The Promise of Partnerships
Local Governance and the Practice of Partnership

by

Carolyn Pletsch

A Thesis
Presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In
Rural Studies

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© Carolyn Pletsch, September, 2011
This investigation examines the new roles of government, civil society and the private sector, in the shift from government to governance. In particular this thesis explores partnership practise within the context of rural Ontario, as partnerships involving some combination of public, private, and civil society actors, have become important vehicles for the achievement of rural governance and community development goals. Contrary to the normative view of these relationships however, anecdotal evidence suggests that partnerships are not always good for all participants. Who actually benefits from these relationships? What are the operational realities that facilitate or present barriers to effective partnership practice? This thesis develops a perspective on these questions, as well as offering a working theory on partnerships that provides some insight for those interested in advancing the theory and practice.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who assisted, supported and encouraged me in this work. The list is significant and includes, but is not limited to the following people: those that volunteered to participate in this study as key informants and those that were a part of my thesis committee; Wayne Caldwell, Belinda Leach and my advisor Al Lauzon. Thanks are also due to examining committee members Doug Ramsey and John Fitzgibbons. Finally to friends and family, particularly Russell and Allie words do not begin to convey my appreciation.
Contents

List of Tables ............................................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures .............................................................................................................................. viii

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 10
  1.1 Mapping the Shift from Government to Governance ......................................................... 11
  1.2 The Promise of Partnership ................................................................................................. 13
  1.3 Problem Statement and Research Question ....................................................................... 18
  1.4 Significance of Research .................................................................................................... 19
  1.5 Research Goal and Objectives ......................................................................................... 22
  1.6 Conceptual Framework ...................................................................................................... 23
  1.7 Research Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis ...................................................... 27
  1.8 Delimitations ..................................................................................................................... 28
  1.9 Limitations of the Research ............................................................................................. 29
  1.10 Summary ........................................................................................................................ 29

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature .......................................................................................... 31
  2.1 Governance Now .............................................................................................................. 32
  2.2 Globalization as Context for the Transition from Government to Governance ......... 33
  2.3 Public Private Partnerships .............................................................................................. 42
  2.4 Global Governance ......................................................................................................... 45
  2.5 Conceptions of Networks and Partnerships .................................................................. 48
  2.6 Partnership Typologies .................................................................................................... 50
  2.7 An Analytic Tool for Assessing Partnership Status .......................................................... 51
  2.8 Endogenous Development and Partnerships ................................................................. 57
  2.9 Examples of the Partnership Approach to Local Economic Development and Rural Development .............................................................................................................. 59
  2.10 Summary ......................................................................................................................... 62

Chapter 3: Methodology ............................................................................................................... 64
  3.1 Situating Self ..................................................................................................................... 64
  3.2 Ethics ................................................................................................................................ 70
  3.3 Qualitative Methodology ................................................................................................ 70
Chapter 4: Case Study Overview ........................................ 88
 4.1 Activities .......................................................................... 95
 4.2 Human Resources ................................................................. 102
 4.3 Organizational Periods ............................................................. 103
 4.4 Funding the Enterprise-Sustainability Crisis ............................. 104
 4.5 Postscript ........................................................................... 105

Chapter 5: Research Findings .................................................. 110
 5.1 Operational Realities-Facilitating and Not .............................. 110
 5.2 The Partnership is Adequately Resourced with Financial Capital ........................................ 114
 5.3 Human Resources in the TORC Partnership ............................. 124
 5.4 In-Kind Compilation for RCCB Project 2004-2006 .................. 127
 5.5 Structure of the Partnership is Transparent .............................. 135
 5.6 Engaged Membership-Partners ................................................. 142
 5.7 Members have a Strong Social network ................................... 146
 5.8 The Value of the Partnership is Established .............................. 148
 5.9 Members Prioritize the Partnership .......................................... 151
 5.10 Power in the Partnership .......................................................... 152
 5.11 Leadership .......................................................................... 155
 5.12 Communication in the Partnership .......................................... 158
 5.13 Mandate of the Partnership is Explicit .................................... 160
 5.14 Communication Technology ................................................. 162
 5.15 Environment-Political .............................................................. 164

Chapter 6: Discussion and Summation ...................................... 168
 6.1 Community Capitals Analysis ............................................... 169
6.2 Modeling “Reality” Through Systems Theory ........................................171
6.3 Resources and Structure ......................................................................172
6.4 Characteristics of Member-Partners ....................................................186
6.5 Communication Patterns-Value ............................................................196
6.6 Access to and Innovative use of Communications Technology ............198
6.7 Communications – A Systems Perspective ..........................................200
6.8 A Working Theory of Partnerships and Summation of Research ............202
6.9 Rural Partnerships Going Forward .........................................................211
6.10 Final Words .........................................................................................212

Chapter 7: References and Appendices ....................................................215

7.1 References .............................................................................................215
7.2 Appendix A. Torc Documentation .........................................................237
7.3 Appendix B Interview Guide ..................................................................244
List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Major Resources, Projects and Staff.................................................................107

Table 2: Operational Realities that Facilitate and Present Barriers to
Partnership Practice.................................................................................................................................112

Table 3 Contribution of Documentation to Thesis.................................................................................113

Table 4: TORC Administrative Meetings..............................................................................................127

Table 5: TORC Administrative Meetings..............................................................................................128

Table 6: Operational Realities Summary Table-12 Pairs .................................................................169

Table 7: Operational Realities ..............................................................................................................204
List of Figures

Figure 1: FACT - Focused Assessment through Cause Effect Tracing ...........................................27
Figure 2: Summary of P3 Identified Projects (Government of Canada, 2003, p.3) ..................45
Figure 3: My contact with TORC ............................................................................................65
Figure 4: Two (of Three) Levels of Partnership ......................................................................75
Figure 5: FACT - Focused Assessment through Cause Effect Tracing ..................................76
Figure 6: Sampling ..................................................................................................................79
Figure 7: Operational Realities that Facilitate Partnership Practice ......................................83
Figure 8: Operational Realities that Present Barriers to Partnership Practice .......................84
Figure 9: TORC Organizational Chart ..................................................................................95
Figure 10: Example of Operational Reality Continuum, Structural Transparency ...............111
Figure 11: TORC Contract Timelines .....................................................................................116
Figure 12: Access to Sufficient Financial Capital ...................................................................123
Figure 13: Access to Sufficient and Appropriate Human Resources ....................................135
Figure 14: Engaged Members .................................................................................................146
Figure 15: Members have a Strong Social Network ...............................................................147
Figure 16: Value of the Partnership is Established ................................................................151
Figure 17: Members Prioritize the Partnership .......................................................................152
Figure 18: Awareness of Power Dynamic .............................................................................155
Figure 19: Leadership .............................................................................................................158
Figure 20: Communication .......................................................................................... 160
Figure 21: Explicit Mandate ...................................................................................... 162
Figure 22: Access to ICT’s ....................................................................................... 164
Figure 23: TORC Systems Diagram 1 ....................................................................... 172
Figure 24: TORC Systems Diagram 2 ....................................................................... 186
Figure 25: Awareness of the Power Dynamic ........................................................... 189
Figure 26: TORC Systems Diagram 2 ....................................................................... 196
Figure 27: Communication-Value ............................................................................ 196
Chapter 1: Introduction

Structural adjustment in rural Canada is no longer a new phenomenon; however the implications of adjustment with respect to an evolution from ‘government to governance,’ (Stoker, 1997) are just beginning to be assessed. Current use of the term ‘governance’ implies that there is a new order in which the capacity to craft the agenda and then accomplish community goals is now dependant on a self-directed network of numerous organizations and individuals. While these organizations may include government, government is no longer necessarily the driver (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1997; Murdoch, 1998, p.8). Although there are many manifestations of this new system of governance, this work is concerned with the proliferation of the practice of “partnerships”. An examination of social and economic policy implementation in Canada and globally reveals that partnerships, have become important vectors for both rural communities and their stakeholders, in their mutual quest to achieve rural governance goals (Cavazzani & Moseley, 2001, Goodwin, 1998).

Since beginning this research, the public’s interest in the practice of partnerships has grown significantly. Its trajectory has been noteworthy particularly in the field of public policy where the practice of partnerships as a mechanism of governance, appears well entrenched (Murdoch, 2000). At the same time, society’s understanding of the costs and benefits of partnership relationships within rural and other contexts still diverges widely, encompassing experience and opinions that are polar opposites. At one end of this continuum is the popular, normative conception which holds that partnerships can add to the human resource base, use resources more efficiently and deliver an extensive range of services for which individual organizations would not ordinarily have the capacity (Rodal & Mulder, 1993).
These assumptions are readily identifiable in a wide variety of government policy documents and contribution agreements. Contrast this normative conception of partnership practice to one on the other end of the continuum, a point of view that is frequently held by practitioners. This perspective is less positive, identifying underlying inequities and costs associated with partnership relationships, the practice of which is both time-consuming and as a result is expensive, frequently taking its toll in both financial and human resources of the least resilient members (Smillie & Helmich, 1993). At present these differences of opinion regarding the scope and utility of partnerships show no real signs of resolution.

### 1.1 Mapping the Shift from Government to Governance

The introductory paragraphs of this thesis raise a number of questions which will be addressed throughout this study, the first of which involves the historical context from which partnerships emerged. What was the Canadian context that drove the shift from government to governance, a change that constituted a major shift in how citizens’ participate in governing and what they regard as government’s role in the governing process?

According to Stewart (1998), “In an astonishing short time-between 1956 and 1975-Canada became a modern welfare state….We built a welfare state for reasons of defense against the faults and failures of an economic system that created huge wealth for some of our people and unendurable poverty for others” (p. 15). In Canada the welfare state was “government” at its most dominant, prolific, and by some accounts most intrusive.

According to Marsh (1975), “by the 1940s social security had become a national aim and an international ideal” (p. xvi). In 1943 the Liberal government struck a Special Committee on
Social Security and it was to this committee that the Marsh Report was presented in that same year. “The Marsh report was a pivotal document in the development of war and post war social security programs” (Marsh, 1975, p.ix). In this report Marsh outlined a comprehensive (benefits) system designed to address social needs and in so doing he succeeded in providing a plan for what evolved into one of the most ambitious and comprehensive social security programs in the western world.

These Liberal policies of the 1940s provided a foundation for the next thirty years of social programming, positioning most of the cost and all of the control in the hands of the public sector. The programs included family allowances, veteran’s benefits, the Medical Care Act, Unemployment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and others. The resultant social safety net was financed by contributions from the federal and provincial government as well employed taxpayers. According to Barlow and Campbell (1995), “Most importantly, the major political pressures and influences of this time were from the left” (p.23).

There is some disagreement in the literature about when exactly the Canadian welfare state came under scrutiny and consequently began the process of rescaling. Some claim it began in the early eighties, for example Barlow and Campbell (1995, p.38) identify the Trudeau government’s “Six & Five” legislation, capping public service wages, provincial transfers, and social security payments in 1982, as the first sign of restructuring in Canada. Others such as Pierson (1994, p.4) say that it was a full decade later. Regardless of the timeline, clear indications of the process of change; particularly decline, in the scope and role of government have been evident over at least the last three decades.
Despite subsequent Progressive Conservative efforts to curb spending and reflect a market-friendly environment, in 1992 the Canadian federal government's net debt exceeded 60 percent of Gross Domestic Product (Government of Canada, 1993). In response the first Liberal budget in February of 1994 signaled massive cuts to spending including the elimination of 45,000 public sector jobs, agricultural and business subsidies were slashed, as were the Canada Health and Social Transfer payments (Barlow and Campbell, 1995, p.145).

1.2 The Promise of Partnership

Confronted with diminishing access to resources, the government of the day initiated measures to both increase efficiency and reduce risk by developing alternative procurement and service delivery mechanisms. Privatization and partnerships are two examples of means to these ends (Rodal & Mulder, 1993). Philosophical support for what was reported to be more efficient service delivery was from the right, and reflected a national and international obsession with economic performance, manifesting itself in policy that was underwritten by an assumption that the market’s management expertise and practices should be applied to the public sector. Emergence of neo-liberal norms (the focus on efficiency, the dominance of the market, the reduced role of government and of risk sharing through partnerships) can be traced through many government policy documents. These include, for example, the 1994 federal green papers entitled *Agenda: Jobs and Growth* and *Improving Social Security in Canada*. Provincial equivalents were also written in New Brunswick, British Columbia and Alberta (Golden, 2005, p.3). A full decade later the Federal Government’s “Social Economy Initiative” announced in 2004, provides an example of current governance practice.
Social economy enterprises are run like businesses, producing goods and services for the market economy, but they manage their operations and redirect their surpluses in pursuit of social and community goals…. [these] strategies involve citizens, governments, the voluntary sector, business, learning institutions and others working together (Government of Canada, 2005).

