals to explore the theory in view of their own experiences is. For example, the main feature of the *Defining Collaboration* exercise is that each individual participating in the exercise is asked to explore, in various different ways, a collaborative activity in which they have been involved. This particular exercise has received positive responses by other individuals on previous occasions yet the Mobile Resource Team members did not find it useful. Interestingly however, they responded positively to preparing case studies (Section 6.5 and 6.6) of collaborative activities that they had recently been involved in, and making these accounts available for exploration at workshops.

There may be several reasons for these rather different reactions to seemingly similar ways of “building on participants’ experiences”. In the first case, the method for exploring experiences (i.e. the exercise) was brought to the team members and they were subsequently asked to choose and explore experiences using those methods. In the second case, they were asked to give accounts of specific relevant experiences of their choice and the method for exploring the experiences was designed or chosen with those experiences in mind. In both cases, the theoretical issues under focus were determined by the individuals’ experiences but the extent to which this was the case was probably greater in the second case.

In commenting on the exercises, one of the members said, with reference to the first method, that;

*‘people chose examples with a small component of community development and a larger part of collaboration’*

*‘people spoke about what they thought collaboration means [rather than talking about a shared view of collaboration].’*

Thus, the individuals may have felt that the first case provided too little overlap with their own experiences whereas the second method increased their ownership of the exercise and the extent to which they were able to draw on their own experiences. There are probably a number of additional reasons why the team preferred the second method to the first method. However, in terms of the overall design of the ‘transferring insight to practice’ method, one implication seems to be that the preferred method requires a reactive approach. This would in turn imply that there is an even greater need for flexibility which not only rules out a number of possible *Transfer Means* but also has a great impact on the extent to which the audience determines the agenda (see Design Principle 8 below).

#### **8. Balance working with and according to individuals’ experiences and introducing the theory on collaboration.**

*This design principle addresses the need to balance ‘drawing pragmatically on the theory of collaboration’ (Design Principle 4) and ‘building on individuals’ experiences’ (Design Principle 7). Building on individuals’ experiences is key to the transfer process and may be a sensible starting point. Yet, moving on from that to introducing insight in a prepared format is problematic. There is thus a tension that arises from the need to build on individuals’ experiences and the need to introduce collaboration theory.*

Whilst building on individuals' experiences is a sensible starting point, introducing theory by building on that starting point is problematic because it requires a fairly dominant approach. That dominant approach will in turn contradict with building the transfer of the insight on individuals' experiences. If, on the other hand, the approach is dominated by participants' experiences, then that will be done at a risk of not being able to convey key insight. Thus, the benefit of the theory including the non-obvious aspects of it, may be lost.

It follows that care is needed to get beyond a mere exploration of participants' experiences to actually introducing theoretical concepts. This generally requires preparation of structure and theory. The 'themes in collaboration' may be used as a way of 'anticipating' individuals' experiences and the preparation of the theory to be transferred may be based on that. This may provide the necessary balance between being able to prepare the theory to be transferred and a structure for transferring it whilst at the same time allowing individuals to have an influence on the agenda.

### **Insight gained from the Action Research with the Mobile Resource Team**

Getting the balance right between introducing theory on collaboration and paying attention to the individuals' experiences was probably the issue that posed most difficulties in the research with the Mobile Resource Team. The general difficulty of striking this balance was discussed in detail with reference to the first two training events during Phase 1 (see Section 7.1.3). It was concluded that if the aim is to elaborate upon the participants' experiences, then it may not be possible to follow a prepared structure. The inability to follow a prepared structure means that the benefit of theory may be lost as it is not possible to prepare a meaningful structure of theory. Thus, the inability to follow a prepared structure is a key dilemma.

In the case of the Mobile Resource Team, there were several factors influencing this issue. It is important to note here that many of those factors seem to relate to the issue of research rather than the issue of balancing working with and according to individuals' experience and introducing theory on collaboration. Thus, the team members did not have a genuine interest in the research agenda (see *Design Principle 1*). They did not have a perceived need to raise their awareness about collaboration (see *Design Principle 4*). The team viewed the project as a collaboration rather than a research project (see Chapter 7). The team members



wanted to have a greater influence on the design of the events which was problematic because they did not share the Design Group's view on the purpose of the events. This may have been the main contributor to the team's negative reaction and general resistance to theory.

Responding to the team's needs (as perceived by the team), the Design Group shifted the direction of the research away from its intended agenda. It is possible that some of the benefit of the theory was lost in the battle to satisfy all concerned. *The shift away from the intended agenda had a significant impact on the structure of the training events.* The design of the events should have provided insight with regard to the appropriate structure of events aimed at *Transferring Insight To Practice*. However, as will become evident from the comments below, it is not clear from the research with the Mobile Resource Team what type of structure is more appropriate.

Comments made by the Mobile Resource Team seem to suggest that the team both asked for more structure and at the same time, reject the structure provided for them. Further, the team also seemed to both want to have a greater say in the design of the research and at the same time wanting to know where it was all going. Some comments about structure is given below:

*'there should be 'more structure'' (but what type?),*

*'the structure of the [second] event didn't allow equal participation and it [the event] should be 'less one sided - needs more balance' (to which direction did the balance tip?)*

and with reference to the fourth event where only structure and no theoretical input was provided, one person commented;

*'there should have been 'more equal share of input'' (it is not clear what input the individual is referring to)*

Thus, the team both wanted to have an equal say in the process and at the same time wanted to have the structure provided for them.

