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Unraveling the Principle of Common Goals in Collaborations

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses a "goals paradox" which suggests that both congruence and diversity in organizations' goals influence success in collaboration. Using extensive empirical data, we develop a framework which portrays goals as an entangled, dynamic and ambiguously hierarchical web of variously perceived, higher and lower level goals that can be characterized across six dimensions: level, origin, authenticity, relevance, content and overtness. We then explore the paradox in terms of the framework, and so propose a much elaborated theoretical understanding of it. This provides theoretical and practical understanding relevant to management and governance *in* and *of* collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration is a recognized feature of public administration (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009; Thomson and Perry, 2006) because it provides the means to seek synergistic gains known as collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Lasker et al, 2001)[1]. Unfortunately, collaboration is also notoriously conflict ridden and challenging to manage so the advantage can be hard to realize (Bryson et al., 2006, Connelly, Zhang and Faerman, 2006; Grimshaw, Vincent and Willmott, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2004; Lasker et al, 2001; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009). Researchers

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[1] We use the term "collaboration" to refer to formalized joint working arrangements between organizations which remain legally autonomous while they engage in coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that none of them can achieve on their own. Such arrangements are often conceptualized as "networks" (e.g. Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; O'Toole, 1997; Provan and Milward, 2001, Provan and Kenis, 2008).

and practitioners interested in the management and governance of collaboration are therefore advised to embrace its paradoxical nature (Connelly, Zhang and Faerman, 2006; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009; Provan and Kenis, 2008; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010)[2].

In this paper, we locate a "goals paradox" which suggests that both congruence and diversity in organizations' goals influence success in collaboration. This paradox – which is implicit in the literature on collaboration management and network governance – is central both to the principle and the enactment of collaborative advantage.

At the principle level, congruence of organizational goals is argued to be essential because joint goals for the collaboration can be easily aligned to partners' goals and this thus increases their commitment to the collaboration (Page, 2003; Ansell and Gash, 2008; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009; Provan and Kenis, 2008; Thomson and Perry, 2006). Diversity of organizational expertise and resources is, however, perceived to be essential to gaining truly synergistic advantage from collaborating (Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Lasker et al, 2001), but this, in turn, implies diversity of organizations' goals. What makes the paradox, at the principle level, particularly noteworthy however, is that the achievement of collaborative advantage can also be hindered by both congruence of, and diversity between, organizations goals. Too much homogeneity in goals can make organizations reluctant to cooperate and share information (Provan and Kenis, 2008); too much heterogeneity leads organizations to seek different and sometimes conflicting outcomes (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Percival, 2009).

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[2] A paradox is defined as something which involves contradictory, mutually exclusive elements that are present and operate equally at the same time (Cameron and Quinn, 1988).

At the enactment level, an assumption that runs through the literature is that agreement between organizations on joint goals for a collaboration is a requirement for its success; the presumption is that collaboration goals cannot be enacted unless they are explicitly acknowledged by all participants (Agranoff, 2006; Agranoff and MeGuire, 2001; Amirkhanyan, 2008; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Daley, 2009; Fleishman, 2009; Lasker et al, 2001; Page, 2003; Percival, 2009; Thomson and Perry, 2006). Paradoxically, however, the same literature also points to numerous difficulties associated with reaching such agreement in practice. For example, organizations may have different expectations that result in conflict (Agranoff and McGurie, 2001; Bryson et al, 2006); resource constraints can make compromises difficult (Provan and Milward, 2001); organizations may view policy implementation goals differently (Perceival, 2009) and agreement, when it is reached, may not move beyond a rhetorical commitment (Page, 2003).

While the contradictions and dilemmas inherent in the goals paradox are implicit in the literature, the phenomenon has yet to be investigated and conceptualized in ways that make a real contribution to theory on the management and governance of collaborations. We therefore explore the relevance and validity of the goals paradox through addressing the following questions:

- What is the underlying nature of goal congruence and diversity in collaborations?
- How do the characteristics of goals in collaborations influence organizations' ability to agree on the joint goals for the collaboration?

The research is rooted in theories on management (Agranoff and McGurie, 2001; Thomson and Perry, 2006; Bryson et al, 2006; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009) and governance (Provan and Kenis, 2008; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010) of public sector collaborations but it takes its form specifically from the theory of collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Four key

principles of the theory are particularly relevant for this paper. First, the theory is constructed in *themes*, which principally are areas identified repeatedly by practitioners as providing anxiety or reward in collaboration. This paper contributes to a theme concerned with collaboration goals. Second, the complexity that underlies collaborative situations is depicted in a holistic manner which recognizes the idiosyncratic nature of actual collaborative situations. In this respect, the theoretical analysis includes the broadest range of contexts and modes of governance and is relevant to management and governance *in* and *of* collaborations (Provan and Kenis, 2008; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010). Third, the identification and description of implications for practice are regarded as an integral part of the conceptualizations. Fourth, implications are presented in a non prescriptive manner which complies with the paradoxical nature of collaboration and which implies practical tensions: i.e. positive and negative sides to alternative ways of managing and governing (Connelly et at, 2006; Huxham and Beech, 2003; Provan and Kenis, 2008) and which are intended to be used as "handles" to support reflective practice (Huxham and Beech, 2003). These four principles informed both the design and execution of the research and the subsequent conceptualizations of the findings.

Our approach to addressing the research questions involved the development of a framework which explicates the complexity of goals and facilitates identification of the challenges inherent in the goals paradox. We carried out empirical research with a large number of individuals involved in collaborations in different contexts and at a time when considering, agreeing and deciding on goals was relevant to them. The framework highlights important aspects of goals in the collaboration arena. In this paper, we first provide a brief synopsis of relevant conceptualizations of goals in collaborations followed by an outline of the research process. We then present the framework itself followed by a theoretical analysis of the goals

paradox in light of the framework. In the conclusion, we comment briefly of the framework's implications for theory and practice on management and governance of collaborations.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF GOALS IN COLLABORATIONS: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

In theories on management and governance of collaboration, goals are variously used to refer to the reasons why collaborations are initiated, what organization participants aspire to achieve and the nature of the collaborative advantage sought. In this context therefore, we define goals broadly to include aspirations, vision, missions and purpose. While the contradictions and dilemmas inherent in the goals paradox are implicit in this literature, the characteristics of goals have not been fully conceptualized. However, some extant literature on goals *within* (rather than between) organizations is relevant.

Early conceptualizations of organizational goals typically postulated the relationship between individual and organizational goals as simple hierarchies with individual goals subordinate to organizational goals (England, 1967; Simon, 1964). More recently, Eden and Ackermann (1998) identified a "goal system" in which strategic organizational goals are derived from issues engaging influential individuals in an organization. This conceptualizes the possibility of identifying, for any organization, a complex hierarchy of inter-connected goals in which the achievement of each supports and is supported by other goals. We presume that a hierarchical model of the type specified by Eden and Ackermann is an appropriate conceptualization of goals within organizations. Without reifying the organization as a single purposeful actor (Simon, 1964) we also presume first that goals are conceived of by individuals but are also often conceptualized by them as belonging to organizations and, second, that organizations are mechanisms through which goals that are beyond the reach of individuals can be pursued (Scott, 1998). Extending this argument, we see inter-organizational collaboration as

providing a mechanism through which organizations and individuals may seek to achieve goals that they could otherwise not accomplish (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Daley, 2008; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Lasker et al, 2001; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009; Provan and Kenis, 2008; Provan and Millward, 2001; Thomson and Perry, 2006).

However, the precise characteristics of goals are likely to be unclear to those involved. The type of goals that make collaboration worthwhile frequently relate to the kinds of large-scale issues facing society (Trist, 1983) that have been variously described as *messy* (Ackoff, 1974) or *wicked* (Rittel and Webber, 1973) because they are characterized by having a large number of ill-defined interrelated elements. By their very nature, it is not easy to determine routes for addressing such issues. In collaborations, the plethora of parties – individuals and organizations – that can be involved, the lack of a single organizational hierarchy and associated authority relationships and the indeterminate nature of the timescales over which a collaboration may operate add to the difficulty. Those involved will not only have different values but will also be uncertain about what those values actually are. Thus, when two or more organizations' complex goals hierarchies, each with inherent conflicts of interest (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Connelly, Zhang and Faerman, 2006; Fleishman, 2009; Grimshaw, et al, 2002), are brought together, the complexity may be expected to be overwhelming. The framework developed in this paper aims, in part, to clarify the nature of this complexity. .