In this quotation the emphasis is on efficiency and the primacy of the market through references to the management of enterprises ‘run like businesses’ and ‘producing for the market economy.’ Also evident are the alternative delivery of social services and an acknowledgement of the importance of relationships or partnerships in the development and implementation of these initiatives.

But what does the practice of partnership actually promise and who benefits? Representative organizations from all sectors; private, public, MUSH\(^1\) and not-for-profit have become active participants in governance partnerships. Government sees NPOs in particular as a natural partner largely because of their deep community roots-networks, dedication to social and humanitarian issues, and their non-profit status (Helmich, 1999). At first glance this collaboration appears to be a good thing that benefits all partners. Through the engagement of NPOs, government can achieve its objectives of increased efficiency and effectiveness while encouraging the active participation of rural citizens in resolving issues of public concern (Rodal & Mulder, 1993). In return, NPOs receive funding to carry out their work. Thus the promise of partnership is held in four key beliefs; 1) that together organizations and stakeholders can do more than any one can individually, 2) that partnerships can do these things with less financial resources, drawing instead from community capacity, and 3) that

---

\(^1\) Municipalities, Universities, Schools and Hospitals
through these relationships citizens can participate in resolving issues of public concern, 4) and finally through the mechanism of partnerships, the ability of government to govern from a distance is facilitated.

The success of partnership relationships within the context of rural governance appears however to be plagued by a number of concerns and issues which ultimately belie or at least undermine the potential promise. These concerns are profoundly influenced by the relationship government has with its citizens, in particular the lack of trust citizens have in the institution(s) of government (Dreessen, 2001). The net result of this flawed relationship between government and its citizens is ever increasing thresholds of accountability criteria for the expenditure of public funds. “Issues of accountability, effectiveness and efficiency are foremost in the minds of the general public and of politicians in particular” (Dreessen, 2001, p.12). Although a lack of necessary financial resources can make it difficult for communities to work together, there are also other less obvious causes of disharmony exacerbated by the context of the growth and development of Canada’s rural communities. These include:

1. Populations and institutions that are not engaged (Carter, 2004).
2. Government that is not effective at horizontal co-ordination (Bryden, 2005).
3. Rural communities that are lacking in the capacity for participation and adaptation to change (Roling & Wagemakers 1998).

The existence of these factors makes it difficult for communities to work together in partnership.
Engaged populations and institutions refers to a state where the population of a community, district or neighbourhood sees itself as connected with one another and capable of collectively identifying their common interests and how these should be celebrated, overcome, managed or built upon. It is a condition where members of a population feel they have a say, some influence or control; they are committed to a common future and see themselves as a part of that future (Carter, 2004, p.1).

The communities in which citizens can become engaged vary widely (Carter, 2004, p.1). Structural adjustment processes have however, disrupted historic or ‘natural’ community boundaries leading to reformulated artificial communities, the populations of which lack common goals. There are many examples of citizen opposition to these processes that have gone ahead regardless. As a result, community members believe that they have little influence or control—and disengagement results. Disengaged citizens find little reason or need to form partnerships.

One example of restructuring and resultant disruption to traditional boundaries is that of Ontario’s new Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN). In March of 2006 Ontario’s Ministry of Health and Long Term Care joined Canada’s nine other provinces by introducing a regional structure to health care planning and funding regardless of a well-mounted campaign of opposition by local communities, hospitals, community services boards and professional bodies (Lewis & Kouri, 2004). LHIN boundaries were determined by using the postal codes from patient hospital discharge abstracts to locate a patient’s home location and then comparing them to the location of the hospital where the services were received.² New regional groupings were made around hospital service areas with no consideration given to

---

the ‘natural’ or traditional service boundaries. In rural areas where access to public services such as healthcare is limited, the disruption to long held partnerships formed around previous organizations such as DHCs have taken time to resolve, taking into account the LHIN framework. It is easy to imagine how a unilateral structural change in the administration of healthcare embarked on without community consultation and despite significant community opposition could significantly and negatively impact citizen engagement.

While the example of LHINs can be used to illustrate the lack of community engagement around the provision of programs and services, it is also an illustration of a lack of horizontal co-ordination by government. According to Bryden (2005) horizontal co-ordination is about ‘new governance’ or how decisions are made within a context of devolution, partnership and integration. “It is about the fact that governance cannot be left to government because government lacks key areas of knowledge, is not representative, and it needs resources (human etc.) from other actors that it cannot control” (Bryden, 2005, p.1). As mentioned in the case of the creation of LHINs, decisions are reported to have been made unilaterally. Staff of local DHCs, and other key stakeholders in the processes were not engaged in any kind of consultation, instead found out about progress towards the new LHIN structure by announcements made just in advance of press releases. By essentially ostracizing the staff and community partners of DHCs the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care officials denied themselves access to a wealth of potentially very useful knowledge that may have ultimately changed both the process and the end result.

The third factor, that of community capacity can refer to many things: in this context the most significant of these is the capacity to effect change. The capacity to effect change
requires the ability to learn and respond to changing conditions (Roling and Wagemakers, 1998). In the 21st century the ability to adapt to change utilizes both hard and soft skills. Given this context community capacity includes the following skills and abilities: local leadership, recognition of local infrastructure and its potential, recognition of local strengths and weaknesses (as well as compensating factors), identification of other necessary capacities and options for procurement, and the valuing of local community (Carter, 2004). Contained within this formidable array is that of knowing when and how to develop expedient, mutually beneficial partnerships, and when and how to be involved in the policy development process. Over the last three decades government has supported a large variety of community capacity development programming, but only during the research and development phase of the programming. There appears to be a notable absence of funding related to program implementation. Rationale for this course of action is familiar; it limits government contribution and ensures multiple partners. But when only one partner, government, has the financial resources for implementation, excellent and necessary capacity development programming has frequently been undelivered. This leaves rural communities lacking in sufficient community capacity, without resources to develop the skills required to change and adapt.

1.3 Problem Statement and Research Question

Canadian public policy makers have embraced “partnerships” as a key approach to governance, (as have member countries of the OECD, the EU and others), regardless of the lack of knowledge about the effectiveness of partnerships in accomplishing governance goals. After more than two decades of partnership practice, the Canadian experience of
partnerships in a rural context is largely unexamined, and as a result remains relatively unsupported by evidence or analysis. Outstanding questions are legion, including the question at the centre of this dissertation which involved an exploration of the nature of partnership experience on the ground. The question is this:

What are the current operational realities that facilitate, or serve as barriers to effective partnerships practice in Canadian rural organizations; why are these occurring, and how are these operational realities impacting both the individual organizations, and the multi-organizational practice of partnerships?

The field evidence required to facilitate this discussion has been gathered by developing a case study of a partnership based organization which has been significantly and fundamentally involved in rural Ontario’s system of governance, the Ontario Rural Council.

1.4 Significance of Research

As in other western jurisdictions, Canada and of particular interest, rural Ontario has undergone changes that have significantly changed the social, economic and physical landscape. Many of these changes stem from two interdependent processes 1) rural restructuring and; 2) demographics, specifically a demographic shift characterized by an aging population and low birth-rates.

1.4.1 Rural Restructuring

Globalization and its associated processes such as privatization, regionalism, and decentralization have led to significant change in the industrial structure of Canada and of particular interest to this investigation, the rural economy. The nature of this change has been described as an “historic shift”, (CLMPC, 1994, p.17), “from goods producing
industries to services. In the first decade of this century, goods producing industries employed two thirds of Canadian workers. Now in the last decade, less than a third of employment is in the goods producing sector” (CLMPC, 1994, p.17). This massive structural change fundamentally changes the nature and content of work resulting in “computer-based work and piecework done from home, job-sharing, the growth of entrepreneurship and of self-employment options and an increasing reliance on shift work” (CLMPC, 1994, p.29).

These realities remain unmitigated by policy makers of the Canadian public service, and have for the most part negatively impacted the residents of rural communities. Negative impacts include unstable employment, lower wages particularly for women, reduction of real estate values and increasing use of social service (Leach & Winston, 1999). In the following quotation Leach and Winston (1999, p.99) highlight what has emerged as the most devastating result, permanent under, and unemployment;

Older displaced workers face a relatively bleak future in rural areas as they compete with younger workers for jobs and find it more and more difficult to find work of any kind. Many of our respondents over 50 years of age were facing increasingly chronic health problems, without comprehensive extended health insurance, which the services they and their families require, such as visiting nurse and homecare are diminishing.

Some segments of the rural population feel these effects more than others, exponentially increasing the disadvantage associated with being disabled, or female for example. Several authors (Armstrong, 1996; Bock & Shortall, 2006; Leach, 1996) have identified and analyzed the gendered dimension of the new rural economy. Their work finds that women are impacted by the changes generated as a result of economic restructuring differently than men.
Leach and Winston (1999, p.93) say that the differences centre on the fact that women tend to be unemployed longer than men, when they go back to work they make less than men and are more likely to work on a part-time basis then are men. Each of these factors significantly affects the family income. Gender also influences how farm families have been dealing with economic restructuring. When women are questioned regarding strategies for improving farm performance; they will generally choose what is commonly regarded as the safe option i.e. farm diversification in contrast to the men, who historically have taken a more aggressive approach.

1.4.2 Demographics

Immigration is now the primary means by which Canada grows its population, a population growth that impacts largely urban communities. In Ontario for example, urban communities receive over 90% of new immigrants. The rest of the province suffers from population decline and little job creation. Nowhere is this more evident than in rural and remote communities.

While each rural community is unique, many also share common demographic and socio-economic characteristics. These characteristics are relatively well known and recognized. They include: physical isolation, lack of economic diversification and resultant limited employment opportunities, high servicing costs, limited public and private services, and youth out-migration. This not an exhaustive listing however in addition to the fact that as a result of structural adjustment many regions are artificial, it is sufficient to give some context

---


4 As a % of the total population
and a sense of the challenges rural communities face. These characteristics place isolated rural and remote communities at risk with the potential to benefit significantly from alliances, collaborations and partnership relationships.

1.5 Research Goal and Objectives

The main goal of this research is to initiate the development of a working theory of partnerships, the partnership approach to rural governance and consequently to sustainable rural communities in Canada:

1) By exploring and describing the historical, political and economic context of the partnership approach to rural governance and in so doing give context to the why of rural partnerships and their operational realities.

2) By identifying, examining and explaining some factors that may affect the formation, stability and success of partnerships in a rural context and as a result address the question: what are the operational realities that facilitate, or serve as barriers to effective partnerships practice in Canadian rural organizations?

3) By exploring how operational realities may be impacting organizations and their partnerships and based on these observations begin to develop a hypothesis regarding the efficacy of partnerships as a vehicle for the facilitation of rural governance goals.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation includes a discussion about how this research might contribute to better partnership practice and public policy with the aim of supporting
local actors who implement the partnership approach. While not a primary objective of this research, this will be an important contribution to effective practice.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework\textsuperscript{5} for this research draws from Butler-Flora and Flora’s (2008), Community Capitals Framework, General Systems Theory and Focused Assessment through Cause Effect Tracing (FACT). On mass, these three theories have provided a perspective that illuminates governance partnerships and multiple partner networks.