**9. Address (1) to (8) by providing a means to explore the themes in collaborative practice which are repeatedly of concern to collaboration practitioners, rather than through a prescriptive approach.**

This Design Principle highlights the centrality of the *Collaboration Themes* and the extent to which they inform the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* (Chapter 5). It is suggested that the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should explicitly incorporate and be informed by the *Collaboration Themes*. This is based on the understanding that an initial focus on the *Collaboration Themes* can pave the way to gaining an understanding of the complexity that lie under their surface.

The implication of this Design Principle is that the *Collaboration Themes* may inform both the type of theoretical insight to be transferred and the way in which it is transferred. For example, as discussed above, Design Principle 3 suggests that a focus on *Collaboration Themes* means that the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* will account for individuals' different conceptions of what collaboration actually is. Design Principle 6 suggests that a focus on *Collaboration Themes* will facilitate a balance between providing a simple picture of collaboration and at the same time, conveying the complexity of collaboration. Finally, Design Principle 7 suggests that a focus on *Collaboration Themes* will enable individuals to see the practicality of the theory. Further, the focus on *Collaboration Themes* provides a way of 'anticipating' individuals' experiences and enable the theory to be prepared in view of those experiences.

Thus, the suggested transfer process puts a strong emphasis on the use of the *Collaboration Themes*. Examples of how this may be done, including the Mobile Resource Team's responses to them, have been discussed above.

**10 Allow Partnership Support Workers to develop appropriate behaviours, tools or other responses for themselves rather than give highly prescriptive advice on these.**

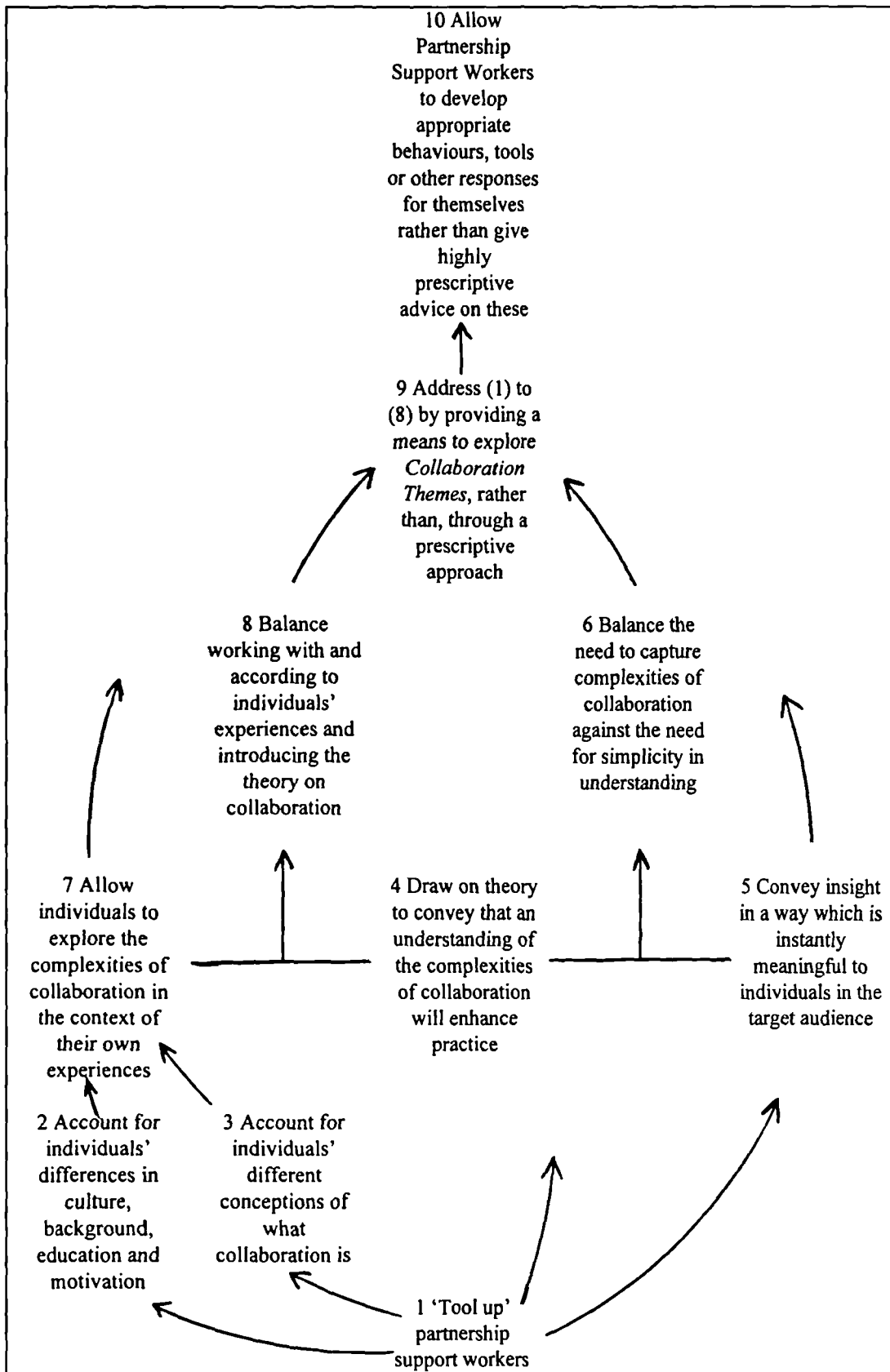
This Design Principle captures the notion that the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should provide Partnership Support Workers with the necessary understanding of collaboration activities to develop their own ways of facilitating collaboration among others. The focus on *Collaboration Themes* is obviously a key integral component of the proposed process as discussed above (Design Principle 9).