Although, by definition, goals serve to direct what partners aspire to achieve for themselves and collectively, their practical value can be manifest in a variety of ways. Thus, a specific goal may provide a source of commitment for one organization (Clark and Wilson, 1961; March and Simon, 1958; Thomson and Perry, 2006), justification for actions for another (Staw, 1980) and performance evaluation criteria for a third (Amirkhanyan, 2008; Provan and Kenis, 2008;

Thomson et al, 2007). Our framework does not specify nor preclude specific practical manifestations but, rather, acknowledges that variety as part of the inherent complexity.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The theoretical framework was developed using a Research Oriented Action Research (RO-AR) methodology (Eden and Huxham, 2006). The approach involves interpretive theorizing from data gathered during organizational interventions on matters that are of genuine concern to the organizational participants and over which they need to act (Huxham 2003; Huxham and Hibbert, 2011; Huxham and Vangen, 2003). The approach is similar to ethnography in the sense that it draws theoretical insight from "naturally occurring" data rather than, for example, interview or focus group data (Galibert, 2004; Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993), and has particular similarities to Alvesson and Deetz's (2000) notion of "partial ethnography". However, in RO-AR, the intervention is explicitly intended to change the way that participants think about or act in the situation. The theoretical insight itself is derived emergently (Eisenhardt, 1989) in a manner that has some similarities to the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), with empirical data "provid(ing) resources for both imagination and discipline" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007: 1266). Important precepts of RO-AR are the careful and systematic pursuit of theoretical advancement *and* the development of that theory in a way that is meaningful for use in practice (Huxham and Hibbert, 2011). Eden and Huxham (2006) particularly stress the theory and practice *cycle*: "(RO-AR is) concerned with a system of emergent theoretical conceptualizations, in which theoretical constructs develop from a synthesis of that which emerges from the data and that which emerges from the use in practice of the body of theoretical constructs which informed the intervention and research intent" (p396). With this in mind, as suggested by Huxham and Hibbert (2011) our methodology has concentrated on

generating theory in the form of descriptive conceptualizations suitable for supporting reflective

practice, in which the complexities of organizational life are captured through the "highlighting

of issues, contradictions, tensions and dilemmas", rather than through generating synthetic

explanatory variables (Langley, 1999) or propositions.

The theoretical conceptualizations reported here were developed gradually, albeit

systematically, over a period of many years, during which time we worked facilitatively with

members of organizations engaged in collaboration. Research and conceptualizations on goals

were embedded in a larger program concerned more generally with the development of theory on

the management of collaborations (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Data relating to the research

questions outlined earlier were gathered during numerous interventions in which we worked with

individuals who managed and led collaborations at a time when grappling with goals was

relevant to them. In the cyclic fashion specified by Eden and Huxham (2006), we used the data

to develop theoretical conceptualizations which we tested for practical relevance so that over the

years these gradually gained validity and robustness. The process by which the framework and

its theoretical consequences was developed can be summarized in three, partly overlapping,

phases as illustrated in Figure 1.

Phase 1 – Developing an Initial Framework

We built an initial framework some 17 years ago during a 3 year long project concerned

broadly with understanding the nature of collaboration. This included research with participants

in a collaboration between eight public agencies and non-profit organizations. In the course of

supporting and helping members to agree a direction for their joint work, we interviewed each

member twice about their views of what the collaboration should aspire to achieve. The

interviews were entered into the Decision Explorer software in the form of key concepts
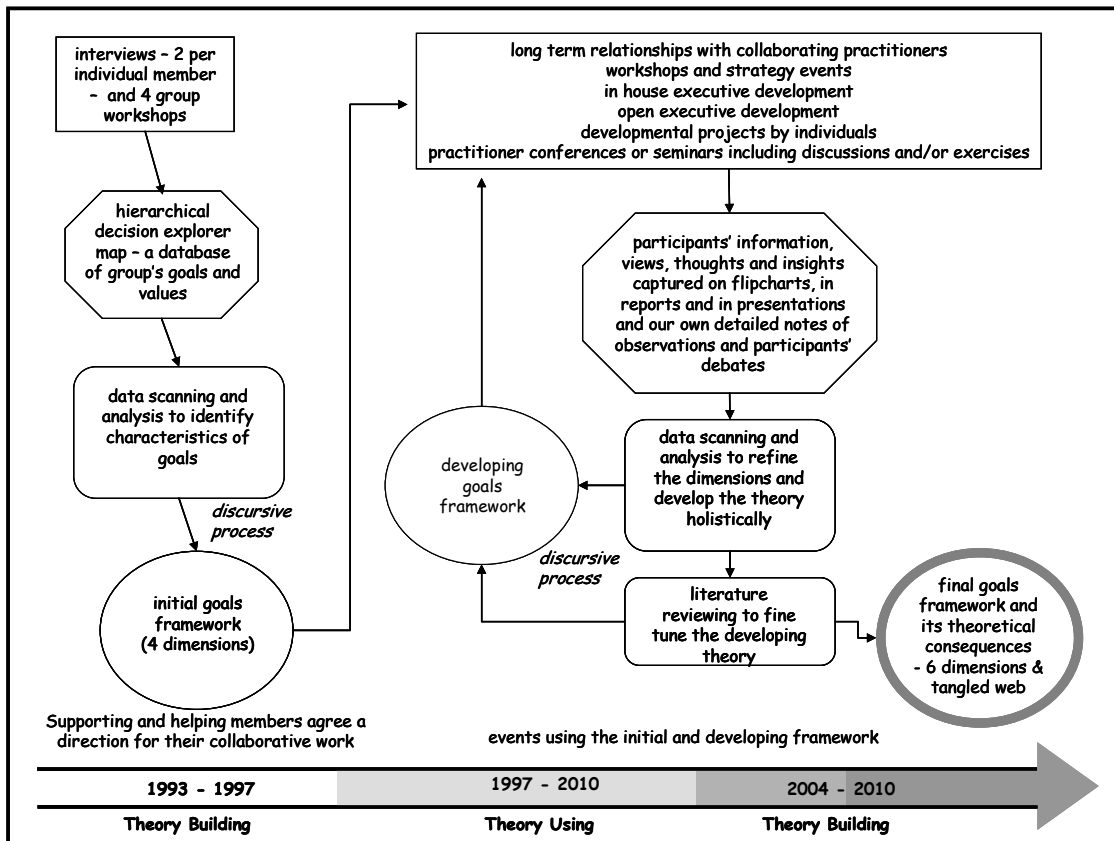
Figure 1: The research process

(typically 10 – 20 words each) and causal links (Eden and Ackermann, 1998). Similar views and experiences expressed by different individuals were merged or linked together into a hierarchically organized "group map" including all members' expressed values, beliefs and goals relating to the collaboration's activities. The analysis identified the relationship between goals at different levels, as illustrated in Figure 2. This aggregated model, which contained some 900 concepts, formed the basis for discussion in a series of 4 workshops.

The process involved the participants in clarifying, negotiating and reviewing the goals identified by the analysis in the light of past experience and considering and agreeing future actions. The model was amended during workshops as understandings were clarified, new ideas emerged and agreements on goals between the participants were reached. During the course of