1.6.1 Community Capitals, 2008 Framework as a Component of the Conceptual Framework

The Community Capitals Framework offers a way to assess community from a community systems perspective by identifying the assets in each capital, the types of capital invested, the interaction among the capitals and the resultant impacts across capitals (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 20). The Community Capitals Framework (CCF) augments and grounds the systems theory perspective with a context specific scaffold. An inevitable result of using the CCF framework is that the emphasis is placed on assets or investments rather than deficits and needs. While CCF has been criticized for being unduly positive, it is a perspective that has many proponents of which I am one. Flora’s CCF (Emery & Flora, 2006, p.21) model incorporates the following:

---

\textsuperscript{5} I am using the term conceptual framework to describe the role of CCF, GST and FACT in this research. The work of a conceptual framework is as follows: “it provides the organizing basis for reaching the conclusions that we come to, and helps us infer meaning from these conclusions. It is influenced by the ideas and research of others” (CCF, GST and FACT). Lazlo Group, (n.d.) retrieved on July 1, 2010 from http://www.lazogroup.ca/msproject/framework1-e.php
1. Natural capital refers to those assets that abide in a particular location including weather, geographic isolation, natural resources, amenities and natural beauty.
2. Cultural capital influences what voices are heard and listened to, which voices have influence in what areas and how creativity, innovation and influence emerge and are nurtured.
3. Human capital is understood to include the skills and abilities of people to develop and enhance their resources, to access outside resources and bodies of knowledge and be proactive in shaping the future of the community or group.
4. Political capital reflects access to power, connections to resources and power brokers.
5. Financial capital refers to the financial resources available to invest in community capacity building, to underwrite the development of business and to accumulate wealth for future community development.
6. Built capital, includes the infrastructure supporting these activities.

CCF has provided a useful lens with which to view and analyze partnerships both by itself and, as in the case of this research, when used in conjunction with General Systems Theory.

1.6.2 General Systems Theory as a Component of the Conceptual Framework

General Systems Theory (GST) was conceived in the early twentieth century by Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Prior to von Bertalanffy’s proposal, scientists who theorized about systems hypothesized that a system was linear and as a result could be reduced to the sum of its individual parts; of which each constituent part could then also be examined as an independent entity. In contrast to traditional systems theory, von Bertalanffy’s proposal outlined a world where systems were complex not linear, and secondly that systems were defined by the interaction of their components (i.e. through communication), none of which could be understood apart from the whole system.
Over the following decades GST matured as an analytic and theoretical framework in both the biological and social sciences, generating many variations, in many disciplines such as the field of organizational development, and management, both areas that are particularly relevant to this study. Some examples of work that is based on GST is Peter Checkland’s soft systems methodology (1981, 1990, 1998), and Peter Senge’s learning organization (1990), a component of which is systems thinking. Key GST hypothesis relevant organizational development and in particular to this investigation include the following;

1) Equilibrium in a system is achieved when all forces (i.e. input, output, positive and negative feedback) are balanced. All systems are by definition in search of equilibrium. In order for a system to survive over time it must be able to maintain a state of equilibrium (Kuhn, 1970).

2) Equilibrium in a system is achieved through a negative or positive feedback loop process. In negative feedback, the system maintains its present state by creating a dampening effect. In positive feedback, the system responds to external information or stimuli not by reducing or damping but by amplifying the response. This leads to a reinforcement of this change (von Beralanffy, 1972).

3) A closed system is one where communication and other exchanges happen exclusively between the system components and not with the larger system of which it is a part. Alternatively an open system is one that receives communication and exchanges from the environment and also interacts with the larger systems.
systems can tend toward higher levels of organization while closed systems can only maintain or decrease in organization (Weiner, 1948).

4) Systems receive energy from the system of which they are a part. This energy is called an input and can be composed of many things such as matter and information. Output reverses the input process, both inputs and outputs cross the membrane or boundaries that delineate the system (Weiner, 1948).

Claims that systems theory provides a universal approach to all science may be somewhat overstated; however for the purposes of this study conceptualizing partnerships as systems has provided a unique and useful lens through which to view the practice of partnerships in rural areas. In summary, the use of FACT, CCF and GST, have provided a comprehensive, robust conceptual framework, within which to consider partnership practice in a rural context.
Figure 1: FACT- Focused Assessment through Cause Effect Tracing

The third component of the conceptual framework discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and illustrated in Figure the FACT, “Path of Analysis” which provided a framework for the interview guide, and was adapted from the work of Kroes, Luckenotter and Fekade (2002),

1.7 Research Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis

This research was designed and realized from within what I would describe as a postmodern-constructivist perspective, with primary data collection employing case study methodology, most frequently described as a qualitative methodological approach. “Case study can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining” (Tellis, 1997, p.3). Cavazzani and Moseley (2001) speak to the suitability of
the case approach for partnership research, “Employing multiple sources of evidence to investigate a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. It does so in a holistic fashion, focusing on people and events. The case study has no influence or control over the subjects in the study but rather seeks to understand their identity and uniqueness” (p.16). The case study identified earlier as ‘The Ontario Rural Council’ incorporated various research methods including interviews of key informants, and the analysis of existing data including relevant documents such as the minutes of various meetings, business plans, and funding proposals. This approach included three of the four main qualitative data collection procedures (Creswell, 1994).

The case detailed in this research was the Ontario Rural Council, formed in 1998, “with a mandate to act as a catalyst for rural dialogue, collaboration and action. TORC creates a forum – a multi-sector, multi-level association - whose members share a commitment to rural development. TORC provided a unique and important opportunity for multi-sector cooperation within the rural sector.” TORC was a legally incorporated, partnership based organization, whose members were organizations and individuals. Through it’s involvement in networking, project activities and as a forum for discussion and consultation, TORC was over the years, significantly and fundamentally involved in the governance of rural Ontario.

1.8 Delimitations

As outlined, primary data collection employed a case study methodology. The Ontario Rural Council was selected as the case study because of its unique organizational structure which facilitated partnerships on two levels; the partnerships of the association i.e. the partnerships that formed the organization itself (also called membership), and the partnerships that the
organization then formed with others (both internal and external partners) to undertake work in the community. Given the dual level, multi-sectoral nature of the TORC partnership(s), this case represented a range of partnership experience. Once the draft case was completed\(^6\), it was shared with key informants as well as a leader in another partnership based organization.

1.9 Limitations of the Research

Limitations of this research center on my desire to have done more interviews, more additional document review and more analysis. I believe however that this desire is not unique among graduate students, and is in fact common in those that are involved with research as a profession. Having acknowledged this limitation I believe that I was ultimately successful in conducting exploratory research that initiated the development of a working theory of partnerships. The surfacing of potential barriers and facilitating factors through the telling of one organization’s story, exposes “data” that is rich and draws from the experience of a host of member partners, many with their own substantive backgrounds in partnering.

1.10 Summary

Partnerships have become a popular approach to governance for many reasons. As the body of literature has grown however, so also has evidence that the partnership approach is not always good for all parties and that this approach frequently sacrifices the ability to plan for the long term to the detriment of both participating organizations and rural governance goals. While some excellent, on-point examples of research and resources exist; for example, the

\(^6\) Chapter 4 is the main case and was shared with several key informants.
‘Partnerships for Rural Integrated Development in Europe’ (PRIDE) European research project, which has made a significant contribution to the understanding of partnership practice in rural Western Europe (Cavazzani & Moseley, 2001), there are still, however, few Canadian resources and research on partnerships from which to gain insight. After more than two decades of partnership practice many questions remain, including the one that has been central to this research; “What are the current operational realities that facilitate, or serve as barriers to effective partnerships practice in Canadian rural organizations; why are these occurring, and how are these operational realities impacting both the organizations themselves, and the multi-organizational practice of partnerships? Ideally this work has begun the process of exploration necessary for the development of a working theory\(^7\) of partnerships within a Canadian context, the findings of which I hope will provide some insight regarding facilitating factors and barriers for those interested in advancing\(^8\) the practice of partnerships.

\(^7\) A working theory is conceptual scaffolding, that if located on a scale would be somewhere between untested conjecture and what is known as ‘evidence based theory.’

\(^8\) Practically and theoretically
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, since beginning this research the public’s interest in the practice of partnerships has grown significantly as has the body of literature which records its emergence, growth and development. As a result there are now many ways to approach this task of informing an understanding of current theory and practice. I have chosen several lines of inquiry that in my assessment provide fundamental context to thinking about partnerships beginning with a discussion and clarification of terminology, of which two notable examples are ‘governance and partnership’.

This chapter will continue the exploration of the economic, political and social environments which gave rise to and continue to facilitate the practice of partnerships. While Chapter One focused on context from the perspective of the national, Canadian story, Chapter Two will continue the discussion with an exploration of how the broader process of globalization has supported a neoliberal agenda intent on reducing and changing the role of government, both here and abroad. The review will continue with the subsequent impact of restructuring on the Canadian rural economy and the Canadian and global social safety nets, as well as the various tools such as privatization and public-private partnerships currently being used to mitigate risk and service decline⁹.

The balance of the review will focus on assessment of selected conceptual work on partnerships and partnership typologies through a description of the development of an analytic tool which has been used to qualify or categorize the case study, the Ontario Rural

__________________________

⁹ Chapter Four completes historical context setting with the local Ontario story.
Council as a partnership. In conclusion I will propose a chronology of endogenous development processes as having provided the philosophical foundation of the partnership approach in rural areas. This chapter will also describe some real life applications of the partnership approach to rural development initiatives as well as other examples of partnership practice, domestic and international as articulated through the literature.

2.1 Governance Now

Popularization of the term ‘governance’ has resulted in what some would call conceptual ambiguity. As a result, it seems wise to begin this chapter with a clarification of its meaning and use within the context of this thesis.

According to Plumptre and Graham (1999, p.8) governance as a concept has relevance in three distinct spheres.

*Global governance, deals with issues outside the* direct influence of national governments [generally incorporating the activities of supranational organizations]…. *Governance in national space i.e. within a country. This is sometimes understood to be the exclusive preserve of government of which there may be several levels: [national, provincial, and municipal] but particularly at the community level, governance is concerned with how other actors, such a civil society organizations, may take a role in taking decisions on matters of public concern. Of incorporated and non-incorporated organizations that are usually accountable to a board of directors.*

While it is not difficult to imagine that the spheres delineated are not as distinct in practice as they are in theory, the context within which I will be using the term governance is that of the nation-state and the interaction between various levels of government and civil society further articulated by Rosenau and Czempiel (1992):
Governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance. Governance, in other words, is a more encompassing phenomenon than government. It embraces governmental institutions, but it also subsumes informal, non-governmental mechanisms whereby those persons and organizations within its purview move ahead, satisfy their needs and fulfill their wants (p.4).

Clearly the use of the term governance has changed over the last decades. Where traditional use and definitions of governance refer to the act of governing or the exercise of authority, in most contexts referring to the state (Plumptre & Graham, 1999), current use of the term is broader, incorporating a modification of governing relationships: “from state sponsorship of economic and social programs and projects, to the delivery of these through partnership arrangements which usually involve both governmental and nongovernmental organizations (Murdoch & Abram, 1998, p.41).”

2.2 Globalization as Context for the Transition from Government to Governance

Although the context within which we commonly discuss and understand ‘partnerships’ is a local one, this local context is only a part of the broader social, political and economic circumstances which created, and then facilitated partnership practice, normally identified as the process of globalization.

The concept of globalization is highly contested; its very existence is still in some quarters the subject of debate. There are also varying interpretations of the process, but in this case I will begin the discussion with a brief description of economic globalization which is understood to have driven the restructuring process exhibiting itself in the phenomenon of governance among others. Many authors (Smith and Wolfish, 2001; Clarkson, 2001;
Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992) identify the process of dismantling the welfare state\textsuperscript{10} as occurring in concurrence to and in fact being one of the principle conditions for the evolution of globalization. “Welfare state structures of the developed post war societies were and remain a critical variable for the timing, the form and the content of globalization” (Rieger & Leibfried, 2003, p.7). According to Rieger and Leibfried (2003), “The deregulation of the economy and trade which paved the way for globalization was a reaction to the conditions in which a highly regulated economy was no longer able to fulfill its promise of prosperity. Deregulation was an attempt to find an answer to the failure of regulatory welfare state politics (p.28).” Herman Daly’s (1999) definition provides an excellent summary of economic globalization: “Globalization refers to global economic integration of many formerly national economies into one global economy, mainly by free trade and free capital mobility, but also by easy and uncontrolled migration. It is the effective erasure of national boundaries for economic purposes (p.31).” The economic framing of the debate about globalization is so pervasive that it begs the question: Is globalization purely an economic trend? Many believe it is not that simple and Anthony Giddens (2002) is one author that sees globalization as a more profound and complex phenomenon: “I would have no hesitation, therefore, in saying that globalization as we are experiencing it is in many respects not only new, but also revolutionary. Globalization is political, technological and cultural as well as economic. It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back only to the late 1960s (p.10).” Giddens identification of the power of communication as being foundational in the evolution of globalization is a position that is

\textsuperscript{10}The Canadian story of rescaling the welfare state is summarized in Chapter One.