The implication of this Design Principle is that the design of the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* should provide Partnership Support Workers with a thorough understanding of collaboration rather than provide highly prescriptive advice on how to help practitioners collaborate. The process should provide Partnership Support Workers with insight about collaboration, concepts for explaining collaboration activities and suggest ways and means of raising awareness about collaboration to equip Partnership Support Workers to develop their own responses. The Action Research Workshops and the *Transfer Means* designed and developed during the course of this research have all demonstrated possible ways of doing this.

## 8.2 A discussion of the characteristics of the Design Principles

In the above section, each Design Principle was discussed specifically though not entirely in isolation. In this final section, the *Design Principles* will be discussed in general terms with the aim of clarifying how they relate to one another (see Figure 8.2). The proposed set of *Design Principles* pertain to a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* using training events as transfer mechanisms. Further more, Design Principle 1 suggests that initial efforts should be targeted at Partnership Support Workers. However, the initial set of *Design Principles* emerged out of research including individuals who are themselves involved in collaboration activities as well as Partnership Support Workers. The intention here is to indicate the extent to which the *Design Principles* may apply to different audiences and different transfer mechanisms (see Chapter 5 for a discussion on possible audiences and transfer mechanisms).

Figure 8.2 illustrates the way in which the *Design Principles* relate to one another. Design Principle 1 concerns the target audience and is as such the logical starting point. *Design Principles* 2 and 3 highlight that individuals concerned with collaboration in practice come from highly different backgrounds and have highly different views on what collaboration actually is. In view of these differences, Design Principle 7 suggests that individuals should be given the opportunity to explore the complexity of collaborative working in view of their own experiences. The two arrows leading on from Design Principle 1 to *Design Principles* 4 and 5 are intended to bring attention to the fact that whilst collaboration is complex individuals are usually unaware of this complexity and the need to consider they way in which they manage their collaboration activities. In view of that ignorance, Design



**Figure 8.2** The relationship between the Design Principles for Transferring Insight to Practice

Principle 4 suggests that there is a need to convey theoretical insight on collaboration to prepare individuals for the challenge that the complexity of collaboration implies. Similarly, Design Principle 5 suggests that as individuals are more concerned with the substantive purpose of the collaboration rather than the process of collaboration, there is a need to convey a simple picture of collaboration that will instantly grab their attention. The two broad lines at the centre of Figure 8.2 indicate that tensions arise due to the need to present both a simple and a complex picture of collaboration and the need to both build on individuals' experiences and introduce theory on collaboration. Design Principle 6 therefore suggests that there is a need to balance presenting a simple picture against exploring the complexity of collaboration. Similarly, Design Principle 8 suggests that there is a need to balance working with and according to individuals' experiences and introduce theory on collaboration. *Design Principles 9 and 10* sum up the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* by responding generally to all the other *Design Principles* and pointing out the purpose of the process and the role of the *Collaboration Themes*.

### **8.2.1 The general applicability of the Design Principles**

A brief review and examination of what each Design Principle intends to capture will help to illustrate the extent to which the *Design Principles* may apply to other audiences and other transfer mechanisms. *Design Principles 2, 3, 4 and 5* for example, relate directly to the nature of collaboration activities. The issues they aim to capture (as opposed to the responses they suggest in terms of transferring insight) are *directly concerned with collaboration activities as opposed to the process of transferring insight*. Because they capture issues directly concerned with collaboration activities, it may be argued that for any process aimed at enhancing individuals' understanding of collaboration activities, regardless of transfer mechanism chosen, these *Design Principles* will apply. For example, if the target audience comprises individuals actually involved in collaboration as opposed to Partnership Support Workers, these *Design Principles* may be helpful in designing the approach. If, on the other hand, the aim is to provide individuals with direct help in managing their collaboration activities, then the extent to which the process should convey the complexity of collaboration (Design Principle 4) for example, would have to be considered. It is not necessarily helpful for individuals to dwell on the complexity of collaboration whilst undertaking their every day collaboration activities. Yet at the same time they need to be aware of the fact that collaboration is complex and that care is needed. Thus, it may be

argued that it would be useful to individuals to recognise Collaborative Inertia when it happens.

*Design Principles 6, 7 and 8* are of a slightly different nature in that they arise as a result of *Design Principles 2-5*. The issues they capture, therefore, as well as the suggestions they make, relate to *the process for Transferring Insight to Practice*. These *Design Principles* are not as generally applicable as *Design Principles 2-5* because they depend on the flexibility of the transfer mechanism chosen. The ability to build on individuals' experiences for example, is greater with a transfer mechanism that is interactive as opposed to for example, written text. This is not to say that *Design Principles 6-7* do not have value beyond using training events as transfer mechanisms. Paying specific attention to the need to balance conveying the complex reality of collaboration with the need for simplicity of understanding is likely to enhance the value of any approach aimed at raising awareness and enhancing understanding of collaboration.