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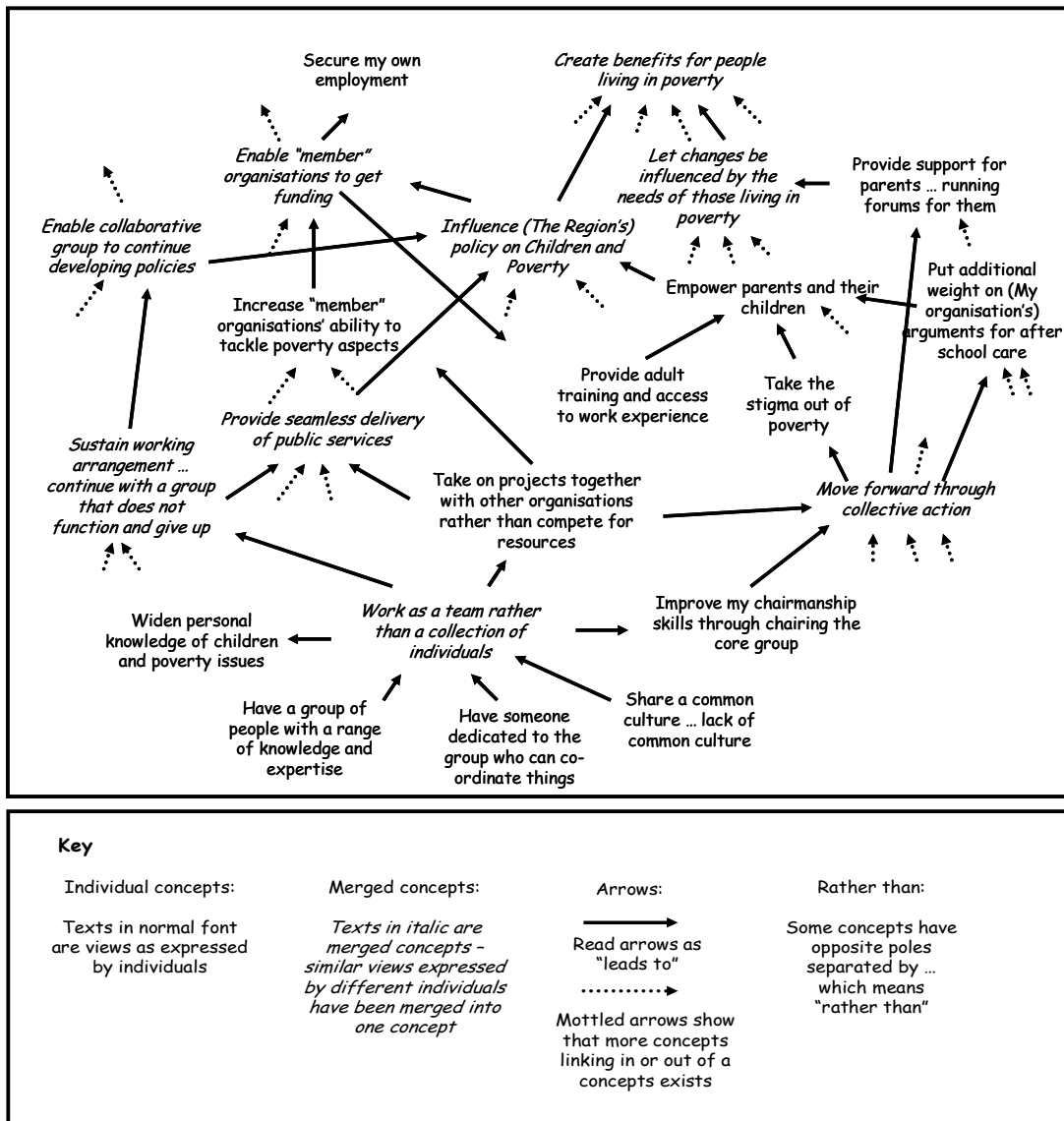
Figure 2: A Section of the Decision Explorer Hierarchically Organized Group Map

this work, it became apparent to us that the goals articulated by individuals were not immediately comparable. The various goals were therefore compared and contrasted with a view to identifying what their distinguishing features were. Consequently, we identified a very simple, preliminary framework of four distinguishable dimensions. These related to (1) whose goals achievements are to be evaluated against, (2) the distinction between goals that relate to the

process of collaborating and those about what is to be achieved, (3) the need to differentiate goals that could be tackled by a collaboration from related goals that should be tackled by a partner (organization or individuals) independent of the collaboration, and (4) the degree to which goals are openly stated.

Phase 2 – using and testing the framework

The second phase involved using the framework to support participants in collaborations, and thus informally testing it. It has been used by such participants in numerous situations involved in collaborations on an assortment of scales and governance structures with diverse purposes, to address a variety of different aspects of collaboration (see Table 1).

These situations called for different applications although the broad aim was always to enable participants to identify management and governance implications for themselves and others. The most basic use has been to point out both the principle and the enactment of the goals paradox and the challenge of developing agreement of goals in practice. At this basic level the framework provokes deep discussion. It has also been applied in many in-depth ways. For example, it has underpinned strategy events for rural partnerships addressing different aspects of economic and social deprivation and inequalities, formed the basis for group activities during executive development events and informed debates about the agreement of goals in various collaborations. Data from these events include participants' context specific information, views, and insights captured on flipcharts, reports and presentations. We also took detailed notes on participants' debates.

Type of events	Number of events	Examples of types of collaborations	Examples of types of organizations	Our involvement
Long term relationships	4 core to analysis 1 other each involving many events	A poverty-alleviation alliance A public health alliance	100 local government departments, national and international charities, non-profits and community organizations Public agencies concerned with social services, public health, primary health care and, housing body with voluntary sector and local universities,	Consultants / Facilitators / Expert participants / Interviewers
Workshops or strategy events	10 core to analysis 15 others	Inter-university collaborations A rural partnership	Universities, national and local authorities, charities, churches Locally based public and not-for-profit agencies	Facilitators
In house executive development	11 core to analysis 10 others	An international education partnership A community policing partnership	Universities, National Councils, Banks, Charities Police, local government, residents associations, other local organizations	Trainers / Facilitators
Open executive development	5 core to analysis 11 others each addressing several collaborations	Care for the elderly An agricultural international joint venture	Social service, housing and health agencies, private nursing homes, consumer representatives, lobbying groups, Government of a developing nation and a developed nation private grain distributer	Trainers / Facilitators
Developmental individual projects	9 core to analysis	A community health care trust A schools public private partnership project	Local health organizations including a health authority, GPs, dentists, pharmacists etc A local council and a construction company	Supervisors
Practitioner conferences or seminars including discussions and/or exercises	2 core to analysis 35 others each addressing many collaborations	A government facilitated unemployment partnership A government initiative to extend and integrate children's services	National industry confederation, local authorities, trade unions Schools and public sector agencies	Invited speakers / Facilitators / Expert participants

Table 1: Main Data Sources and Additional Contexts in which The Framework was Used and Developed

Phase 3 – active theory building

All the phase 2 events influenced our understanding of goals. However, phase 3, which paralleled the latter years of phase 2, was a period of active theory building. This included a systematic review and inductive analysis of the data gathered in 45 phase 2 situations, including four long term relationships involving many events.

Consistently with the cyclic approach advocated by Eden and Huxham (2006), several iterations of conceptual development took place. First, data items that provided rich information about different contexts and how individuals used or drew insight from the initial framework were isolated. Our aim was to understand the characteristics of goals in the collaborative arena in ways that would be applicable to management and governance at the level of the collaboration as well as specific parts of it. This helped ensure that the framework would be holistic, versatile and sensitive to varying contexts. We then examined the data items in terms of the dimensions and categorizations of goals. This led to the identification of two additional dimensions relating to: (1) where the goals considered by the collaboration originate from; and, (2) the extent to which goals articulated in the collaboration are genuine or not. It also led to new and re-configured types of goal under each of the original dimensions. Table 2 shows examples of data items and their implications on the developing conceptualization that specifically led to these additional and reconfigured dimensions[3]. The revised framework was used in subsequent phase 2 activities.

In subsequent iterations we analyzed data about the revised framework and its consequences and so identified further developments. Each modification was incorporated into later applications in practice. All of the conceptual elements have been refined as a result of energetic debate between the authors, as well as with the practitioners who used it. It has also

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[3] A further example showing how data relates to the conceptualization appears later in the paper, in Figure 3.

Data Source	Context: the framework was used to:	Data item	Implications for the emergent conceptual framework
Peter - a manager in a member organization involved in a cross sector collaboration	- re-assess his organization's role in a collaboration that had changed its goals to respond to externally imposed changes.	In order to strengthen its position in the collaboration, Peter had considered whether his organization needed to offer something new towards the collaboration goals.	- The level dimension: the relationship between organization and collaboration goals. - The dynamic nature of goals.
Ann, Jo and Nik - members of three different public and nonprofit organizations	- help them identify issues cutting across the organizations to assess whether there was scope for collaboration.	The three individuals had decided to initiate a collaboration between their organizations in order to address an issue they each cared about. They looked for overlap in their organizations' purposes to identify a collaboration goal that would allow them to meet their common individual goals.	-The level dimension: influence of individual goals. -Potential for overlap of organizations' goals. -The level dimension: the relationship between individual, organizational and collaboration goals.
Isobel - a member of a nonprofit collaboration	- investigate the affect that a collaboration initiated in one part of an organization had on other parts of the organization .	Isobel commented: "one person's collaboration is another person's nightmare – don't think about the knock-on for the rest of the organization." The collaboration didn't appear to have the commitment of the whole organization.	-The importance of goal ownership. - The level dimension: the relationship between collaboration goals and organization goals - Hierarchical ambiguity between organization and collaboration goals. - Internal variety in organization goals.
Lucio - a representative of an organization seeking international government funding.	- assess congruence between organizations' goals and potential commitment to a nominal goal.	Lucio commented: "You look for anyone to partner with in order to get the money – you don't care if it is a sleeping partner". The eventual partners invented a goal for their joint funding application in order to legitimize the collaboration.	- The authenticity dimension: genuine vs pseudo goals. - The overtness dimension: hidden goals - Potential lack of congruence between organization and collaboration goals.
Florence - coordinator of a health collaboration mandated by government to involve Doctors' Practices.	- gain a better understanding of how to motivate Practices to join in.	Florence was facilitating the enactment of an externally imposed process goal to 'get parties involved'	- The origin dimension: external goals taken on board by collaboration members - The content dimension: process goals as ends in themselves. - Hierarchical ambiguity between process and substantive goals.
Morag – a board member of an alliance of 120 charities.	- help understand alliance members' goals and how the board might seek to address them.	Morag commented that she was regularly called by different parties who would say, "we don't want you to do this and that!"	- The potential for conflicting organization goals. - Pluralities: multiple sets of organization goals.