2.2.1 Globalization and Privatization

Accepting Giddens’s (2002) conclusion that globalization has implications for more than the economy, establishes a societal and academic imperative that we understand the “how and what.” That is, how economic processes or trends that comprise globalization also have political and social implications, and what those political and social implications are.

Privatization is one example of a process that has not only economic but also social implications. “To enable markets through privatization, deregulation, decentralization and economic adjustment is now common priority among national governments” (Miraftab, 2004, p.90) Although privatization is most often associated with resource based business like mining or power generation, it has also been applied to many assets, such as land, roads, and even water rights. Recent examples of water rights privatization include high-profile cases in both Latin America and Africa. The fundamental neo-liberal rationale for privatization is founded on the belief that the state is ill-equipped to run business enterprises as it lacks the primary motivation of good enterprises: profit. As a result say proponents, the state has little reason to care about effective management and corporate governance.

According to Estrin (2002) state-owned firms accounted for more than ten per cent of GDP in many of the leading OECD economies. Today that number is drastically reduced, in large
part because of failed experiments with alternative governance mechanisms in state-owned enterprises. These experiments led to what is now a dominating neoliberal view: “that continued deficiencies in productivity, and innovation can best be addressed through privatization” (Estrin, 2002, p.) Conservative governments have made services such as health, sanitation, and education the subject of privatization efforts, with varying results up to and including discussion about privatization of social security in the United States (Feldstein, 1997). According to Feldstein (1997), a neoliberal in his own right, “Raising future tax rates even further to pay for the [social security] benefits embodied in current law would do great damage to the American and European economies” (p. 25).

The ‘success’ of privatization efforts according to proponents of privatization, of which Feldstein is just one example, supports their conviction that privatization of services, formerly having been the purview of the state, is a natural progression of the free market model (Estrin, 2002). Associated with this conviction is the argument that comprehensive welfare is not viable in a global economy where capital can pick and choose its location at will (Jenson, 2004). This neoliberal perspective on comprehensive welfare, has over the last decades formed a fundamental part of the world view that has defended, and later justified the transformation of the role of the state.

2.2.2 Globalization and the Transformation of the Role of the State

For many however the transformation of the role of the state that has occurred as a result of a deregulation of the economy and trade is one of the fundamental issues of globalization. Bauer and Le Prestre (2001) discuss the transformation of the state as a result of globalization: “This new situation forces states to give preference to the economic dimension
of their activities and to redefine the national interest in terms of the interest of multinational corporations (p.31).” Bauer and Le Prestre (2001) expand their thinking with this statement, “Judged increasingly by the yardstick of its economic power, the state is presented as being caught in the meshes of the world monetary establishment-as subject to the rules of the marketplace and therefore to strict limitations on its activities (p.32).” 11 “As a consequence of a more sophisticated, less state-centred global political order, the state’s traditional functions have been redistributed ‘up’ to the supranational level, ‘down’ to lower- and upper-level state institutions and ‘across’ to the market” (Klein, 1998; May, 1998; Strange, 1996 as cited in Yeats, 2001, p.11). Thus compliance with international global markets and standards such as those imposed by NAFTA, WTO and others, as well as internal political and cultural pressures, appear to have changed the role of government from the welfare state ‘pervasive provider’ to one of mediator and coordinator.

Rodal and Mulder (1993, p.27) have a more charitable interpretation however. They say that citizens evolving expectations of government have led to an urgent requirement that we rethink the normal role and functions of government; a situation that poses two key challenges.

The first is for government to learn how to significantly increase efficiency and effectiveness – to operate with fewer resources while maintaining or improving the quality of service. The second challenge is for government to learn how to work with growing public demands and

11 Bauer and Le Prestre (2001,p.30) also discuss other dimensions and circumstances that have impacted and diminished the role of the state. “These include the large and diverse population movements that have affected host countries through immigration as well as the harmonization of standards such as ISO9000 and other international standards and regulations. Two more examples include the emergence of global environmental issues highlighting interdependence, as well as the proliferation and accessibility of information that makes control of the flow of information by the nation state a thing of the past.”
capacity for participation in the treatment and resolution of public issues, while retaining the power to act in the overall public interest. Meeting these challenges will require a significant transformation in the role of government—from implementation and provision of programs and services to facilitation, brokerage and partnership (Rodal & Mulder, 1993, p. 27).

The tasks associated with redefining the role of government described are clearly significant, raising many questions about the means by which government has achieved these goals in the past and more importantly how they plan to meet them in the foreseeable future given the stated challenges of fiscal restraint and increased requirements, and expectations for collaborative planning and decision making implicit in governance.

2.2.3 The State and Social Policy Formation

The role of the state has changed and those changes are wide ranging in scope. Of particular interest to this review are changes in one of the key roles of government, the formulation and implementation of social policy. For the purpose of further discussion, the term “social policy” is used in its broadest sense: “guiding principles for ways of life guided by basic and perceived human needs (Gil, 1990, p. 23).” As mentioned previously globalization has altered the state’s ability to formulate and implement social policy. This alteration has been due to a number of issues. First, capital mobility makes even the regulation and taxation of corporations difficult, let alone the development and implementation of comprehensive welfare programs. Developing an understanding and appreciation of the behaviour of bureaucrats and those who Jenson (2004) describes as policy intellectuals or producers of social knowledge for whom says Maxwell (2003) social policy making is dominated by policy maker’s own constructions of reality. Each will have an idea of what they believe about, or that to them represents the Canadian economy. This model will be embedded with
various underlying principles or values that relate to issues of globalization for example, or the health of the Canadian economy. Because these beliefs are part of their construction of reality, a policy or program that conflicts with their personal construction may well not be implemented. In this way the construction of reality is more powerful than the ‘actual’ reality. As a result of these factors, 1) capital mobility and, 2) perceptions of the global reality; political support (based largely on private sector or the market) for governments’ role as policy maker and implementer is declining (Yeats, 2001).

Overall the range of structurally viable strategic policy options available to governments is narrowed and individual governments are unable to affect the socio-economic outcomes they may desire or resist pressure to curtail activities that the market may not support (May, 1998 as cited in Yeats, 2001, p. 22).

Rarely acknowledged in the ‘mainstream’ literature are the challenges relating to cultivating an attractive environment for transnational corporations and the impact of steering away from re-distributive welfare policies which (Yeats, 2001) calls the “race to the bottom.” “Social dumping, as it is also known, incorporates both the erosion of established levels of social protection as well as the arrested development of social protection and regulation […] Social security dumping refers to the restructuring of provisions from universalism and social insurance and social safety nets – by shifting the burden of financing, thus making it easier for firms to by-pass obligations” (Yeats, 2001, p. 25; Deacon, 2000). Judith Maxwell (2003) calls this the “individualization of risk.” According to Maxwell (2003):

As markets have gained in importance and government policies have retrenched, families and individuals have become exposed to more risk, and the systems for
sharing risk have been weakened or simply failed to adapt to changing circumstances. These risks tend to be cumulative over a lifetime Maxwell (p.3).

While the relationships are not always immediately visible, close analysis reveals the social and political implications of what could appear to be a decision with strictly economic implications. In this example questions arising from issues and assumptions associated with privatization highlight changes in the role of the state, and why for many, the transformation of the role of the state that has occurred as a result of deregulation of the economy, trade and privatization is one of the most costly and negative impacts of globalization processes.

2.2.4 Globalization and Decentralization

Other processes generated by the economic imperative of globalization, which also have political and social impacts include that of decentralization, in this example manifesting in regionalism. Anthony Giddens (2002) expands on regionalism as a byproduct of globalization:

Most people think of globalization as simply “pulling away” power and influence from local communities and nations into the global arena. And indeed this is one of its consequences. Nations do lose some of the economic power they once had. Yet it also has an opposite effect. Globalization not only pulls upward, but pushes downward, creating new pressures for local autonomy. Globalization also squeezes sideways. It creates new economic and cultural zones within and across nations.

12 Jane Jenson (2004) builds on Maxwell’s work and develops the case for a new social model. In this work she discusses the ‘new social knowledge’ that should be informing policy decisions in the 21st century. This knowledge reveals that socio-economic patterns are profoundly different from what they were in the post-1945 decades. New policy challenges exist arising from five key areas of structural change including: an ageing society, new family structures, an increasingly diverse immigrant society, the situation of indigenous people, and finally labour market issues such as income vulnerability and inequity and the increased labour force participation of women. These changes [along with those of globalization] drive the need for a new social model based on among other things, choices about the mix of welfare and governance arrangements (Jenson, 2004, p.).
Examples are the Hong Kong region, Northern Italy and Silicon Valley in California (p.13).

There are many examples of regionalization, particularly in Europe. One of the best known regions is Catalonia, the capital of which is Barcelona. Both city and province are active participants in the EU and in EU programming\(^\text{13}\), developing their own political and economic agenda as an (almost) independent region of Spain (Giddens, 2002). This example is just one of many in Europe, which over the centuries has been more regionally oriented than nationally, a situation which in addition to religious wars, has caused much bloodshed. The fact that the region of Catalonia is able to integrated into the EU with its own political agenda establishes it as being part of the process of Europeanization.

Europeanization is “a particular kind or example of change which is evident through what might be termed ‘the EU effect’. That is, change that would not have happened, or would not have happened in the way it has, if it were not for the existence of arrangements and relationships consequent upon the establishment and development of the EU” (Burch et al, 2003 p.1). Europeanization is what some authors (Caporaso, 2003) might define as the leading edge of globalization.

The rationale for decentralization and centralization are also, not surprisingly, strongly rooted in economics. According to Garrett and Rodden (2003), the “benefits of decentralization are positively correlated with the (geographic) variance in the demands for publicly provided goods” (p.91). In other words, the more diverse a population, the more likely it is that decentralized government will develop compatible political and economic programming.

\(^\text{13}\) The EU Currently has a Committee of the Regions with membership from almost every EU member.
Although national governments frequently prefer centralization, investors prefer decentralization as it forces government to compete for mobile capital. Last but by no means least, the process of decentralization is viewed positively by the World Bank and the IMF, a situation which creates an additional demand for decentralization. This demand frequently becomes actualized, particularly in developing countries that often need the assistance of what some have come to regard as economic dictators.

Many citizens and municipalities believe that decentralization is accompanied by more autonomy. While this is generally true, the state does not as a rule increase financial resources to a devolved region. According to Garrett and Rodden (2003), “the process (of regionalization) more likely leads to a centralization of public expenditure and taxation, while simultaneously enhancing the political autonomy and discretion of sub-national officials” (p.92). This push-pull between region and sub-national officials is mitigated somewhat by the fact that 1) globalization increases aggregate risk, 2) centralization is better suited for inter-regional risk-sharing. Centralization and the risk management function that accompanies larger agglomerations provides a stabilization function. However in addition to risk management central authorities also control the financial resources of these regions; distributing, redistributing, and from time to time providing additional funds.

### 2.3 Public Private Partnerships

In addition to the processes of privatization, and decentralization, public-private partnerships (P3) have served as a tool by which government has enabled the market, and some say also community (Miraftab, 2004, p.90). Definitions of P3 relationships vary from a Canadian born (2003) version. “A public private partnership is a legally binding contract between
government and business for the provision of assets and the delivery of services that allocates responsibilities and business risks among the various partners,” to the other end of the spectrum where a French interpretation (Sadran, 2004, p.235) is broader “it becomes difficult to conceptualize this polymorphous reality”. As written this statement could open the door to any kind of partner and project, and at the very least certainly illustrates what Sadran (2004) calls the “French exception”.

What appears consistent in the discourse about P3s is that P3s are a government sanctioned tool for the delivery of both infrastructure and services, and that governments in particular are using them as an alternative to traditional procurement and delivery methods that concentrate both control and risks in the hands of the public sector (Government of Canada, 2004). Within the P3 literature, consistency in any other issue such as the kind and number of partners is not apparent, however the stated benefits of P3 projects focus on the resolution of what government sees as three significant challenges: 1) they increase access to capital funds; 2) they are generally able to implement a project faster thereby improving access time for the public; 3) and they provide cost savings through efficiencies (Rodal & Mulder, 1993)

The positive story reflected in literature generated by the public sector seems well substantiated. This story is not however the only account of P3 implementation and the alternative perspective illustrates that the net benefits of P3s are still subject to uncertainty and debate (Hodge, 2004).