It may also be interesting to note that *Design Principles 2-5* address issues to do with gaining an audience's initial attention, 'getting in', whereas 5-7 relate to the transfer of insight once the audience's attention has been gained. It may be argued then, that any process which cannot successfully incorporate Design Principle 2-5, will be of limited success regardless of its ability to account for *Design Principles 6-10*.

*Design Principles 9 and 10* are also of a different character because they address the entire process rather than focus on certain aspects of it. Thus, *Design Principles 2-8* all capture ways of achieving 9 and 10. In terms of the generalisability of these *Design Principles*, the arguments are similar to those above. These are however, more generally applicable than *Design Principles 6-8* because any transfer mechanism can incorporate the focus on *Collaboration Themes*. Further, any Transfer Mechanism can with effort, be designed to be less prescriptive.

In this brief recap, the Policy Makers and Governments and The World audiences have been largely ignored. These audiences are far more remote from collaboration activities than are the collaborators and the Partnership Support Workers. It is therefore not possible to assess the general applicability of the *Design Principles* to any process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* targeted at these audiences. Because the aims of targeting these audiences would differ from that explored in this thesis, it is however not very likely that the proposed set of

*Design Principles* would be relevant. Similarly, some of the transfer mechanisms such as academic courses and newspapers have been ignored because they would not be specifically targeting the audiences close to the collaborators. Rather, they would be more suitable if Policy Makers and Governments and The World were the chosen audiences.

### 8.3 Conclusion

The aim of the research reported on in this thesis was to develop process theory pertaining to the transfer of collaboration insight to practice. To that end, the *Design Principles* discussed above are the primary output. Other output directly linked to the *Design Principles* are the identifications and conceptualisations of the Target Audiences, the *Transfer Mechanisms* and the *Collaboration Themes* as discussed in Chapter 5 and the *Transfer Means* as discussed in Chapter 6.

The methodological basis upon which the validity of this research is claimed was discussed in Chapter 4. One aspect of the validity of the research output relates to whether or not it conveys an accurate and thorough understanding of the subject; Transferring Insight on Collaboration to Practice. Furthermore, the validity relates to whether the research output captures and accounts for the views, experiences and actions of those who participated in the research. It is not the intention here to repeat the discussions on rigour and relevance of Chapter 4. However, two significant measures of validity relate to whether or not the research output is relevant to those who participated in the research and whether or not it can be generalised beyond the specific research setting. The discussions throughout Chapter 7 demonstrated the extent to which the *Design Principles* were grounded in the research undertaken and thus the extent to which they may be relevant to the specific research settings. The discussions of Sections 8.1 and 8.2 have sought to demonstrate the extent to which the *Design Principles* may be generalised beyond the specific research settings as discussed in Chapter 7. One key aspect of the relevancy of the research relates to whether it was useful to those directly involved in the research and whether it may be useful beyond this research. This aspect of the validity of the research is therefore reflected upon here.

The Poverty Alliance managers co-operated in this research in a participatory action research capacity. They demonstrated their commitment and loyalty to the research throughout the entire research project and in particular when difficulties emerged during

Phase 3. During Phase 1 and Phase 2, the Alliance managers invited individuals associated with the Alliance to participate in training events. Furthermore, the research undertaken during Phase 3 was a significant intervention into the activities of the Poverty Alliance's Mobile Resource Team. This, as well as the fact that the Alliance managers have kept nurturing their relationship with Chris Huxham and myself is a measure of their trust and commitment to the research.

The usefulness of the research to the Alliance relates in part to the success of the events in transferring insight on collaboration to participants. If the events were successful then they also contributed instantly to the Alliance's remit of 'developing effective networks and promoting collaborative processes' (see Section 4.1.3.1). Furthermore, as the research was undertaken in a participatory action research capacity, the learning gained throughout the research was discussed at Design Group meetings undertaken at regular intervals (see Figure 4.2). That learning is captured by the *Design Principles* as discussed above. Thus the Alliance may have gained long term benefits relating to the way in which it undertakes activities of fostering and co-ordinating collaboration among its members and others working with different aspects of poverty in the West of Scotland.

The training events undertaken during Phase 1 and Phase 2 all appeared to be successful in that the participants found the events both useful and enjoyable (see Sections 7.1.3 and 7.2.4). The output of those events was discussed with specific reference to each Design Issue and it was concluded that the events were successful in transferring insight to the participants. In that respect, it may be argued that the *Design Principles* emerging out of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research are valid. These *Design Principles* formed the basis upon which the events with the Mobile Resource Team were designed. As discussed above, the research with the Mobile Resource Team led to an elaboration of those *Design Principles* rather than the identification of additional *Design Principles*.

The final aspect of the research to be addressed briefly is the extent to which the research output contributes to process theory on the transfer of collaboration insight to practice by providing potential benefit beyond the specific research settings, as discussed above. The extent to which the *Design Principles* can inform the design of any approach for *Transferring Insight to Practice* was discussed in Section 8.2 above. Support material available to those concerned with collaboration in practice was discussed in Chapter 3 and their inherent limitations were identified. Chapter 3 concluded that the challenge in



designing a process for *Transferring Insight on Collaboration to Practice* was to overcome the limitations of the existing support material. It is argued that the *Design Principles* have directly addressed those limitations. For example, one of the limitations relates to the tendency to over-simplify and thus not convey the genuine complexity of collaboration. The *Design Principles* not only highlight the need to balance complexity versus simplicity but also provide inherent suggestions on how to convey the genuine complexity of collaboration whilst at the same time providing pragmatic insight to the target audience. The *Design Principles* also capture the need for flexibility for example; in terms of addressing individuals with highly different backgrounds; in accounting for the many different ways in which collaboration is defined; and in addressing collaborations with different structures and purposes. In particular, the 'fixed stages approach' to collaboration promoted by many authors of guidebooks may be too rigid to allow for such differences. The identification of the *Collaboration Themes* and their role in a process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* offer an alternative which facilitates the required flexibility. In conclusion, it may be argued that the sophistication of the *Design Principles* ensure a contribution to process theory on *Transferring Insight to Practice*.