Table 2: Examples of Specific Data Items and Their Implications for the Conceptual Framework

been presented to several academic audiences and thus subjected to wide-ranging scrutiny. In the

following presentation of the framework, we intertwine theory building with examples from the

data to further illustrate the close connection between the empirical evidence and the emergent

theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). For this purpose, we chose six cases that vary in terms of

their purpose and structure as well as the degree to which they appeared successful and the type of

involvement we had with them: a Child Poverty Working Group, a Regional Partnering Forum, a

Public Health Partnership, a Local Governance Initiative, a Regional Economic Development

Project and an Inter-University Collaboration. In the next section we use goals embedded in these

cases as examples to illustrate the framework's dimensions. In the following section, we use the

cases to provide examples of how the complexities implied in the framework impact on practice. It

is not our intention to suggest that these examples indicate a generic "truth", they merely serve to

illustrate our emergent understanding of goals and their implications, in the collaboration arena.

THE GOALS FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework has at its core *six dimensions* each illustrating possible ways of

differentiating one goal from another (see Table 3). In this section, we first present these and the

issues that typically arise out of them for the enactment of collaborative advantage. This is

followed by discussions of issues relating to combining the dimensions and their inherent types

into categories of goals. Finally, we complete the framework through considering how such goals

interact and develop in collaboration goal hierarchies.

DIMENSIONS	TYPES
Level	The Collaboration, The Organization(s), The Individual(s)
Origin	Members, External Stakeholder(s),
Authenticity	Genuine, Pseudo
Relevance	Collaboration Dependent, Collaboration Independent
Content	Collaborative Process , Substantive Purpose
Overtness	Explicit, Unstated, Hidden

Table 3: Dimensions of Goals in Collaboration

Dimensions of Goals

Level - The Collaboration, the Organization or the Individual

Partners in collaboration have different goals and aspirations, so the question of whose goals are being considered is important. The first dimension is about the *level* at which goals are recognized and distinguishes between those that are about the collaboration, organizational purposes and individuals' aspirations respectively. This attribution of goals to collaborations and organizations reflects the ways individuals articulate them. Goals are conceived of by individuals but, as our examples will indicate, are often conceptualized as though they belonged to organizations or collaborations.

Collaboration goals are about what partners aspire to achieve together; their public declaration of the envisaged collaborative advantage. They may relate to highly ambitious joint undertakings - such as innovative programs for addressing health promotion or drug abuse - or to more mundane joint projects or activities. Either way, they relate to the inter-organizational domain and are beyond the achievement of individuals or organizations acting alone.

Example: *The official primary collaborative goal of the multi-organizational Child Poverty Working Group of a regionally based anti-poverty alliance was expressed as: "to influence (The Region's) policy on children and poverty".*

In contrast, organizational goals are about the aspirations for the collaboration of each of the organizations involved. Organizations frequently collaborate with others to better address existing organizational agendas. Organizational goals relating to any particular collaboration are a subset of each organization's overall strategic intent and tend to be closely aligned with their functions, responsibilities and spheres of activity. The distinction between collaboration and organization goals is subtle; the former focuses on the joint activity, while the latter relates to the various organizations' aspirations for themselves. In some cases, a collaboration goal may be a simple amalgamation of organizational' goals – for example, in a public private partnership between a local council and an IT provider, the former may commission a system from the latter in return for cash and a longer term support contract – although a collaboration goal will be needed to direct the implementation. In other cases – for example when a collaboration is third-party funded via government or an NGO such as a United Nations Special Agency – the collaboration goal may be stated quite distinctly from the organization goals.

Example: *In the Child Poverty Working Group, one member said that a reason for her organization's involvement was to "put additional weight on (Organization's) arguments for after school care". This organizational goal was particular to her organization's purpose and had no direct relevance for other members of the collaboration. Nevertheless it could be achieved through the collaborative activity.*

The distinction between collaboration and organization goals is made partly because individuals may incorporate into the collaboration's agenda, aspects of their organization's goals that relate to, but differ from, the formal collaborative purpose.

Individual goals are statements about the aspirations of the individuals involved. Typically they relate to individual incentives, career progression or personal causes.

Example*: One member of the Child Poverty Working Group said he was keen to be in the group because he wanted to "widen (his) personal knowledge of children and poverty issues". For him, this individual goal was about his personal professional development.*

Individuals may participate in collaboration solely for self-interest reasons. For example, they may seek to be involved with collaborations spanning international boarders because they enjoy being exposed to different cultures and seek opportunities to travel abroad. This is, however, relatively rare. Individuals are likely to be mandated to a role in the collaboration by superiors or they may participate because they see an organizational need. Unlike organizations' goals, individuals' goals therefore do not necessarily account for an individual's involvement in the collaboration. Yet once involved they may seek to incorporate aspects of their own goals into the collaboration's agenda.

Origin - Members or External Stakeholders

It might be expected that members of a collaboration would jointly form their own collaboration goals and this is often the case. However, goals formulated by collaboration members are sometimes strongly influenced by the goals of organizations or individuals *external* to the collaboration. Governments are perhaps the most common organizational stakeholders exerting pressure and they frequently influence and shape collaborations. Whether collaborations are mandated or constrained by government, nation-wide policies and local priorities alike will have an effect on the goals of the collaboration and the processes by which they are to be achieved.

Example: *The Regional Partnering Forum, which consisted of representatives from selected public and private organizations with the collaboration goal of promoting supply chain partnerships between large company and public sector purchasers and SME suppliers in the region, was convened under pressure from a Government Department and the National Industry Federation. Its goal was therefore externally derived from the Department and Federation. In*

turn, the goals of any Large Organization-SME partnership it facilitated into existence would be

partly externally derived from the Forum.

Members may be invited to subscribe to externally owned goals and may articulate and internalize these for the purpose of the collaboration. However, in many situations such goals are imposed upon them as a condition of funding. Attracting funds may be vital to organizations' survival and this rather than any other substantive purpose may be the principal goal for the collaboration.

Individuals too sometimes have a strong personal interest in a collaboration even when they are not formally involved. Although individuals may not have enough power to impose their goals, the collaboration partners may chose to subscribe to them. Typically this happens when the individual concerned is able to commit energy and resources in aid of the collaboration. Partnership managers, whose job it is to co-ordinate partners' activities, are commonly in this position. Often – as was the case in the Child Poverty Working Group example – partnership managers are employed by the collaboration rather than a member organization, or are asked to act in a neutral capacity. As their job revolves around the collaboration they are likely to have goals for it and for their own future in respect of it. Externally derived goals can also come from wholly external sources.

Example: *The chief executive of a local public health organization was interested enough in the outcomes of the local Public Health Partnership, of which his organization was not a member, to offer to transfer resources from his organization to the Partnership. This interest appeared to be motivated by a personal sense of what should happen in the community rather than any strategic or operational concern of his organization.*

Authenticity - Genuine or Pseudo Goals

Many of the goals expressed by participants either in conversation or in formal documents are genuine statements about what they aspire to achieve. This appears to be the case in all the previous examples. However, there are many reasons why partners may not identify with publicly stated goals. For example, they may not subscribe to goals that have been imposed upon them or which are conditions of funding or participation. In such cases a collaborative goal may be invented to satisfy the specifications of a funding provider and which effectively disguises their real aim. Some goals are thus expressed as a "cover story", purely to legitimize the existence of the collaboration and are not a genuine representation of the partners' collaborative intent. Similarly, organizations and individuals may invent goals to legitimize their own personal involvement. We characterize such possibilities as *pseudo goals.*

Example: *In the centrally-promoted collaborative local governance initiative the elected leader of the local government was felt by participants in some partner organizations to be concerned about the shifting of local power away from his own organization that the initiative implied. They felt that he and his colleagues were "minimizing the nuisance factor" by "paying lip service to the collaborative process". They had expressed buy-in to the externally imposed goals because this was expected of them by key stakeholders, but the partners did not believe they were emotionally committed to them.*

When a goal is purely nominal in nature the commitment to achieving it will be low, albeit usually *not* nonexistent.

Relevance - Collaboration Dependent or Independent

Identifying specific gains for each of the parties involved may be important if the collaboration is to succeed. Recognizing which organizational goals can reasonably be pursued through the collaboration is, however, not always straightforward. We noted above that a subset of an

organization's strategic intent normally relates to the broad area of interest of any particular

collaboration in which it engages. Other goals remain to be addressed by the organization alone or

perhaps through other collaborations. In the course of collaborative dialogue however, it can be

hard to distinguish goals that relate specifically to the collaborative agenda from those that are

closely related but not explicitly a part of it.