Again, the issue of risk appears to be of primary concern to government, the private sector and others. In the case of most P3’s, risk categories include finance, construction, operation and ownership (Hodge, 2004). In the traditional notion of the P3 model, risk is transferred to
the private sector in return for the opportunity to profit; in fact they are expected to profit
from these activities. Stories about real projects however convey the experience of P3’s in a
very different light. This contradictory perspective includes the following assertions: 1)
associated accounting practices being misleading from Australia and the United Kingdom; 2)
financing and leasing arrangements as more expensive and wasteful from the United States
and Denmark; 3) private sector partners “screwing the public” also from the United Kingdom
(Hodge, 2004). Given the complexity of P3 contracts, there is limited opportunity for public
participation, transparency and accountability. As such the issue of transparency in
governance is a very real concern given that “with contracts of up to several decades in
duration, governments now entering these arrangements may be reducing the capacity and
flexibility of the Crown to make future decisions in the public interest” (Hodge, 2004, p.38).

In Canada P3s have become a staple to the extent that the federal government,
British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec have developed policy initiatives to support their use
(Government of Canada, 2003). Over time P3s have come to be seen as one obvious vehicle
through which service and infrastructure gaps in rural and northern communities can be
addressed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Remote-North</th>
<th>First Nation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water/wastewater</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Dev</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information/technology, innovation, forestry and fisheries

**Table 1: Summary of P3 Identified Projects (Government of Canada, 2003, p.3)**

While a certain level of capacity must already exist within a community to facilitate such projects, one cannot help but assume that with these projects also comes opportunities to develop capacity. Recent data regarding P3s is, however, difficult to find, a situation which raises some questions regarding the framing of the relationship and perhaps even the voracity of the delivery mechanism over time. Has cumulative experience tipped the scales toward more viable delivery mechanisms, or realizing at best its marginal status as a partnership, no longer calls it a partnership?

2.4 **Global Governance**

The final manifestation of the redistribution of traditional functions of the state has been the emergence of “global governance.” Smith and Wolfish (2001) describe global governance as
follows: “Many policy makers and scholars now believe that we have entered a new period in world politics in which there are multiple centers of power and authority (p.4).” In other words, global governance refers to various processes through which rules are created in political spaces that lack central authority. Some commentators, such as Hewson and Sinclair (1999), claim that global governance has been created in the fields of security, development, human rights, and the environment.

More relevant to this exploration on ‘partnerships’ however, is the manifestation of this redistribution of the states traditional functions to the local or community level. In literature related to rural places this has also been expressed as ‘a shift from government to governance’ and refers to, “a shift from the state sponsorship of economic and social programs and projects, to the delivery of these through the partnership arrangements which usually involve both governmental and nongovernmental organizations working together (Stoker, 1997a, p.1) in non-hierarchical and flexible alliances often characterized as networks (Rhodes, 1995). The emergence of alliances as key mechanisms of local governance ensures the inclusion of new partners in the delivery of policies and services “(Murdoch & Abram, 1998, p.41).

According to Rosenau and Czempiel (1992):

Governance is not synonymous with government. Both refer to purposeful behaviour, to goal oriented activities, to systems of rule; but government suggests activities that are backed by formal authority: by police powers to insure the implementation of duly constituted policies, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities that do not necessarily rely on police powers to obtain compliance (p.4)
Understanding dimensions of governance requires that we understand and identify the location(s) of authority. When authority is highly centralized, it is vested in a single hierarchical entity such as used to be the case with the state; or authority can be widely dispersed among individual actors, each with limited jurisdiction (Kahler & Lake, 2003). In defining governance, Goodwin (1998) echoes Murdoch and Abram in emphasizing issues of organization as he quotes Jessop (1995): “the term governance signals a shift to a broad concern with a wide range of governance mechanisms with no presumption that these are anchored primarily in the sovereign state” (p.7). Goodwin also, however, begins to get at issues of power and control as he discusses the “policy world” that is now made up of diverse, overlapping, integrated networks often operating beyond the effective control of formal structures of government. It is within this context that he quotes Stoker (1997), who says that “government is not just changing its tools, [and its role], it is changing its meaning” (p.5).

How has government changed its meaning? Goodwin’s (1998) answer summarizes the previous pages; he claims that it has done so through enmeshed processes that on mass called to question traditional means of governing. The first of these processes is the crisis of the post-war Keynesian welfare state discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. The second process is the emergence of the [no longer] new right ideology. “In Britain, its liberal and conservative adherents combined to produce a politically effective critique of state activity.... Once in power, however, the ideology turned from a rolling back of the state to a search for new forms of intervention and control. These often centred on what could be termed “government at a distance.” Very similar processes occurred in Canada, as detailed in
Stewart’s (1998) work. In response to the first two, Godwin’s third process has been the incorporation of the local, the community activists who in response to their community plans and government imperatives have taken up the challenge of partnership development, and in so doing have changed the face of government and the process of governance.

2.5 Conceptions of Networks and Partnerships

The concept of ‘networks’ is the broadest and most amorphous expression of a relational framework that is related to partnerships provided in this literature review. Manuel Castells author of the Rise of the Network Society is perhaps the best-known proponent of networks of organization, reducing the concept of ‘network’ to the flow of communication and information largely through the medium of advanced telecommunications systems and predominately within the realm of the international business economy. His work serves as a reference point for many authors who explore the concept of networks and as a result his work is included in this literature review. According to Castells (2000), “the informational global economy is organized around command and control centers able to coordinate, innovate and manage the intertwined activities of networks of firms. Complex, value added services including finance and marketing can all be reduced to knowledge generation and information flows” (p.409). Also according to Castells (2000), “as the global economy expands and incorporates new markets it also organizes the production of advanced services required to manage the new units joining the system and the conditions of the ever exchanging linkages” (p. 410).

Castells (2000) goes on to discuss the hierarchy in the network which is by no means stable or assured, dependent to a large extent on the ability of any city to become information based,
value production complexes which need not internalize workers and suppliers but can access them when they are required. This mandate requires flexibility, and that the network not be reliant on the agglomeration of a few metropolitan nodes. Castells does not make particular mention of rural, but his work does lead us to believe that the rural world lies far from the agglomeration of the metropolitan nodes or the organizing centers of these networks (Murdoch, 2000, p.408).

Others, however, have spent some time developing the concept of networks as a relational framework that has application to the rural. One such example is Murdoch’s (2000) concept of networks as a new paradigm of rural development. Murdoch (2000) states: “As sets of relations that can straddle diverse spaces, networks hold the promise of a more complex appreciation of ‘development’ than has traditionally been evident in state-centred versus market-led, or endogenous vs. exogenous models” (p.408).

According to Murdoch (2000), one example of vertical networks is commodity chains or food chains. Food chains represent a key aspect of the rural development agenda and focus on areas of standardization and industrial efficiency. These networks are controlled by powerful actors such as input suppliers. The result is that rural participants find their room for maneuvering limited to the production of standardized and generic commodities (Murdoch, 2000). Murdoch (2000) goes on to contrast vertical networks to horizontal networks of innovation and learning characterized by trust, flexibility and diversity. In his view, economic networks can emerge in these environments and are well suited for participation in the fast-changing global economy which places a premium on adaptation and innovation. In this sort of network, reciprocity is the key to success. However, Murdoch also
believes that horizontal networks are exceptions rather than the rule and often lead to uneven rural development (p.415).

Gilchrist (2000) summarizes this discussion by emphasizing the importance of networking in communities:

Networking is a normal aspect of human activity… It is a vital means of survival when access to resources is unpredictable or restricted. Networking is skilled and strategic. It involves a chameleon-like ability to adopt a range of different guises, drawing on local and expert knowledge…As an area of community development competence, the ability to network is as important as organizing or managing (p.271).

What is the relationship between a network and a partnership? Partnerships are the physical manifestation of the network; individual partnerships comprise a network. Each partnership (Murdoch, 2000) is dynamic, active, and based on social relationships. These social relationships are widely described as being based on trust and reciprocity (Frank & Smith, 2000; Miller & Ahmad, 2000; Moseley, 2003). Although this congruency is rare in the literature, agreement on a definition of the term partnership remains elusive.

### 2.6 Partnership Typologies

The next section of the review will focus on the literature used to develop the analytic tool or framework with which TORC qualified as a partnership. Qualification is an important step in the research process and relatively straightforward when such a tool is available. In the absence of a framework for analysis researchers must develop their own, a process which takes some creativity and knowledge of the literature. For example, during the literature review process it became clear that there are many different ways of thinking about, as well
as frameworks (typologies) for assessing and classifying partnership practice. Typologies vary in emphasis but as a rule focus on one dimension of the relationship. As a result typologies frequently appear inadequate to the task of classifying what are multi-dimensional relationships. This weakness in the analysis of partnerships significantly limits the usefulness of these conceptual frameworks, both theoretically and practically, leaving us with an important question. Can the dilemma of the single dimension typology be mitigated?

I believe that there are two options for mitigation; 1) develop a totally new typology, an option that creates a typology which is then open to the same weaknesses as existing ones, or, 2) adapt more than one typology to measure the dimensions of interest. The second choice gives a broader perspective of partnerships than has been the case to date and also may well provide a multi-dimensional perspective.

### 2.7 An Analytic Tool for Assessing Partnership Status

The process of developing an analytic tool to qualify the partnership as a partnership, began with the choice of a guiding definition. The definition of rural development partnerships developed by the Partnerships for Rural Integrated Development in Europe (2003) provided the anchor for the process of assessment. Moseley’s (2003) definition of a partnership is as follows:

> A voluntary alliance of organizations from at least two societal sectors (state, or public sector, private companies, civil associations) with a clear organization structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project, and which show an integrated approach to the promotion of the development of rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants (p.xvi).
Using this definition as a conceptual framework and guide, I identified four dimensions-qualities of interest and importance in partnerships. These were:

1. A *voluntary dimension* which acknowledges the importance of the non-coerced nature of the relationship, requiring that it be entered into willingly.

2. The *temporal dimension* which recognized the importance of the duration of the relationship requiring that it be of more than a single project in length and that a partnership have on-going and long-term activities or projects together.

3. The *dimension of composition* which identified the importance of cross-sectoral membership and requiring that the partnership involve organizations from at least two sectors i.e. public, private, not-for profit organizations etc.

4. The *dimension of purpose* which acknowledged the importance of a common objective in a partnership requiring that the work be toward the promotion of rural development but in this case study the work goal is less specific; the facilitation of dialogue.

Further research identified four typologies which correlated to the selected dimensions of interest and during which process two additional dimensions of interest were identified. They were:

5. The dimension of *process* which recognized that the process with which partners in a partnership work together, communicate and make decisions in large part defines that character of that partnership.

6. The dimension of *method of change* which identified the importance of how the partnership engages to effect change in the community. Some examples of method of engagement are, working through public education processes or through social marketing.
2.7.1 Composition
The first typology is based on the dimension of member composition and is from the work of Moore and Koontz (2003). This is the simplest of the four and is derived from the authors’ work in the environmental sector. The purpose of their work was to establish if noteworthy differences existed when groups were classified into categories, based on the composition of the membership i.e. private and government stakeholder membership (Moore & Koontz, 2003, p. 454). They identified three kinds of partnerships: “(1) primarily composed of private citizens, (2) primarily composed of public representatives or, (3) composed of an equal mix of public and private representatives. We label these types as citizen based, agency based, and mixed respectively” (Moore & Koontz, 2003, p. 454).

2.7.2 Purpose
The second typology is based on the dimension of purpose of the partnership, was also developed in the environmental sector, and documented by Long and Arnold (1995, p.61).

Preemptive Partnerships are relatively rare, focused as they are on situations and partners that already have a track record of hostility or are already antagonistic and that are of significant concern to group members. These situations or projects are usually embarked on as a means to test the relationship and resolve conflict.

Coalescing Partnerships are similar to leverage partnerships as each partner recognizes the importance of the contributions of the others, and the competitive nature of their relationship outside the partnership. Control of the project tends to be an issue in these relationships.
Exploration Partnerships are generally formed around a new or emerging issue that is of interest to a significant number of the partnership. Each is an expert in a part of the project and as such the partners have frequently never met.

Leverage Partnerships are about economic necessity and as such are the most opportunistic. Within this kind of partnership the partners are in it strictly for the expedient solution to a problem that is not a core concern.