#### **8.4 Suggested future research**

The difficulties encountered during this research have led to the identification of possible future research activities to promote the transfer of insight to practice. Two areas seem particularly relevant.

The first issue relates to the members of the Mobile Resource Team frequently and continuously commenting that they perceived not to have learned anything from the training events. At the same time, as discussed above, there were ample indications that learning ought to have taken place. In view of the many sources of understanding that had to be brought to bear on the study of *Transferring Insight on Collaboration to Practice*, the literature on learning was not reviewed thoroughly for the purpose of this research. However, a review of that literature could possibly provide insight into how training events or other Transfer Mechanisms, may be designed with a view to enable participants to recognise their learning.

A second issue relates to the problem of 'getting in', that is, 'gaining enough initial interest for the individuals in the target audience to pay attention' (see Chapters 5, 7 and 8). This suggests that it might be useful to address the 'getting in' problem by developing theory that will instantly grab individuals' attention. Work relating to two possible ways of developing such theory has already begun.

One approach taken is aimed at understanding better how to undertake research and develop theory that can be useful to collaboration practice. This obviously builds on the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as well as, the general development of collaboration theory as discussed in Section 2.3. Based on both those types of work, future efforts will be directed at understanding what it is that makes research successful and useful for collaboration practice. The focus is thus on how to undertake, present and disseminate research for it to be useful to those who collaborate in practice (Huxham and Vangen, 1998).

The second approach taken relates to the first approach but focuses specifically on the development of the theory pertaining to the *Collaboration Themes*. The research aimed at developing the process for *Transferring Insight to Practice* as well as, responses received to other work building on the *Collaboration Themes* suggest that the themes are key to gaining individuals' attention. However, the complexity underlying each theme could be better elaborated for collaboration practice than what is currently the case. The work already underway relates to the development of the 'Trust and Power' Collaboration Theme. The 'Trust and Power' theme was chosen because it is already well featured in the literature on collaboration (see Chapter 1), yet it is not conceptualised in a form suitable to collaboration practice (Vangen and Huxham, 1998b).

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## APPENDIX 1

### EXERCISE GATHERING INDIVIDUALS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES ON COLLABORATION

The following is an idiot's guide to an exercise on gathering individuals' views about collaboration.

The aim of the exercise is to explore, in view of your own experiences; what makes collaboration work; what the difficulties in collaboration are and what ways you have found to overcome difficulties.

#### **Equipment required:**

(for group size of people, increase as required)

5 sheets of flip chart paper + blue tac  
2 post-it pads  
5 Post-it pens (or ordinary, not too broad pens)  
1 Flip chart pen  
+ a big clear wall

#### **Time Management:**

Tasks 1- 6 30 minutes

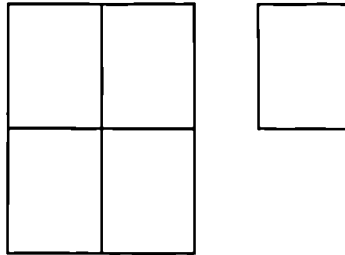
Tasks 7-9 30 minutes

#### **What to do:**

You are asked to carry out the explorations as a group by working through the tasks below using the time management guidelines above. To do this, you need to draw on any inter-organisational collaboration (or any work across organisational boundaries) that you have been involved in or have heard of.

## TASKS

- 1 Fix a group of flip charts (2 x 2) firmly to the wall (blue tac on each corner).  
Fix 1 sheet of flip chart temporarily beside the group (blue tac of top corners).



- 2 Individually and silently, for about five minutes, jot down on post-its any ideas that might be relevant to the questions about collaboration above (use post-it pens):