Example: *In the Child Poverty Working Group, a representative focused on: "providing*

child care for low income families". This was a goal of her organization and although closely

related to the collaboration's agenda, not something members collectively sought to achieve.

In practice, these goals tend to be interwoven with the collaboration goals in the minds of

those concerned. Disentangling goals that relate to a particular collaboration from those that do not

has become increasingly problematic as the number of collaborations that individuals and

organizations are involved in increases. It is common for members to combine agendas across

various organizational and inter-organizational initiatives when they see connections between

them. Other individuals who are not involved in the same set of initiatives do not necessarily see

these related agendas as relevant. Collaboration independent goals can therefore cause confusion

and conflict between partners.

Content - Substantive Purpose or Collaborative Process

Reasons for collaborating often relate to specific outputs such as gaining access to resources and

expertise, increasing efficiency and improving co-ordination in service provision. Such goals are

essentially concerned with *what* the collaboration is about. They relate to substantive outcomes

and are obviously important. All the examples given so far are of this type. However, participants

also express goals that relate to *how* the collaboration will be undertaken. These can relate to any

aspect of collaborative processes such as modes of communicating, types of relationship between

members or a myriad of other possibilities.

Example: *The multi-sector Regional Economic Development Project was initiated by an individual with a regional economic development role who confided to us that he did not regard the project itself as important, but saw it as a means to "getting these parties talking in order to generate long term trust and mutual understanding". He felt that the process would enable the organizations to act jointly and speedily to any future economic development opportunities promoted by central or international governing bodies. This goal was not explicitly stated and instead a substantive goal for the project, relating to unemployment, was used to pull the participants in.*

This kind of rationale is often at the heart of networks, where a significant goal is to build social capital through developing relationships between members who can work together productively when a need, such as emergency relief, arises. In such situations, the process goal may only be acknowledged by the initiator, for whom the substantive goal may be largely "pseudo". For other participants, the substantive goal is a genuine motivation for involvement. Other common process goals relate to various perspectives on getting members of a collaboration to function effectively together *per se* and might be framed in terms of, for example, the achievement of good communication or commitment to the venture or the establishment of well functioning governance mechanisms.

Process goals are not always positive, however; those who have been forced into collaboration by, for example, funders' requirements, may seek either to minimize or bypass the collaborative processes. In some situations, the goal may be purely negative, to prevent something from happening. For example, where the activities of a collaboration encroach upon the territory of an organization, a goal for that organization may be to sabotage it. This is not restricted to external stakeholders; participants sometimes feel they have to respond positively to a collaboration that overlaps their territory. In these cases, they may bring defensive goals to maintain their own dominance in the area.

Example: *The would-be initiator of the Inter-University Collaboration worked hard to persuade potential partners that it was essential that they attend an initial meeting and to find a mutually suitable time. When the meeting had taken place, she commented that the representative of one centrally powerful organization had clearly come solely to ensure that the collaboration did not go ahead. The person had remained disengaged, leaning back with his arms folded throughout. If this was indeed the motivation of that individual or his organization, it was successful. The collaboration was pursued no further.*

These negative goals may not be explicitly acknowledged (i.e. clearly articulated) even to themselves. Typically they are manifested as extreme skepticism or a negative and unhelpful attitude.

Overtness - Explicit, Unstated or Hidden.

The economic development example in the last section illustrated an occasion when a collaborative process goal was not made explicit because it would have been unacceptable to partners. Goals relating to sabotage are also unlikely to be discussed in open forum. Similarly, substantive organization goals are often deemed unacceptable; for example, if an organization wished to participate principally to gain external funding without having any real interest in the notional collaboration goal. In such situations, a partner may find it inappropriate to disclose negative reasons for collaborating and may couch discussion in terms of positive outcomes (pseudo-goals) that are less important. Equally, they may judge that partners would see a goal as distracting from or counterproductive to their view of the collaborative purpose, counterproductive to their goals, or even unethical.

Example: *In the Local Governance Initiative, participants reflected that although there was a clear mandatory (i.e. externally imposed) explicit collaboration goal relating to "supporting a community and partnership ethos for 'best value'", there were likely to be several hidden agendas*

in play. At the organization level, they suspected that a hidden agenda for the local government organization would be to "minimize the threat" imposed by the changed governance arrangements. They felt that some others might be wishing to offload some of their own problem areas onto the collaboration, and so conserve their own resources. At the individual level, they thought the local government leader had a particular undeclared agenda relating to reducing local government taxes. Some thought that goals relating to networking and career progression had been deliberately kept hidden.

In practice there are many reasons why goals may knowingly not be revealed, even if there is genuine goodwill between partners; hidden agendas are endemic in collaboration. Deliberate concealing is not, however, the only reason why goals are not clearly stated. Typically, there may be limited opportunities for exploring and explicating the complex hierarchy of sub-goals. Therefore, although some goals are explicitly discussed, many remain unstated.

Example: "*Better service delivery, kudos, funding and efficiency" were identified as collaboration goals that might have been assumed for the Local Governance Initiative but which had never been explicitly discussed. Some of the participants also realized that there was one member organization whose reason for involvement was not clear to them, since its representative had never been asked to articulate it.*

The possibility of representatives mistakenly assuming that others understand their goals and making assumptions about others' goals is therefore very high. Furthermore, the likelihood that individuals will attach precisely the same meaning to goals is low. Formal contracts are one way in which partners seek to explicate and tie down goals. However, even with carefully drawn up contracts the challenge lies in managing those aspects that are not covered, which inevitably include goals that are hidden or left unstated.

Assembling Dimensions into Categories of Goals

In combination, the dimensions above provide a way of characterizing goals. This is illustrated in Figure 3. For example, a goal could be conceptualized at the organization *level*, *derived* from a member, genuine in *authenticity, relevant* for addressing by the collaboration, with its *content* fully focused on substantive purpose and hidden on the *overtness* dimension. In any collaboration a large number of differently characterized goals are likely to be interacting. We will now consider some issues that arise when the dimensions are combined.

Fuzzy boundaries

In introducing the dimensions above, it was helpful to describe the types of goal in each dimension as though they were clearly distinct. In practice, however, there are many reasons why the boundary between one type and another may be blurred. To take some examples, on the *Level* dimension, a collaboration goal is sometimes merely the amalgamation of organizations' goals. On the *Origin* dimension, members' interpretations of externally sourced goals may result in modifications reflecting their own views so that the goal in use becomes a combination of both types. On the *Authenticity* dimension, therefore, pseudo-goals created to address externally imposed goals often become partly genuine. On the *Relevance* dimension, what can and cannot (or, should or should not) be achieved through the collaboration is rarely clear-cut. On the *Content* dimension, goals expressed in terms of collaborative process are commonly seen as a means of achieving substantive ends even though the substantive rationale may not be explicated or fully understood. On the *Overtness* dimension goals may be hidden to some and not to others, may be explicitly stated but not written and so on. The use of varying forms of hatched horizontal line in Figure 3 is intended to convey this sense of fuzziness.

Level	Origin	Authenticity	Relevance	Content	Overtness	Categories
Collaboration	Internal	Genuine	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Explicit	
					Unstated	
				Process	Explicit	
					Unstated	
	External	Genuine	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Explicit	
					Unstated	
				Process	Explicit	
					Unstated	
		Pseudo	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Explicit	
					Unstated	
				Process	Explicit	
					Unstated	
Organization [for each participating organization]	Internal	Genuine	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Explicit	
					Unstated	
					Hidden	
				Process	Expli...	
					Unsta...	
					Hidd...	
			Collaboration Independent	Purpose	Expl...	
				Process	Expl...	
		Pseudo	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Expl...	
				Process	Expl...	
Individual [for each participating individual]	Internal	Genuine	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Explicit	
					Unstated	
					Hidden	
				Process	Explicit	
					Unsta...	
					Hidden	
			Collaboration Independent	Purpose	Explicit	
				Process	Explicit	
		Pseudo	Collaboration Dependent	Purpose	Explicit	
				Process	Explicit	

Example:
a genuine but hidden, substantive goal that is conceptualized by members at the organizational level and is dependent on the collaboration

Figure 3: From Dimensions to Categories of Goals

Impossibilities

Although the categorization suggests that any goal can be seen as a combination of types across the dimensions, some combinations are impossible or unlikely. Most obviously, collaboration goals must be collaboration dependent and cannot be hidden because they are about the joint work. Aspects of them may, however, remain unstated between the parties. Internally derived collaboration goals cannot be pseudo for the same reason. Although organizational and individual participants could obviously be influenced by their own external stakeholders, their goals are internal from the point of view of the collaboration. Externally derived goals cannot be hidden if the collaboration must be seen to respond to them. Pseudo goals cannot be unstated or hidden, or collaboration independent, because their purpose is to deceive others about the originator's reason for involvement. These impossible and unlikely combinations have been omitted from Figure 3.