### 2.7.3 Process

The third typology is based on the dimension of process and a synthesis of typologies, predominantly those of Rodal and Mulder (1993) and Frank and Smith (2000). Rodal and Mulder (1993) have a public sector perspective and Frank and Smith (2000) are third sector members.

Consultative or advisory partnerships (Rodal & Mulder, 1993, p. 36) involve a membership of public, third sector or other groups to give or receive input, from either the public or stakeholders around a proposed change or planned policies. This sort of partnership is frequently initiated by government but is a practice that has been adopted by others as well. Advisory boards are good examples of this kind of partnership. In this sort of partnership the convening party usually retains control of the relationship.

Contributory or support sharing partnerships (Rodal & Mulder, 1993, p. 36) are developed to benefit the work of a particular community or community organization; however, because raising funds is a common reason for these relationships the founders as a rule set the objectives and the “new partners” then must agree with the objectives or not join.
Leveraging new resources through the use of “in-kind” contributions is a common reason for the formation of these partnerships.

Operational partnerships (Rodal & Mulder, 1993, p. 36) are formed to set the strategic direction for an initiative, product or service; however, the operational implementation is undertaken by one partner. In these partnerships effort and resources are shared but not necessarily decision-making power as this responsibility is most often kept by the managing partner.

Collaborative or decision-making partnerships (Rodal & Mulder, 1993, p. 36) are the quintessential form of a partnership relationship. Ideally in addition to sharing operational responsibility they also share the decision making. The goal of such partnerships is that the resources, risks and power are allocated as equally as possible. Community based and driven partnerships often strive for this kind of partnership relationship.

2.7.4 Primary Method of Change
The fourth typology is based on the dimension of primary method of change, from the work of Torjman (1998, p.5). This work is heavily influenced by a “traditional social services” point of view and concentrates on the participation of both private sector and non-profit community groups the in the development of partnerships to promote economic and social wellbeing. Torjman (1998) identifies four key kinds of partnerships; the first of which is a “public education partnerships refer to strategic alliances between groups or organizations that seek to raise awareness around a social, economic or environmental concern” (p.7). Here raising awareness is the primary goal.
Social marketing partnerships are closely related to public education partnerships but are specific about the membership composition of the partnership. In this case it refers to a relationship in which business chooses to endorse a social cause and in so doing contributes to its marketing strategy. Here again the primary goal is awareness raising and for the social concern, fund raising. Torjman (1998) says this is a common form of partnership in the field of health.

The potential for community investment partnerships occur when the private sector and/or public sector make a substantial contribution to the community through involvement with a community benefit organization which focuses on a specific cause. This contribution is generally not limited to money, rather the partners engage together in activities that benefit the community or in-kind activities.

Social, economic or environmental change partnerships occur when business, the public sector and non-profit groups engage actively in making social change. “These partnerships provide an important community service or tackle difficult problems such as family violence, unemployment or poverty”(Torjman, 1998, p.9). Contributions of the partners must involve both time and effort.

**2.7.5 Time**

While there is some discussion among authors about whether a partnership constituted for a single project is actually a partnership, the debate raises the dimension of *time or age of the partnership* in typifying partnerships. Some believe that partnerships can be ad hoc and
temporary. Others, like Moseley (2003), believe that a partnership has “on-going long-term activities that include more than one project” (p. xvi).

In combination these individual partnership typologies make a robust framework for the analysis of multidimensional partnership relationships. The use of this framework, a process explored in greater detail in chapter three, was integral to qualifying TORC as a partnership.

2.8 Endogenous Development and Partnerships

Clearly the new governance paradigm and resultant partnership relationships is a thread that is woven throughout recent thinking about economic and social policy and while not explicit in early theories of endogenous development process, is clearly stated in recent thinking. According to Esparcia, Moseley, and Noguera, (2000), “Philosophical underpinnings of the partnership approach to rural development include the belief that endogenous development processes, fostering the active involvement of local residents is the only way to achieve long term sustainable development (p.17).” Endogenous development approaches were developed in response to “the concept and practice of development in their usual forms…Awareness of the deficiencies of the existing development models which emphasize economic measures, productivity and technical considerations to the detriment of real human and social needs and the aspirations of the populations” (Cao Tri, Thanh Khoi, Colin, & Yuan-zheng, 1986, p.3). This early account of UNESCO’s search for an endogenous development blueprint makes no mention of partnerships as a means to promote endogenous development. Instead, effort is spent developing knowledge transfer through social communication and the mass media as facilitators and vectors of development. Ziemilski (Ribes, Ziemilski & Gutelman, 1981), also sponsored by UNESCO, is another example of the use of knowledge transfer as a primary
means to endogenous development. Very little time is however spent on how that knowledge sharing is facilitated except with a very brief reference to social learning processes. Later work (Pichierri, 1994) sees the concept of partnerships beginning to emerge, originally expressed as the application of worker’s networks which could be used to facilitate endogenous development in Italy;

Endogenous development is to be understood as local development, produced mainly by local impulses and grounded largely on local resources. In Emilia-Romagna it is clear that the variety of endogenous developments that have taken place critically depended on 1) the importance of the agricultural sector for the provision of the capital and manpower needed to create non-agricultural enterprises 2) the ability of rural workers to extend their skills, networks and management capacities towards new fields and arenas. And 3) the desire for self employment (Pichierri, 1994, p.196)

Pichierri, (1994) elaborates on the (Italian) regional economic framework that resulted from endogenous development processes, consisting of an extensive network of small and medium sized businesses, as well as enmeshed economic sectors and sub-sectors contained within the regional economy. These linkages extend to regional and local enterprise sectors.

Haverkort, van’Hooft & Hiemstra (2002) definition of endogenous development is the most clearly connected to partnerships, both in terms of process and as a mechanism for development; “Endogenous development in contrast aims at local control and decision making, and implies that members of the communities use their own mechanisms to make decisions regarding control. Traditional authorities play an important role in this process, while the community itself manages internal power conflicts, and comes to grips with gender balances and leadership systems. Acceptance or rejection of external support and practices
will be a decision of the community”. In further discussion of processes that support endogenous development a key factor in their opinion is “networking and strategic partnerships.” According to Haverkort et al., p.35) “endogenous development acknowledges the importance of linking regional, national and international processes, while looking for synergy between different knowledge systems and practices.” They go on to highlight that regardless of local efforts, sometimes options for local development are stalled for political reasons. Having said that lobbying and networking when used judiciously can often turn the tide toward local initiatives. Through this discussion Haverkort et al., firmly establishes the role of partnerships as critical to the facilitation of endogenous development.

2.9 Examples of the Partnership Approach to Local Economic Development and Rural Development

The partnership approach has also become a significant vector for the achievement of rural development goals across rural Europe. According to Westholm, Moseley and Stenlas (1999), “While the partnership approach was introduced and established in the 1980’s in the UK and in Ireland, it is (still at the time of writing) something of a novelty in the Nordic countries and in southern Europe. There are considerable variations between the member states [EU] in the emergence, operation and impact of partnerships”(p.16).

An example of a European rural development partnership program frequently mentioned in the literature is LEADER (Liaison entre actions de developpment de l’économie rurale) (Westholm et al., 1999). LEADER was launched in 1991, largely as a result of what was perceived as the unsatisfactory exogenous rural development programming of the 1980’s,
and funded through structural funds (EAGGF).\textsuperscript{14} LEADER was introduced to improve economic and social unity and to equalize what had been identified as structural imbalances across the EU. The basic organizing principles of the LEADER program were; (1) the organization of a local partnership, a LAG (local action group) responsible for the definition and implementation of a local development plan or action plan; (2) an action plan must have several development projects that were locally developed by the LAG, (3) these projects must draw from across the “landscape”, i.e. economic, cultural etc. (4) action plans and resultant projects must have been financed by a combination of sponsors including national and supra-national levels. (5) knowledge exchange and mobilization activities were required (Fuller & Pletsch, 2003, Westholm, et al., 1999). LEADER had three, multi-year incarnations of which the third and final phase, LEADER plus, concluded operation in 2007 in all rural areas of all EU member states.

The defining feature of most European Union sponsored rural development programs is the existence of a formal institutional structure, (corporate structure), the membership of which is comprised of a range of public, private, voluntary and other community organizations. LEADER is one such example as are County Enterprise Boards in Ireland, PRODER\textsuperscript{15} in Spain, and Territorial Pacts in Italy (Westholm, et al., 1999).

In the United States various rural partnership programs exist. One example includes Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC). The EZ/EC is an endogenous

\textsuperscript{14} EAGGF stands for the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, one of the EU structural funds. These funds were established to address national and regional inequalities between EU member states.

\textsuperscript{15} The Spanish acronym for Development and Economic Diversification Operation
program with four guiding principles abbreviated as follows; (1) economic opportunity including employment and entrepreneurial training; (2) community based partnerships requiring the membership of local community benefit organizations, local government and others; (3) sustainable community development most broadly defined as holistic; (4) and strategic vision developed by the community. “These EZ/EC partnerships emphasize capacity building at the local level with the USDA and other federal agencies also providing technical assistance to ensure sustainability” (Fekade, 1999, p. 175). Another American example of a rural development program is the National Rural Development Program developed to promote interagency and private sector partnerships, again with the aim of facilitating bottom-up development programs. This program inspired TORC’s founders and is described in more detail in chapter three.

In Canada the only continuously operating example of partnerships for rural development is the Community Futures (CF) program evolving from almost two decades of “local employment development programming.” CF was announced in 1985 as a key way to assist stabilization and adjustment in those non-metropolitan areas most in need. In 1994 Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) were created to provide: 1) strategic community planning and implementation, 2) business services including counseling and 3) access to capital or investment funds. The program is administered by Industry Canada/FedNor and three regional development agencies (Fuller & Pletsch, 2003). In 2008 the program was granted universal coverage (to all rural areas in Canada) and funding extended indefinitely.

2.10 Summary

Interest in the practice of partnerships grown as has the body of literature which records its emergence, growth and development. As a means to explore what has become a significant body of work, several lines of inquiry that in my assessment provided fundamental context when thinking about partnerships were chosen. I began with discussion and clarification of terminology; governance and partnership.

This second chapter continued the exploration of the economic, political and social environments which gave rise to and continue to facilitate the practice of partnerships. While chapter one focused on context from the perspective of the national Canadian story, chapter two continued with an exploration of how the broader process of globalization has facilitated the neoliberal agenda by reducing the role of government both here and abroad; the subsequent impact on Canadian and global social safety nets, and the various tools such as privatization and public-private partnerships currently being used to mitigate risk and service decline.\(^{17}\)

The balance of the literature review focused for the most part an assessment of selected conceptual work on partnerships and partnership typologies. Conceptions of partnerships reviewed in this paper included networks, chains and partnerships and diverse iterations such as various kinds of collaborations. Some partnership typologies were also examined; cumulatively illustrating that there is a broad range of conceptions of the term ‘partnership.’

What was clear from this review is that current typologies focus on one dimension of multi-

\(^{17}\) Chapter Four completes historical context setting with the local Ontario story.
dimensional relationships. This chapter included a description of the development of an analytic framework; employing multiple typologies, which was then used to qualify the case study, the Ontario Rural Council as a partnership.

To conclude I presented a brief chronology of the endogenous development processes which I propose forms the philosophical foundation of the partnership approach to getting things done in rural areas. The literature reviewed illustrated that this foundation which acknowledges the importance of partnerships and networking, is one result of an evolution of thought regarding endogenous development. There also appears to be a connection between endogenous approaches and recent conceptions of governance. Finally I included some applications of the partnership approach to rural development; these initiatives including the EU’s LEADER, the United States EZ/EC and Canada’s CF program.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter chronicles my personal and academic search for an understanding of the practice of partnerships, within the Canadian rural context. The empirical component of this journey is mapped in some detail, forming the bulk of this chapter, but I will begin with a brief discussion of my personal perspective and prior knowledge of the case. A description of the qualitative approach, followed by an explanation of the development of an analytic tool for assessing partnership status and delimitations follow. The account of data collection and analysis, highlighting the use of interviewing as the primary method of data collection, and a discussion of the limitations of this research conclude the chapter.

3.1 Situating Self

Dupuis (1999) identifies three areas where she believes the influence of positivism has removed us from our research, these being:

Our failure to recognize the role that human selves play throughout the research process and how those selves subsequently shape our products: our failure to recognize and account for the role our emotions and personal experiences play in our research endeavors and our specific data collection and writing styles which tend to adhere more to positivist ideals regarding how scientific enquiry should be conducted and reported (p.44).