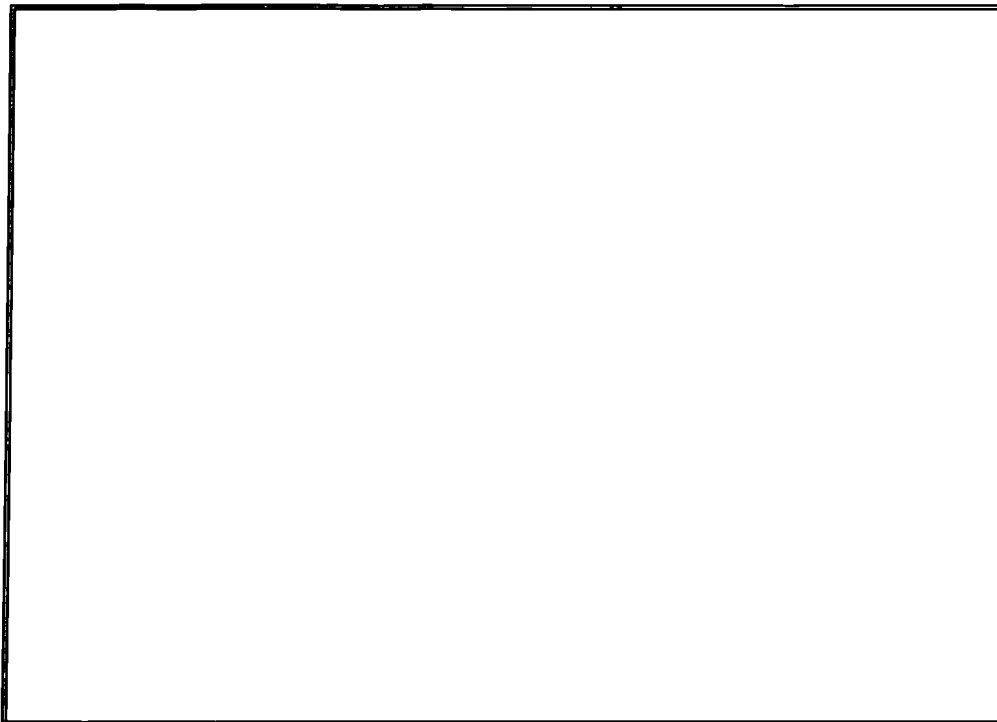
**Format:**

- one idea per post-it
- about 10 words per post-it

**Content:**

- include personal experience and opinions
- be as specific as possible
- action statements are useful

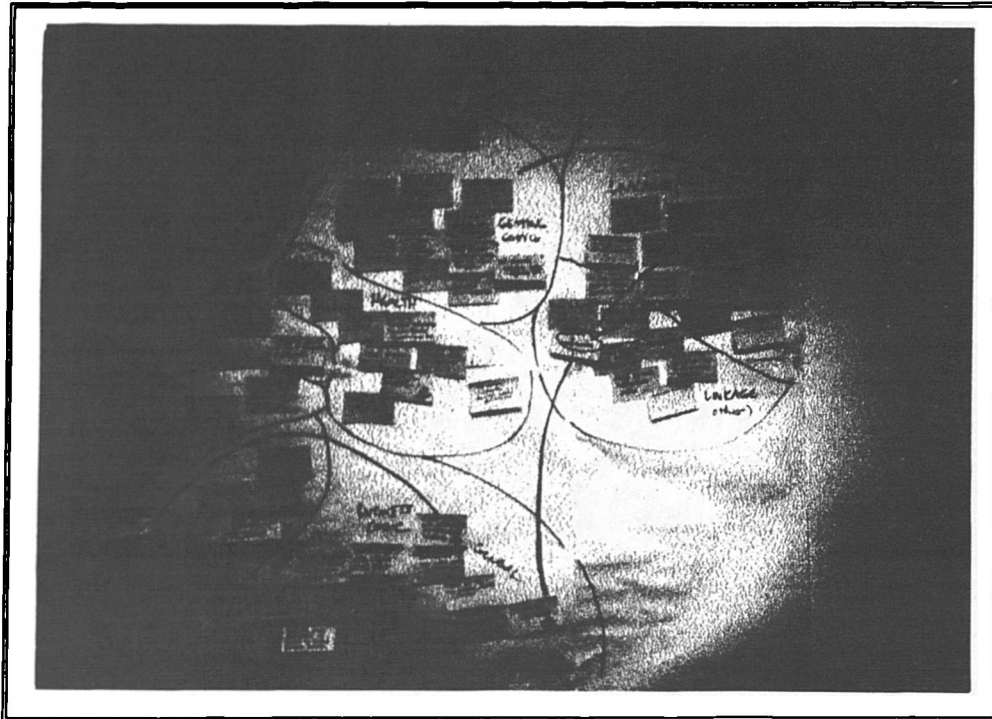
- 3 Dump the post-its onto the 4 flipcharts putting them close to similar ideas from others.  
Do not hoard your post-its; keep putting them on the flip charts.



Group putting post-its on flipcharts



- 4 Other peoples' ideas may jog further ideas for you; continue to jot and dump.
- 5 Appoint a "clusterer" whose prime role it is to ensure that similar ideas continues to be put together in clusters. Cluster ideas according to their likeness. An active clusterer is required until the end of the exercise; rotate the role if you wish.
- 6 Collectively build up your picture on the flip charts (i.e. continue to jot, dump and cluster).
- 7 Label each cluster by deciding on a keyword (or two) that best describes the theme of the cluster. Use flip chart pens to write labels at each cluster.



A group's picture

- 8 List the cluster labels on the single flip chart sheet, leaving a gap between each label.
- 9 Summarise your picture into a combined group-view of the themes by writing a few key words or phrases under each cluster label, which best portray the essence of the post-its in each cluster.

**PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT WORKERS NOTES ON:**

**EXERCISE ON GATHERING INDIVIDUALS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES ON COLLABORATION**

**Purpose:**

- 1) an efficient way of getting a first impression of participants' experiences, what is the extent and nature of their experiences and what angle are they approaching the subject from
- 2) a warm-up to getting participants into discussion of the subject
- 3) as a vehicle into transferring collaboration insight (bridging theory and practice)

The exercise is not intended to create an in-dept view of participants experiences although this is possible if the number of participants is not too large and time is sufficient to go on discussing the issues identified during the exercise.