Pluralities

This way of conceptualizing goals takes the collaboration as the central unit of analysis and thus envisages a *single* hierarchical set of goals at the collaboration level. From this vantage point, however, there will be *multiple* sets of organizational and individual level goals. As indicated in Figure 3, there is a set of goals associated with *each* organization and *each* individual from those organizations who sees the collaboration as relevant to their organizational role. In practice some of these will be more significant than others, depending on the stakeholder's power and interest relative to the collaboration's business. There are similarly sets of goals associated with any external stakeholders who are able to bring their interest to the attention of someone who has the power and know-how to influence the collaboration's agenda.

A Dynamic Tangled Web of Goals

The variously characterized goals as presented in Figure 3, intermingle into a partly hierarchical entanglement, which may be perceived differently by the individuals concerned with the collaboration and which is continuously changing. We now consider these aspects of the entanglement.

Hierarchical issues

As indicated in the Introduction, the framework portrays goals as hierarchical systems (Eden and Ackermann (1998). "Hierarchy" suggests that some goals relate to lower level outcomes that might lead to the achievement of higher level ones. For the collaboration as a whole, there will be a degree of hierarchy between all goals although its nature cannot be routinely determined. Sometimes a collaboration goal is super-ordinate to organizations' goals, dictating their aspirations in its sphere of relevance. For example, the Local Governance Initiative strongly influenced the organization goals of the agencies involved. In other cases – for example, in a service delivery partnership associated with the Regional Partnering Forum – the organization goals are super-ordinate to collaboration goals, dictating what the members are prepared to do jointly. In any collaboration there might be a mixture of sub- and super-ordinate relationships and a collaboration goal might be super-ordinate for one organization and sub-ordinate for another.

Another example of hierarchical ambiguity relates to the *content* dimension. Process goals are often seen as means of achieving substantive ends and, in that sense, are usually subordinate to substantive collaboration goals. However, as we have seen in the Regional Economic Development Project example, they can be the main collaborative advantage sought and thus super-ordinate to substantive goals. That example clearly demonstrates that process goals can be super-ordinate for some participants while being sub-ordinate for others.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine which, if any, is the overarching goal. For example, when – as in the Local Governance Initiative – government policies explicitly include a requirement for community participation, or funding bodies specify collaboration as a bid condition, it can be hard to tell whether the process of collaborating or the issue over which collaboration occurs is the more fundamental concern.

Taking these comments about hierarchical ambiguity together with the notion of multiple categories of goal and the fuzziness of the boundaries between the categories, we suggest that the goals structure of a collaboration is well portrayed as a *tangled web*. We illustrate this in Figure 4, using some of the goals from the Child Poverty Working Group example. It depicts an entangled hierarchy of goals including both high-level general and detailed specific goals and indicates varying driving relationships between goals at the individual, organizational and collaboration levels.

Multiple Perceptions

Figure 4 presents a singular perspective on the collaboration but does not show, as will be the case in practice, that the goals may look different from the perceptions of each of the parties involved. Each would have a particular understanding of their own and other's goals, even when these are externally derived. Understanding the goal structure of a collaboration in practice, would mean considering together the perceptual sets of goals of all categories for all the participants.

Dynamics – Goals Changing, Emerging, Developing

Finally, this tangled web of interconnections is in a constant state of flux as the goals change over time. One reason for the continual modification of goals is that collaborations
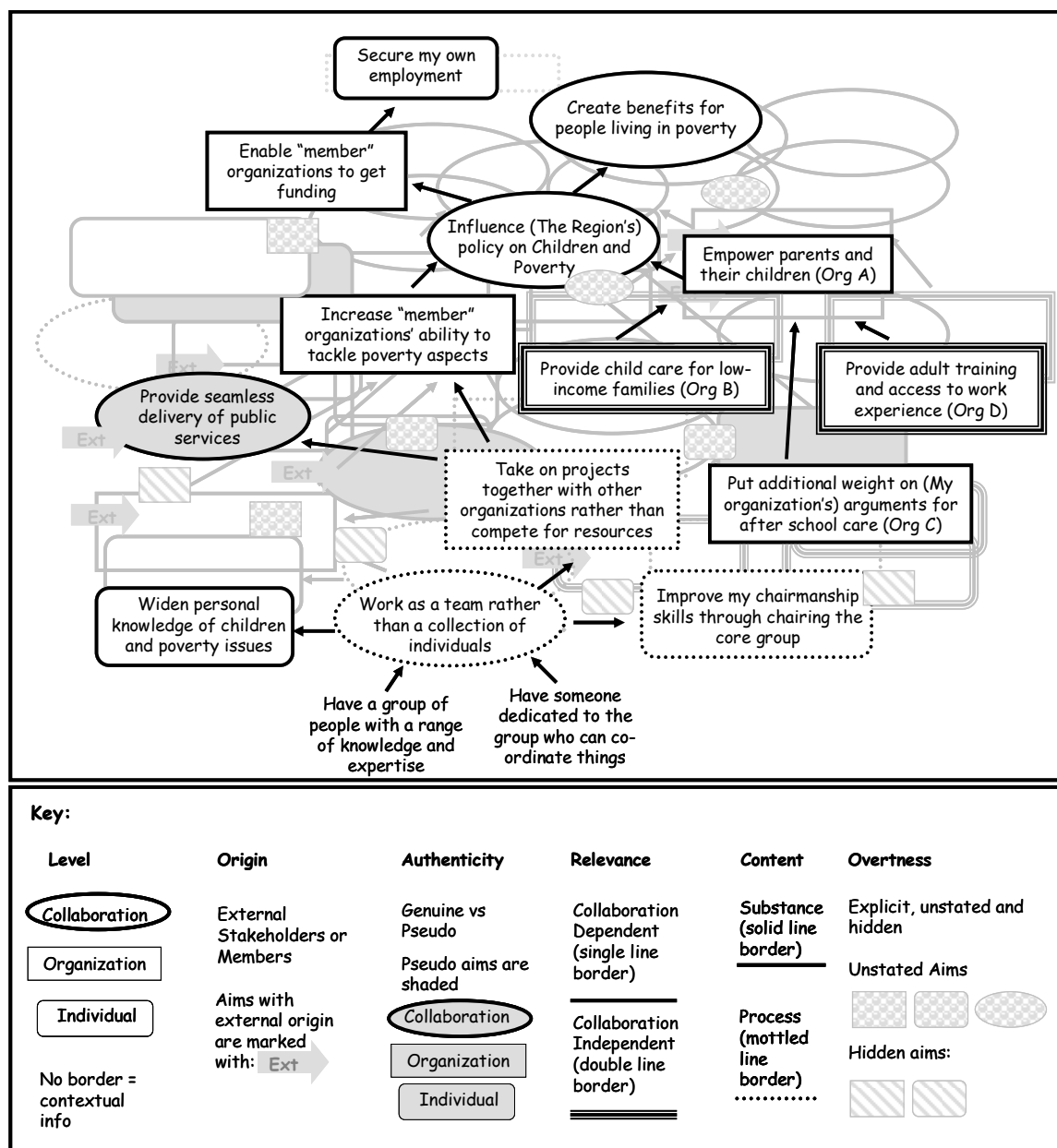
Figure 4: Goals in Collaboration as A Tangled Web

themselves frequently change over time as a result of transformations in the member

organizations. Individuals come and go, or change their role within the organization, and the

collection of individual goals relating to the collaboration alters alongside this. Similarly

organizations - subject to mergers or de-mergers, new alliances, closure or restructuring -

come and go and the collection of organization goals alters accordingly. Any resulting

configuration of the membership often affects the formal collaboration goals as well.

Organizations also may change their policies as a result of such structural changes or for other reasons and different issues in the environment will require attention at different times. This too may affect their organizational goals for the collaboration as well as the collaboration goals. Whether goals are derived by external stakeholders or members, they are subject to similar forces. In this sense, goals in collaborations may be in a constant state of flux.

However, even in situations where the parties and their broad goals remain relatively stable over lengthy periods of time, goals relating to collaboration may change as interim outcomes – sometimes completely unexpected – lead to new ways of doing things. Sometimes this leads to new collaboration or organization goals and sometimes it results in changes to the hierarchical relationship between goals. For example, an alliance may be initiated as the operationalization of partners' organizational goals, but they may subsequently find themselves having to adjust their own priorities in order to respond to the needs of the alliance, or wishing to do so in order to reap additional benefits from it. Interim outcomes may also lead to goals changing negatively as people become despondent about lack of progress, unhappy about unintended outcomes or even upset by the actions of others.