Dupuis’ analysis resonated with my already well established constructivist perspective. Constructivism holds that what we experience during our lifetime influences how we perceive the world, and so I begin this chapter with a brief description of how my interest in partnerships began and developed over time. I am proceeding on the assumption that this brief description will expose my personal perspectives, and give the reader insight into
potential influences that as a result of these life experiences I may have brought to this research. According to Stanley and Wise (1983); “We see the researcher’s self as central in all research. Ones self cannot be left behind, it can only be omitted from the discussion and written accounts of the research process (p.262).”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: My contact with TORC**

Table 2 displays my involvement with TORC over the years 1998-2009. My role in this relationship had various incarnations; 1) that of member-partner; 2) that of consultant; and 3) and most significantly in my mind, that of researcher. Clearly this involvement has been extensive and included activities associated with consulting in addition to those associated with being a council member, outlined in detail in Chapter Four. This prolonged contact and familiarity developed into a rich understanding of TORC and its concerns, both the organization and the people of which the partnership was composed. As a result I knew many of the key informants prior to the interview(s) and I believe that they shared significantly more with me than might have been the case if the researcher had been from ‘outside.’ This experience has without a doubt informed my thinking not only about TORC, but also about organizational development issues in rural organizations generally and the systems that sustain them.
My interest in partnerships and partnership practice developed as a result of an employment situation. I had just completed a graduate degree and went (blithely or blindly on, depending on your perspective), to begin a position as the Executive Director (ED) of the Ontario Agricultural Training Institute (OATI). This job served as my introduction to Ontario’s rural sector and my advanced training in not-for-profit management.

OATI was created by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. This farm business management initiative was meant to distribute training dollars directly to the agricultural and rural sector, and in so doing bypassed the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Funded by AAFC for approximately a decade, OATI equivalents in every province were incorporated as non-profit organizations, created specifically for the purpose of administering the program, and oversaw the expenditure of millions dollars on capacity development, almost exclusively focused on farm business management. News of the program demise was received by the governing boards of each provincial organization in approximately 1999, which was the beginning of the third, three year contract period, I started work as the ED in the middle of year two of the last contract period. It did not take long for me to get a sense of the enormity of the task, nor did it take long for me to learn a few fundamental truths that continue to be useful, as well as relevant in this context. These are as follows:

1) It is difficult to convince people to pay for something that they previously received as a benefit from the public purse. In this case OATI needed to develop a client base that saw real value, (enough so that it would pay) in the same training that had previously been delivered at little or no cost. I was later to understand, that the development of a value proposition has relevance in most organizational contexts.
2) In the effort to demonstrate real value, especially to the private sector, one needs to be able to calculate the return on investment, which in the case of OATI, focused on training and continuing education activities. While many have tried, the definitive training ROI is elusive and as a result it is difficult to convince potential sponsors and students that the results are worth the cost of training.

3) My experience of the first two points convinced me that private sector strategies are not necessarily appropriate for the non-profit sector regardless of recent neoliberal efforts to convince society otherwise. These sectors have completely different values, standards and operational expectations which makes sharing difficult. Another example of this is outlined in point four.

4) Finally (most importantly given the subject of this thesis) it appeared that there was a new standard in the non-profit sector, developed by funders and granting agencies: ALL activities for which an organization received external funding must be done in partnership with others. One of the outcomes of this standard appeared to be a change in language, so that all organizations with which one interacts on a project basis are called partner regardless of the actual extent of their involvement. What became clear to me was that all partners are not equal, and that there are varying definitions and expectations of ‘partners.’

---

18 This value is referred to as the value proposition. In a business environment reference to this would generally emerge as one question, “What’s the value prop?”
19 Evidence which supports this statement is significant, including for example public sector insistence on ‘business plans’ to support project proposals and a demonstration of sustainability regardless of the nature of the project (i.e. focused on social rather than for profit outcomes). This neoliberal imperative in conjunction with the downloading of social programs was at its most intense during the Common Sense Revolution, and gave rise to the phenomenon of the social economy as discussed in chapter two.
It was the converging of these realizations along with others, which coalesced for me into what I now term the dilemma of the third sector; triggering my initial curiosity, and eventually sustaining my interest in partnerships.

My belief in the dilemma of the third sector is important, and also relevant as context for what has developed into my fascination with partnerships. This dilemma plays itself out in various ways, one of which stems from society’s determination that some organizations had reasons other than profit to exist, and called that kind of organization not-for-profit (NPO) or charitable corporation. The NPO was to be driven by other, largely social concerns, not profit.20 As a result of this fundamental difference, NPOs also have different values than do other corporations and differences do not end with the corporate charter or values. NPOs and ordinary corporations must follow different regulatory requirements which govern maintenance of corporate status and the way they conduct their financial affairs. They are treated differently with respect to taxation; for example, how or if they are taxed on surpluses, how losses are treated and if successive years of taxable income generation will render their charitable status void.21 Despite recent changes to NPO corporate legislation which on the face of it would seem to indicate society’s recognition of the differences between for profit and not for profit corporations, elected representatives both federal and provincial, (reflecting societal beliefs) appear to no longer recognize or value diversity in

20 These organizations were created under either the Canada Corporations Act part two, an act that had not been amended since 1917; or in Ontario under the Ontario Corporations Act. Both have recently been amended.
organizational structure, instead demanding a uniformity of approach which regards traditional for profit business processes as superior to all others. To illustrate this drive for uniformity, funders now expect to see business plans from organizations in the not-for-profit and the public sector, forcing them to mimic a for-profit process that is driven by for-profit values.

OATI was one of the original members of TORC, a member of the Community and Human Services Sector. During my second week on the job I attended TORC’s rural development conference; Rural Ontario 2000: What’s in it for you? It was my first contact with what turned out to be an impressive network of leaders in the rural community. Over the next four years I attended most TORC forums and conferences, and OATI, TORC and others worked together on a variety of projects.

After I returned to school, but before I had identified TORC as my case study, the TORC board contracted me to compile year end reports for their federal and provincial partners (funders). In addition to completing these reports, I also facilitated the development of TORC’s budget for the next year, and completed the proposal for their last round of (Rural Community Capacity Building) federal funding. This occurred in 2006 when TORC was without an Executive Director. It was after completing this contract that I decided to approach TORC for their permission to use the TORC experience as the focus for my dissertation on partnerships.
3.2 Ethics

During the course of this research normal ethics protocols were followed; however, the dual role of two dissertation committee members was the subject of additional discussion with the ethics board. As well as being committee members, both Al Lauzon and Wayne Caldwell were key informants in the TORC case; chosen because of their involvement as TORC members, board members and board chairs. This apparently unique situation was eventually deemed to be acceptable ethically, due to the fact that the “power” was in the hands of the key informants; i.e. they could choose to disclose or not without concern as a result of their positional power as members of my committee.

3.3 Qualitative Methodology

This research was designed and realized from within what I would describe as a constructivist perspective. This personal framework is described by Schwandt (2000) as:

an everyday uncontroversial, garden variety constructivist…. in a fairly unremarkable sense we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive- a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind-but active; that is, the mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forming abstractions or concepts. In this sense constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it. We invent concepts models and schemes to make sense of the experience and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Furthermore there is an inevitable historical and socio-cultural dimension to this construction (p.197).

Primary data collection employed a case study methodology most frequently described as a qualitative methodological approach. Miles and Huberman (1994) define a case: “Abstractly we can define a case as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The
case is, in effect, your unit of analysis. Studies may be of just one case or of several” (p.25). Cavazzani and Moseley (2001) speak to the suitability of the case approach for partnership research, “employing multiple sources of evidence to investigate a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. It does so in a holistic fashion, focusing on people and events. The case study has no influence or control over the subjects in the study but rather seeks to understand their identity and uniqueness” (p.16). Moseley (2003, p.40) adds: “the case study method is appropriate for the analysis of partnerships because of the complicated, multi-layered, and changeable nature of these relationships.”

Design of the case study identified earlier as ‘The Ontario Rural Council’ incorporated three out of four main qualitative data collection methods: 1) interviews of key informants; 2) analysis of existing data including relevant documents such as the minutes of various meetings, business plans, and funding proposals; 3) and observation (Creswell, 1994).

3.4 The Qualification of TORC as a Partnership-Revisited

As outlined in chapter two, by synthesizing several typologies to create a tool that would measure the dimensions of interest in the partnership, I had the means through which I qualified the case study, “The Ontario Rural Council” as a partnership. Using Mosley’s (2003) definition as a guide several dimension of interest were identified.

A voluntary alliance of organizations from at least two societal sectors (state, or public sector, private companies, civil associations) with a clear organization structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project, and which show an integrated approach to the promotion of the development of rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants (p.xvi).
These were then analyzed with reference to TORC, beginning with the fact that TORC and its members have developed their associations voluntarily. This also held true in the partnerships developed for project work.

The second dimension was that of composition, identified the importance of cross-sectoral membership and required that the partnership involve organizations from at least two sectors i.e. public, private, not-for profit organizations etc. Partners were members of what TORC also identified as five sectors. These sectors were: 1) the economic and infrastructure sector; 2) the resource and environmental sector; the 3) community and human Services sector; 4) the government sector; 5) regional and individual members.

The third dimension was organizational structure. The TORC partnership had a clear organizational structure, as illustrated by its incorporation. While project partners for the most part shared this characteristic, the partnerships formed for the purposes of project work frequently had a limited structure. One notable exception to this last observation was the partnership formed for the ROC project outlined in detail in Chapter Four.

The fourth dimension, the temporal dimension, recognized the importance of the duration of the relationship, requiring that it be of more than a single project in length and that a partnership have on-going and long-term activities or projects together. TORC’s partners, both member-partners and project partners were partners on multiple fronts and had frequently developed their associations over many years. This also held true in the partnerships they developed for project work. The relationships were clearly enmeshed,
some partnerships overlapped in the sense of having members that belonged to more than one partnership.

The fifth dimension was that of purpose, and acknowledged the importance of a common objective in a partnership, requiring that the work be toward the promotion of rural development. In this case study the work goal is much less specific; the facilitation of dialogue. In this case the work that TORC undertook was more general, the facilitation of dialogue both inside and outside rural areas. Although the venues varied, the dialogue was always focused on issues that concerned rural residents and the promotion of rural areas.

Related to organizational structure is the sixth dimension, process: how did the partnership do its work? In situations when TORC worked in partnership with others to undertake projects the partners shared resources and risk according to requirements of the individual partners and the contribution agreement. In the partnership of what I have called the partnership of the association, risk or risk management became the responsibility of the corporation. In the sharing of more general resources however such as information and time (resources other than financial resources) TORC members were extremely generous.

Based on this process and analysis I concluded that TORC was a partnership because of the following characteristics:

- TORC and its members developed all of their associations voluntarily.
- Partners were members of what TORC has identified as five sectors.
- The TORC partnership had a clear organizational structure on multiple levels.
• When possible TORC and partners shared resources and risk.
• Member-partners and project partners were partners over an extended period of time.

3.5 Delimitations

As previously outlined, primary data collection employed a case study methodology. The Ontario Rural Council was selected as the case study because of its unique organizational structure which facilitated partnerships on three levels; the partnership of the association i.e. the partnerships that form the organization itself (membership), the partnerships that the organization then formed with others (both internal and external partners) to undertake project work and the partnerships that the member-partners already had in place with other organizations. Although this study focuses on a single case, given the tri-level, multi-sectoral nature of the TORC partnership(s), I would argue that this one case actually reflected a range of partnership experience.

Designing the study and research instruments so that sampling within the case study would reflect the activities and processes in which I was interested; i.e. key informant’s experience of partnership both the level of the partnership of the association as well as the experience of partnership at the project level, was challenging. Resolution of this challenge occurred when key informants were provided the opportunity to comment on their experiences within both contexts. Several projects were chosen to facilitate this process of which three were; 1) Rural Online Communication project 1999, 2) Data Services Improvement Program 2000, 3) The TORC Conference 2006. This structure is illustrated in figure four. I would begin my
questions with those that concerned the partnership of the association and if the key informant had not commented on a project move onto to focus on a relevant project.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the work of Kroes, Luckenkotter and Fekade (2002), Butler Flora and Flora’s (2008) Community Capitals and GST provided conceptual frameworks for this research and so also guided the development of the instrument. Figure illustrates the FACT, “Path of Analysis” which provided a framework for the interview guide, within
which community capitals guided the resource (input) questions. As illustrated in figure five, the large centre box labeled ‘practice’ is intended to illustrate the “partnership” relationship. The aspects of the partnership contained within the four boxes on the periphery of “practice”, identified as composition, participation, objectives and structure, are important components or inputs to “practice”, that in turn manifest in decision making and more generally in “action”. With the addition of context provided by the historical background and resources which are roughly equivalent to Flora’s six capitals, this framework provided logical categories within which to examine the operational realities as they facilitate or provide barriers to effective partnership practice.