The exercise provides an initial impression of the participants' views and experiences of collaboration and can therefore help the facilitator understand how best to transfer collaborative insight to the participants. People usually enjoy the exercise and as such it provides an excellent ice-breaker and warm up. The "tensions" typically identifiable in the cluster exercise provides an ideal base upon which to transfer collaboration insight.

**Some hints:**

If this exercise is run as a self-managed exercise then participants might loose momentum. The facilitator might therefore have to keep asking the participants to keep at it otherwise the result might be that very few ideas are generated. Groups will usually manage on their own but it might be necessary to give some initial help with the clustering.

**Expected output:**

Usually, a group will generate around 9 clusters with 4 - 11 ovals in each. The labels will typically be of the following:

Goals / objectives  
Communication  
Culture  
Personal relations  
Resources  
Power  
Networking / teamwork  
Trust  
Benefits  
Commitment  
Agendas / hidden agendas

## APPENDIX 2

### PURPOSE

The general purpose of this exercise is to discover how different people define or view collaboration.

Individuals will define collaboration differently due to their different backgrounds, professions and collaborative maturity. Gaining an understanding of how individuals might view and how they may differ in their views about collaboration is worthwhile in its own right. The exercise may further aid the participants' development of a conceptual framework because it unravels the complex nature of collaboration in a way which for example, the post-it exercise does not do. In this way, the exercise may enhance an individual's insight into the collaborative process.

Gaining an understanding of how people differ in their view about collaboration can further help the facilitator transfer theoretical insight about collaboration successfully. The exercise might help the facilitator understand what different people might engage with and this can in turn help the facilitator help the individuals make links with their own experiences and alternative theoretical concepts about collaboration.

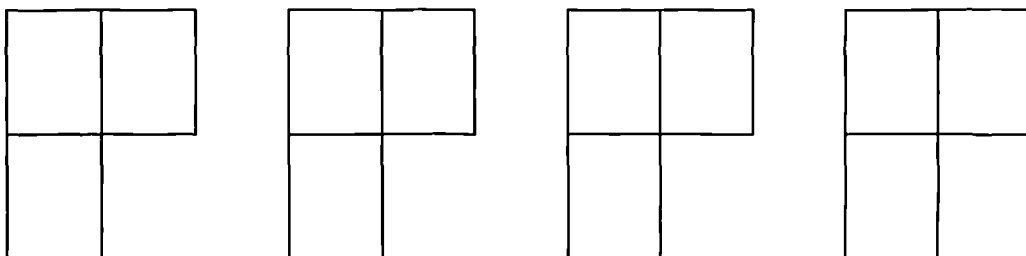
### PREPARATION

It might be useful to give the Brief Description of the exercise to the participants a few days in advance.

#### Equipment required:

Flip charts (about 20)  
Flip charts pens (different colour for each individual)  
Pens and paper for participants  
Enlarged copy of "definitional characteristics"

Put three flipcharts per person on the wall leaving space in between each individual's flipcharts for adding more flipcharts later if required. Put a group of 4 flipcharts for definitional characteristics (stage 4). Set aside a different colour flipchart pen for each individual.



Put an enlarged copy of the "definitional characteristics" on the wall but cover up with a flipchart so that it cannot be seen (it might be confusing).

**Time Management:**

**NB -- Change required -- NB**

Based on 3 individuals participating in the exercise.

Task 1 - 5 min

Task 2 - 10 min (3 min per individual)

Task 3 - 45 min (maximum of 5 min per individual per question)

Task 4 - 45 min

Task 5 - 45 min

## **THE EXERCISE**

The participants would have received a brief description of the exercise a few days in advance which should make it easier for them to respond to the questions.

### **Part 1**

- a) Ask each individual to make a list of some collaboratives that they have been or are involved in. If an individual has been involved in more than one collaborative then they should be asked to pick out one that they will describe to the rest of the participants during this exercise. (5 min)
- b) Ask each individual in turn to give a description to the others about the chosen collaborative. (3 min per individual)

Write the name only of the chosen collaboration and on a flip chart.

### **Part 2**

Ask each individual to answer, in turn, the questions below. (All to answer a question before preceding to the next question.) (5 min per individual per question)

- 1) Who are / were involved in the collaboration (organisations, groups, individuals)?
- 2) How do / did those involved relate to each other structurally?
  - e.g. why they are involved
  - e.g. what they hope to get out of the collaboration
  - e.g. what can they offer it
  - e.g. what type of groups / organisations they are
- 3) What is / was the purpose of the collaboration?

Summarise what each participant say on their flipcharts. It might be helpful to initially use 2 flipcharts for the questions following the sequence above and 1 flipchart for other general issues raised during discussion.

### **Part 3**

Introduce this part of the exercise by saying, for example:

"In light of the discussion we have just had, we want to look at the factors which define the collaborations as collaborations. We are not at this stage looking at what makes it work or not, just what makes it a collaboration.

- a) Ask each individual in turn to look at what is on the flipcharts and try to suggest general definitional characteristics. Ask them to think about what it is that makes each a collaboration.

Write the suggested definitional characteristics on the designed flipchart. Try to tease out opposite poles of the definitional characteristics e.g. by repeating the suggested characteristics and say "rather than?" (e.g. voluntary rather than mandated).