Summary: Issue Manifestations in the Tangled Web

While the tangled web framework is conceived holistically, it is possible to summarize key ways in which each of its elements are typically manifested through the actions of participants. These are presented in Table 4.

Dimensions	**KEY ISSUE MANIFESTATION**
Level	*Individuals may seek to incorporate organizational and individual goals, which relate to but are different from the collaboration goals, into the collaboration agenda.*
Origin	*Government or interested external parties (as well as members) may be strongly influential in forming the collaboration agenda.*
Authenticity	*Expressed goals may be purely nominal to satisfy a stakeholder (internal or external to the collaboration) rather than relate to intent.*
Relevance	*Goals closely related, but not actually relevant, to the collaborative purpose may creep into the collaboration arena.*
Content	*Process goals may be as important as (or more important than) substantive goals. Process goals may be supportive of, or un-cooperative to, the collaboration.*
Overtness	*Many of the goals that drive actual behavior in the collaboration may not – intentionally or otherwise - have been expressed.*
Tangled Web	
Fuzzy Boundaries/ Impossibilities/ Pluralities	*Multiple sets of variously categorized individual and organizational goals will be interacting.*
Hierarchical issues/ Multiple perceptions/Dynamics	*There is likely to be a mixture of sub- and super-ordinate hierarchical relationships between the various dimensions of goals and partners will have different perceptions on this. The various categories of goals and hence the relationship between them is highly dynamic.*

Table 4: Key issue manifestation in the goals framework

THE GOALS PARADOX REVISITED: HOW COLLABORATIONS OPERATE IN THE TANGLED WEB

The goals framework captures goals in the collaboration arena as a *tangled web* of dynamic, ambiguous and partially overlapping goal hierarchies. It thus suggests that a large variety of goals influence actions and behaviours in collaborations. Using the tangled web framework as a lens through which to understand collaborative goal structures allows us to elaborate the initial understanding of the goals paradox as presented in the introduction and so address the two questions posed there. In so doing, we build a theoretical understanding of how collaborations operate in the tangled web.

Elaborating the principle level paradox

At the principle level, the paradox that is implicit in extant literature, as outlined in the introduction, may be represented as a tension between positive and negative rationales for promoting congruence or diversity of goals in collaboration (see Figure 5). We suggest that the notions of goal congruence and diversity can usefully be elaborated in terms of the dimensions and the holistic attributes of the tangled web framework.

Goal congruence:	congruence and	Goal diversity:
+ *partners' and collaboration goals aligned* − *competitive conflicts of interest* *(reluctance to share information)*	diversity in tension	+ *synergy from diversity of resource* − *incompatibility conflicts of interest* *(seeking different outcomes)*
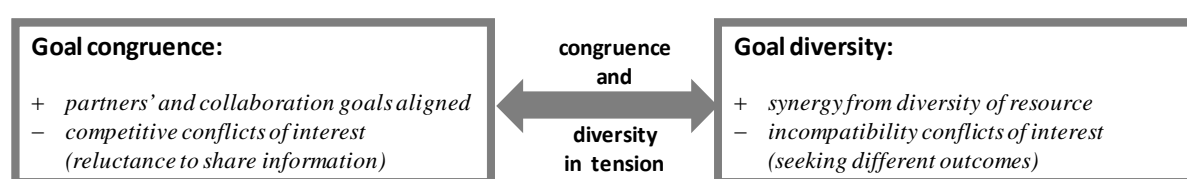
Figure 5: Initial statement of the principle level goals paradox

While the *congruence – diversity* tension is relevant across all the six goal dimensions there are some important differences in principle. Productive and counterproductive congruencies and diversities are generally (at least implicitly) conceived in relation to the level and content dimensions of the framework. In particular, as the initial framing of the paradox suggests, congruence in organization level substantive purpose goals, rather than process goals, tends to be the spur for initiating collaboration between partners. The goals framework however, highlights the relevance of other goal types in these dimensions. Both congruence of *individual level* goals and congruence of *collaborative process* goals can help overcome lack of momentum arising from insufficient congruence between organization level and collaboration goals. Thus, for example, in one of the supply chain partnerships represented on the Regional Partnering Forum, it appeared that two key individuals had sufficient congruence about both the substantive purpose of the partnership and the collaborative processes required to make it work that they were able to turn around, and

deliver on, a long ailing technology supply project. Similarity of high level process goals such as "involvement of the community" (which was central to the governance initiative) often also provides the motivation for collaboration. Even *substantive* goal congruence is not always positive of course: in the Inter-University Collaboration case it was the competitive similarity of substantive organization goals that led the representative of the powerful organization to seek to sabotage the collaboration.

Beyond these two dimensions, goal *congruence* principally makes sense as a concept in relation to possible similarities between goals that are derived by members, genuine, collaboration dependent and either explicit or unstated. However, the alternative types of goals do have relevance to congruence. Thus, while externally derived goals generally contribute to *diversity*, there may be occasions – as, for example, was the case in the public health partnership – when an external goal is sufficiently congruent with member goals to facilitate members into recognizing their own potentially productive congruencies. Similarly, pseudo and hidden goals usually contribute to diversity, but it is important to realize that a participant might, for example, *portray themselves* as having a (pseudo) goal that is similar to (i.e. congruent with) another's (genuine) goal if, for example, they need a legitimate reason for their involvement in the collaboration, or hide a genuine goal if it would appear too (competitively) similar to, or (incompatibly) different from, another's and this "concealed diversity" and "concealed congruence" is likely to cause confusion and misunderstanding.

Collaboration independent goals can play more of a role than might be expected. Organizations and individuals in any collaboration will obviously have a diverse range of goals unrelated to the collaboration and there may be occasions, as happened with the Child Poverty Working Group member's goal referred to earlier, when independent goals are sufficiently close to collaboration goals that members inadvertently (at least from the point of view of most of them) devote time to what they later regard as a diversion of their intended

agenda. However – particularly in horizontal collaborations (such as the potential Inter-University one) between organizations in similar lines of business – there are situations in which there is substantial congruence between goals relating to areas of business that are not relevant to a particular collaboration. This has the potential to aid mutual understanding about language, targets and constraints, but participants may also find themselves straying into areas of business that are not intended to be the subject of collaboration.

While the framework suggests that goal congruence is likely to be limited, it shows goal *diversity* to be endemic in collaborations. Even in the simplest of collaborative arrangements, and even when there is apparent congruence in key areas of collaboration content, the *tangled web* suggests that taking all of its dimensions into account, there will also be a multiplicity of dissimilar goals present. The sheer complexity of the tangled web can lead to expanded and unwieldy agendas, confusion, misunderstandings or just apathy. Both the Child Poverty Working Group and the Regional Partnering Forum collaborations limped along for several years with most of the partners seeming to have no real understanding of any mutually desirable goals or any serious buy in. The former did eventually become productive, but only after being remodeled in line with an externally imposed goal that was accompanied by an injection of resource *and* the departure from the collaboration of most of the partners. The latter was characterized by a lack of real interest in – and hence ownership of – the stated collaboration goals by all but the initiating members, and was eventually disbanded without any obvious achievements.

Fuzziness and perception issues tend to make it unlikely that partners will have similar understandings of goals, and even if there is congruence it may be "concealed". Thus, in the Local Governance Initiative, for example, partners failed to realize their existing congruencies with the goals of the externally imposed initiative and were concerned to set up new schemes where existing ones would have been satisfactory. Hierarchical differences –

such as in the Child Poverty Working Group, where the high level goal of a small community organization had congruence with a lower level goal of a major national charity – can make even congruent goals difficult to manage. Finally, because of the dynamic nature of collaborations, any similarity that does exist is likely to be ephemeral rather than long lasting.

While the above arguments provide a thorough analysis of the nature of congruence and diversity from the perspective of the tangled web, it is beyond the scope of this paper to make an exhaustive analysis of all of the consequent practical implications. Nevertheless, we can surmise that a combination of congruency and diversity across a variety of goals is both inevitable and valuable to the collaboration. And we can summarize the practical points raised above, as a clear indicator of the richness that the framework brings to the understanding of the paradox (see Figure 6). As the figure shows, there are many negative sides to goal diversity, yet these negative sides can be seen as a necessary evil of seeking collaborative advantage in relation to tackling the kinds of difficult social issues – such as community regeneration and crime prevention – that sit in the "inter-organizational domain" (Trist, 1983; p. 270). On the other hand, without some degree of recognized goal congruence there is no possibility of proceeding. We conclude that when all relevant goals in the collaborative arena are taken into consideration, goal diversity must be seen as an inevitability that is likely to continuously challenge any congruence that does exist. In practical situations*, managing goals in collaboration is therefore not so much concerned with a tension between congruent and diverse goals as with working with a combination of them.*

Goal congruence in the tangled web:

+ *substantive or process goal congruence → partners' and collaboration goals aligned → motivation and commitment for involvement*
+ *individual goal congruence → overcoming organizational competitive or incompatibility conflicts of interest or process inertia*
+ *process goal congruence → overcoming competitive or incompatibility conflicts of interest*
+ *congruence between external and member derived goals → facilitation of member goal congruence*
+ *congruent collaboration independent goals → mutual understanding*

− *substantive or process goal congruence → competitive conflicts of interest → reluctance to share information and sometimes agenda sabotage*
− *partial congruence between external and member derived goals → weak collaboration goal ownership*
− *apparent congruence between real and pseudo goals (concealed diversity) or actual congruence between explicit and hidden goals (concealed congruence) → confusion and misunderstanding*
− *congruent collaboration independent goals → diversion of the agenda*
− *pluralities, fuzziness, perception and dynamics issues → difficulty in identifying potentially productive congruence (concealed congruence)*
− *hierarchical differences in congruent goals → difficulty in managing potentially productive congruence*

combined congruence and

diversity inevitability

Goal diversity in the tangled web:

+ *substantive or process goal diversity → synergy from diversity of resource → motivation and commitment for involvement*

− *substantive or process goal diversity → incompatibility conflicts of interest → seeking different outcomes*
− *diversity between collaboration goals and organization and/or individual goals, or between external and member goals → collaborative apathy*
− *diversity between collaboration dependent and independent goals → diversion of the collaborative agenda*
− *diversity from genuine and psuedo goals as well as explicit, unstated and hidden goals → confusion and misunderstanding (concealed diversity)*
− *diversity of perceptions of goals → difficulties of mutual understanding*
− *dynamics of goal development → ephemerality of congruence and, hence, prevalence of diversity*
− *complexity of the tangled web → unwieldy agendas, confusion, misunderstandings and /or apathy*

Key:
+ indicates potentially productive outcomes from goal congruence or diversity
- indicates potentially counter-productive outcomes from goal congruence or diversity
- "→" should be read as "*can (sometimes) lead to*"

Figure 6: Consequences of the tangled web perspective on congruence and diversity: examples from practice

Elaborating the enactment level paradox

While the principle level paradox is concerned with organizational and individual level goals, the enactment level one is concerned with the value and difficulty of agreeing collaboration level goals. Our initial explanation for this difficulty, taken from the extant literature, noted that different expectations, resource constraints and different views of policy implementation goals all militate against reaching agreement. The key issue manifestations identified in Table 4, together with the consequences of the principle level paradox as summarized in Figure 6, considerably develop our understanding of the difficulties of reaching agreement and so help us to elaborate on the enactment level paradox and thus address the second question posed in the introduction.

As Figure 6 indicates, the negative consequences of both goal congruence and, particularly, diversity outweigh – at least numerically – positive ones quite substantially. These provide a fuller indicative set of collaboration characteristics that militate against reaching agreement over collaboration goals. Taken together, these imply settings in which participants are often seeking different outcomes from one another and may be reluctant to share information. They are rife with confusion and mutual misunderstanding so potentially useful areas of congruence that could be harvested to communal benefit, as well as potentially harmful areas of congruence or diversity are frequently concealed from participants. Unwieldy agendas incorporating multiplicitous goals can swiftly divert attention and can be subject to sabotage. Conflict, stagnation and apathy are common phenomena.

It is thus the interplay between the perceived goals within the entanglement that generates the problematic part of the paradox at the enactment level through producing major obstacles to achieving fully owned agreement of collaboration goals. The reasons for this can be summarized in four key points. First, it is highly unlikely that all the goals will be in harmony: extant research implies this (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Bryson, et al, 2006;

Page, 2003; Percival, 2009; Provan and Milward, 2001), the goals framework explicates why. Second, it is highly unlikely that any individual participant will know or understand more than a portion of the goals that are at play. This is a function of the sheer size and complexity of the entanglement, distractions caused by pseudo and independent goals and the masking effect of unstated or hidden goals. Third, differing perceptions lead to a low degree of mutual understanding even where there is individual knowledge or understanding. Fourth, because the entanglement is in a continuous state of flux, any mutual understanding of each others' goals – and hence any agreement over a collaboration goal – tends to be short lived. This analysis does not challenge the notion that agreement on joint goals for a collaboration is desirable but, since it explains why that is inherently difficult to achieve, it does question the practicality of this as a *requirement* for success.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding these real challenges for the management of goals, extant research suggests – and therefore it can be presumed - that success will continue to rely on the "delicate balancing act of bringing together individuals and organizations with both similar and different goals" (Connelly et al, 2006, p.18) and the careful management of the conflicts that arise out of the different goals and expectations that partners bring (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Fleishman, 2009; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009; Bryson, et al, 2006; Connelly et al, 2006). In this respect, the goals paradox may not be the most comforting of concepts as it recognizes that there will be underlying tensions and that managerial responses need to incorporate these. Consistent with both the theory of collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) and theory of paradox (Smith and Lewis, 2011), there will be both positive and negative sides to alternative ways of addressing goals. The tangled web suggests that any managerial mechanism seeking to integrate congruent and diverse goals in

collaborations should emphasize acceptance of the paradox and its inherent tensions rather than seeking resolutions free of any compromises or trade-offs (Vlaar, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2007; Connelly et al, 2006). Accepting the paradox however, does not mean abandoning active management of goals. The tangled web framework provides participants with a handle for reflective practice (Huxham and Beech, 2003) by facilitating the consideration – and hence understanding – of their own and partners' goals. It can be used in this way by individuals or single organization groups to consider what partners' goals might be or by a collaborative group as a basis for collaborative planning. It does not provide normative guidance on how to manage goals but aims to support participants in understanding their collaborative relationships and so allow them to devise their own management strategies.

A keen awareness of the trade-offs associated with different approaches to managing and governing goals will also be an important aspect of continuously nurturing collaborations towards the achievement of collaborative advantage. A broad managerial choice may be between proceeding on the basis of gaining just enough agreement to make progress, or addressing, and so hoping to understand and modify, any importantly inhibiting areas of congruence or diversity. While the latter might appear to be the obvious choice, it can, in practice, lead to lengthy confusing and unproductive discussions which may even open up areas of conflicting interests, so the former may sometimes be a more practical alternative. This broad choice can in turn inform the mode of governance (Provan and Kenis, 2008). For example, as the framework provides a means of identifying areas of congruency and diversity, it can assist those involved in goal-directed networks in their choice between shared or lead organization participant governance *or* the delegation of governance to a network administrative organization. The tensions inherent in the management of goals can similarly be usefully linked to other governance tensions. For example, consideration of the external

versus internal origin of goals can provide vital clues about the management of the *external versus internal legitimacy* tension identified by Provan and Kennis (2008). Other recently identified governance tensions - *efficiency versus inclusiveness, flexibility versus stability* (Provan and Kenis, 2008) and *unity versus diversity* (Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010) could be similarly explored in light of the goals framework.

The Research Oriented Action Research (RO-AR) approach adopted in his paper has made it possible to capture the complexity of goals in collaborations and to identify inherent key challenges for management and governance. These key strengths however also point to some limitations and we comment now on objectivity and reliability of the approach with reference to three issues that are relevant to this particular paper.

First, this type of research does not provide precise guidelines for management and governance. However, this was not our intention, as that would neither reflect the paradoxical and idiosyncratic nature of collaborations nor acknowledge the value of managerial judgment (Vlaar, Van Den Bosch and Volberda, 2007). Instead, the tangled web framework is intended to inform reflective consideration of specific situations (Huxham and Beech, 2003) and so assist in the disentangling of complexity.

Second, as the research approach relies on amalgamating data from various sources, it does not allow for comparative analysis. Thus, for example, the framework does not specify the way the paradox operates in different types of settings. Instead, since the framework captures goals in the *totality* of the collaboration arena its insights are framed generically as relevant to both management and governance in and of collaborations *per se* (Provan and Kenis, 2008; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010).

Third, in the course of this research, we identified a number of goals and proposed that they differ in type over six dimensions. Clearly there could be additional dimensions, but given the considerable time period over which the framework was developed, it seems

unlikely that we would find more. We are not claiming uniqueness, however: we acknowledge that others could equally appropriately configure the framework and label the dimensions differently.

Finally, the research approach does not lend itself to objective assessment of the relationship between the application of the framework and collaboration success. This is a potential area for future research. It is worth noting, however, that it would be difficult to avoid a self referential aspect to any such research since the tangled web model would imply that any measure of success would need to take into consideration the differing goals present in the particular situation (see also Provan and Milward, 2001).

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