- b) Go through the "definitional characteristics table" using the suggested description below. Ask each individual in turn to apply each characteristic in turn to their chosen collaborative. Ask them to identify where they would put a cross on each line to best describe their chosen collaborative (put the cross using each individual's designed colour). Write down any generalized comments on the table and encourage participants to modify and add any new characteristic captured during exercise.

optional if time permits

- c) Find out whether participants agree on which characteristics apply to collaboratives and which do not. Write down on a flipchart characteristics which relate to "not collaboration".

## DEFINITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS - description for facilitator

The characteristics are in two lots, 1-7 are about the characteristics of collaboration and 8 - 13 are about the purpose of collaboration. The texts below each characteristic are suggestions of how one might explain each characteristic to the participants.

1 Voluntary ..... Mandated

Did the collaboration get set up voluntarily, or did somebody require that it should be.

2 Informal ..... Established Procedures

Is the collaboration informal or has it become established in such a way that there are procedures in place for how it is run.

3 Individual Member ..... Full organisation

Is the collaboration between individual members or are whole organisations involved?

4 Few communication links ..... Many communication links

(If whole organisations are involved) Are only the individuals who manage the collaboration communicating with each other or are lots of people communicating.

5 Provider / user ..... Complementary orgs ..... Similar orgs  
Vertical Symbiotic Horizontal

Is the collaboration vertical in that for example, one organisation in the collaboration is supplying something that another would use (e.g. a contractor relationship), or

is the collaboration horizontal in that organisations with similar characteristics are coming together (e.g. LAs working together), or

is the collaboration symbiotic in that organisations with different purposes, skills and expertise are coming together.

6 Collaborative ..... Competitive

Are the relationships between the organisations largely collaborative or largely competitive.

7 Broad Strategy ..... Project Oriented

Is the aim of the collaboration broadly strategic or is it project oriented.

8 Information Sharing ..... Joint Action ..... Enhancing  
another's capacity

Is the purpose of the collaboration simply information sharing or is it beyond that, aiming for joint action or even more ambitiously, aiming for joint action and trying to improve each others' ability to do things.

9 Ideological ..... Instrumental

(Collaboration driven)

(Outcome Driven)

Does the collaboration exist primarily because its members want to collaborate (i.e. collaboration is a good thing) or was the collaboration set up because a specific outcome was wanted for which collaboration was required.

The left side of the next three characteristics are all types of ideological.

10 Changing Power Relationships ..... Making a change through jointly agreed tasks

Was the collaboration set up in an attempt to change power relationships or was it aiming to make a change through jointly agreed tasks.

11 Resolving Conflict ..... Advancing a shared vision

Was the collaboration set up in order to try to solve a conflict or was it set up in order to take a shared vision forward.

12 Community Participation ..... Organisations working together

Does the collaboration exist in order to include the community or is it simply about organisations working together.

13 Empower the weak ..... Increase own power

This characteristic is a specific form of "Changing Power



## DEFINITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- |    |                                    |  |                              |
|----|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1  | Voluntary .....                    | Mandated                                     |                              |
| 2  | Informal .....                     | Established Procedures                       |                              |
| 3  | Individual Member .....            | Full organisation                            |                              |
| 4  | Few communication links .....      | Many communication links                     |                              |
| 5  | Provider / user .....              | Complementary orgs .....                     | Similar orgs                 |
|    | Vertical                           | Symbiotic                                    | Horizontal                   |
| 6  | Collaborative .....                | Competitive                                  |                              |
| 7  | Broad Strategy .....               | Project Oriented                             |                              |
| 8  | Information Sharing .....          | Joint Action .....                           | Enhancing another's capacity |
| 9  | Ideological .....                  | Instrumental                                 |                              |
|    | (Collaboration driven)             | (Outcome Driven)                             |                              |
| 10 | Changing Power Relationships ..... | Making a change through jointly agreed tasks |                              |
| 11 | Resolving Conflict .....           | Advancing a shared vision                    |                              |
| 12 | Community Participation .....      | Organisations working together               |                              |
| 13 | Empower the weak .....             | Increase own power                           |                              |

## DEFINING COLLABORATION EXERCISE

### Brief Description

The "Defining Collaboration" exercise is an interactive exercise aimed at discovering how different people view collaboration. Very briefly, the exercise aims to draw general learnings from descriptions and discussion of collaboratives that individuals have been involved in. The exercise tends to unravel the complex nature of collaboration and can, as such, enhance insight into the collaborative process and aid the development of a conceptual framework about collaboration. The exercise may be divided into three parts:

**Part 1** You will be asked to make a list of collaboratives that you have been or are involved in. If you have been involved in more than one, then you will have to choose one that you will talk specifically about during the exercise. You will then be asked to spend a maximum of 3 minutes describing your chosen collaborative to the others.

**Part 2** In view of your chosen collaborative, you will be asked to answer the questions below:

- 1) Who are / were involved in the collaboration?
- 2) How do / did those involved relate to each other structurally?
  - e.g. why they are involved
  - e.g. what they hope to get out of the collaboration
  - e.g. what can they offer it
  - e.g. what type of groups / organisations they are
- 3) What is / was the purpose of this collaboration?  
(what did / do members of the collaboration hope to achieve together?)

**Part 3** During this part of the exercise, we will work together with the aim of identifying definitional characteristics of each of the collaboratives discussed during part 1 and 2.

Siv Vangen  
Department of Management Science  
University of Strathclyde  
40 George Street  
Glasgow G1 1HX

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