Figure 3: FACT - Focused Assessment through Cause Effect Tracing adapted from Kroes, Luckenotter and Fekade (2002),
3.6 Data Collection and Analysis (Sampling)

Using a semi-structured schedule, original data was collected by interviewing key informants. My goal was to interview as broad a cross section of TORC members and affiliates as possible while making sure that I sampled relevant categories and experiences of the key informants. To this end I recruited and interviewed twenty-two people. Twenty-one round one or original interviews were conducted, drawing from each of TORC’s sectors. In addition to key informants directly associated with the case study such as current staff or member-partners, interviews of key informants not directly linked, or no longer linked to the case study were conducted; these included former staff and former members. Other key informants were identified and interviewed throughout the research phase of this project.

This process is captured by Miles and Huberman (1994) as follows:

> within case sampling has an iterative or rolling quality, working in progressive waves as the study progresses. Sampling is investigative, we are cerebral detectives, ferreting out answers to our research questions. We can observe, talk to people and pick-up artifacts and documents. That leads us to new samples of informants and observations, new documents. At each step along the evidential trail, we are making sampling decisions to clarify the main patterns, see contrasts, identify exceptions…” (p.29).

There is a fine line between providing the reader with enough detail about who served as a key informant for this research and providing too much. Too much impinges on my commitment to keep participation confidential, too little on the ability of the reader to assess the credibility of the key informants. With this line in mind I offer the following description of the positionality of the key informants. Approximately a third of the group consisted of Executive Directors of small rural non-profits, who were of roughly the same generation and had been involved with TORC for longer than five years (with one exception), most from the
beginning. In this group were EDs of TORC both past and current. Some key informants had served as TORC support staff. I was able to interview a few private sector members, also involved with TORC for more than five years and who came mainly from what we would define as big business, although one was a sole proprietor. There were a few academics, all of whom were involved with TORC for more than five years and who all also took significant leadership roles in the organization. Finally there were several government key informants from both federal and provincial departments. All of these key informants were senior, one had been very senior at OMAFRA, all were involved with the organization for periods longer than five years, but at the time I conducted this research only two were current TORC members. Some key informants were also gracious enough to consent to more than one interview, allowing me to explore some lines of thought, do some theory building, and then test those theories in three, round-two interviews.

Three validation or “experience checking” interviews were conducted, two of which were former Executive Directors of TORC and one, the case reader, was from another partnership based organization. This interview was with the ED of an association based organization that was similar to TORC. The total number of interviews was 27, ranging in length from 45 minutes to three hours. These interviews were conducted in places chosen by the key informants; frequently in homes or offices and from time to time in my home at the dining room table. Several took place over the telephone, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Interview</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>External Parties</th>
<th>Member-Partner</th>
<th>Reader</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round One</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round Two</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Sampling

In addition to conducting interviews I also had the opportunity to review and analyze existing data such as published reports, minutes of meetings, project documents, contribution agreements and contracts as well as other documents relevant to TORC and itemized in Appendix A. The use of these documents will be discussed in chapter five. Finally, over the course of the research period I was able to attend a number of Forums presented by TORC as well as other meetings such as TORC’s AGMs. Attending these meetings gave me the opportunity to observe TORC (with the perspective of researcher rather than member), in action.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Tellis (1997), “the case study can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining” (p.3). The construction of the case began with a coding of interview transcripts, the scaffolding of the analysis process was comprised of the multiple conceptual frameworks including general systems theory, and its various interpretations, Flora’s (2008) Community Capitals Framework described earlier, in conjunction with FACT. Interview transcripts were coded using the program Nvivo, which facilitated the process of analysis by supporting the reduction of a substantial number of transcript pages into appropriate groupings and themes. The coding framework is outlined
in the following paragraphs, the headings of which refer to the issue of interest. The questions facilitate the expansion of the key informant’s perception of his or her experience, and in so doing expand on our understanding of the phenomenon.

### 3.7.1 Composition

Composition (figure 3, p.76) encompassed material which referred to members of the partnership i.e. who are the partners? What are their values and goals? How do, or how well do they fit into the partnership relationship? Who are the organizational representatives i.e. are they decision makers in their organization?

### 3.7.2 Context

Context (figure 3, p.76) encompasses material that refers to the general environment, both past and present within which the organization exists. Context was assessed with reference to three main factors: 1) the environment which refers to economic and cultural contexts driving the growth and development of TORC, 2) history was specific in its reference to the events which led to the formation of the organization, as well as significant subsequent events occurring within TORC’s operating environment, 3) identity and purpose referring to the way that TORC responded to, or believed that it needed to respond to the environment.

TORC’s member-partners assessed TORC’s efficacy in this broad context and used this assessment to determine the following: a) do the partners perceive value in the association and b) do the partners perceive that TORC is relevant?
3.7.3 Resources

Resources encompassed material that referred to TORC’s resource base. The analysis was based largely on Flora’s (2008) Community Capitals Framework. Flora identifies six capitals of which five were relevant to this context, beginning with financial capital or funding which is specific in its reference to material contributions, generally although not always related to cash. Other references are as follows: core funding, diversity in funding, funding relationships generally, and project funding. The second capital was human resources or human capacity, and the third built capital, referring to physical assets including technology. Social capital which refers to relationships and networks is the fourth relevant capital to which bridging and bonding social capital are related; and finally cultural capital referred to societal norms, and values and how they are communicated to others.

3.7.4 Structure

Structure (figure 3, p.76) encompassed material that related to, or refers to TORCs organizational framework or structure. Although very closely related to composition, the key differentiating factor is that structure is about what, and composition is about whom.

3.7.5 Participation-Action

Participation-action (figure 3, p.76) included material that referred to, or relates to how TORC members participate in the partnership, and-or how the partnership acts both inside the organizational structure as well as in the organization’s environment; 1) for example how does the organization communicate its values and activities, as well as fulfill its mandate? 2) who takes on leadership roles, about what, and on whose behalf, what are leadership
qualities in this context? How do they impact the partnership? 3) How are decisions made in the partnership; who can make decisions on behalf of the organizations, etc.

3.7.6 Objectives-Aims
Objectives-aims encompassed material that related to whether or not TORC had met its organizational objectives. In this case I asked for a yes or no answer followed by a rationale.

3.7.7 Power
Power encompassed material that referred to, or related to influence in the partnership relationship and responded to the question; is power an issue in this partnership relationship?

3.8 Findings
According to Daly (1995, 1997), conventional qualitative assessment has frequently described the process of theory building as arising ‘fully formed’ off the pages. Instead Daly argues, research products “do not emerge from the data—they emerge from researchers; that is it is drawn out of the data by those who collect it.”(Daly as cited in Dupuis, 1999,p.48). In this way Daly believes and writes that findings and theory, or knowledge is constructed not discovered and in the same way the following tables were constructed from the data. This process was both conscious and no doubt sub-conscious; influenced by my beliefs and my experience, and aided by the reports of the key informants and the scaffolding of the conceptual frameworks.
## Operational Realities that Facilitate Effective Partnership Practice

### A) Structure and Resources

1. The partnership is adequately resourced with financial capital
2. The partnership is adequately resourced with appropriate human capital
3. The structure of the partnership is transparent
4. The value of the partnership is established
5. The mandate of the partnership is explicit

### B) Characteristics of the Member-Partners

1. The partnership has ‘engaged’ members
2. The members possess strong social networks
3. Members give their first priority to the partnership
4. Members are aware of the “power dynamic” within the organization
5. Leadership within the partnership including succession is planned

### C) Communication Patterns

1. Communication, both internal and external is effective and consistent
2. There is access to, and innovative use of communication technology

---

**Table 4: Operational Realities that Facilitate Partnership Practice**
### Operational Realities that Present Barriers to Effective Partnership Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Structure and Resources</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The partnership is not adequately resourced with financial capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The partnership is not adequately resourced with appropriate human capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The structure of the partnership is not visible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The value of the partnership is in question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The mandate of the partnership is obscured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B) Characteristics of the Member-Partners</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The partnership has less ‘engaged’ members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The members have weaker social networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Members give their first priority to others, not the partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Members are not aware of, or choose to ignore the “power dynamic” within the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leadership within the partnership is ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C) Communication Patterns</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Communication, both internal and external is flawed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There is reduced access to, and innovative use of communication technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: Operational Realities that Present Barriers to Partnership Practice**

The operational realities outlined in figure seven and eight existed in some incarnation, and sometimes coexisted within TORC over the lifetime of the partnership. These realities were sorted into three categories: a) structure and resources; b) characteristics of member partners; c) communication patterns. I began with those that were relevant to TORC and then extrapolated the balance based on the original twelve, consequently ending with twelve pairs. Conceptualization and extrapolation was based on the assumption that these realities are
dynamic and exist on continua, rarely remaining at any point on the continuum for an extended period of time.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are terms which are often used by qualitative researchers practicing case study methodology. One well known proponent is the author of the book on case study methodology Yin (2003). Initially, I followed Yin’s advice and as a result, wrote the following about the validity of the case: “construct validity was established through the use of multiple sources of evidence; 1) key informant interviews, 2) documentation such as minutes of meetings, research and forum reports, funding applications and budgets, finally 3) observation through attendance at various meetings. Two key informants also reviewed a draft of the case report.” Unsatisfied with what I believed to be a clash of research cultures within this research, a situation which manifested itself in my need to achieve traditional quantitative markers of research success, these being reliability and validity I continued in my efforts to achieve what I would call methodological coherence. Further research led me to the work of Golafshani (2003), within which the following quotation expressed the essence of my discomfort and offered a path for the way forward which I have outlined in 3.10, limitations:

However the concepts of reliability and validity are viewed differently by qualitative researchers who strongly consider these concepts defined in quantitative terms as inadequate. In other words, these terms as defined in quantitative terms may not apply to the qualitative research paradigm. The question of replicability of results does not concern them (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), but precision (Winter, 2000), credibility and transferability (Hoepf, 1997) provide the lenses of evaluating the findings of qualitative research. In this context the two
research approaches or perspectives are essentially different paradigms (Kuhn, 1970).

3.10 Limitations of the Research

As mentioned in 1.8, limitations of this research center on my desire to have done more interviews, more document review and more analysis. I believe however that this desire is not unique among graduate students, and is in fact common in those that are involved with research as a profession. Having acknowledged this limitation I believe that I was ultimately successful in conducting exploratory research that initiated the development of a working theory of partnerships. The surfacing of potential barriers and facilitating factors through the telling of one organization’s story, exposes “data” that is rich and draws from the experience of a host of member partners, many with their own substantive backgrounds in partnering.

What is necessary to demonstrate is not quantity but that the research is credible and trustworthy, a conclusion that depends largely on my effort and my ability (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). Clearly it was not my intention to produce generalizable conclusions, rather it was through analysis, to begin the process of developing a working theory of partnerships by surfacing potential barriers and facilitating factors. While this is one organization’s story, based largely on interview data, this data is rich and draws from the experience of a host of member partners, many with their own substantive backgrounds in partnering. My final comment with respect to limitations would be to mention my regret regarding an inability to recruit more than one case reader. Had I been able to do so, I would be more confident about discussing what is essentially a unique approach to establishing transferability and credibility.
3.11 Summary

This chapter has chronicled my personal and academic search for an understanding of the practice of partnerships in the Canadian context. From both perspectives the journey has been long. The academic component is mapped in some detail beginning with a brief summary of my personal experiential perspective and prior knowledge of the case. A description of the qualitative approach, the development of an analytic tool for assessing partnership status and delimitations followed. The description of data collection and analysis, highlighting the use of interviewing as the primary method of data collection preceded a description of the interview coding scaffolding. Limitations of the research concluded the discussion.
Chapter 4: Case Study Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview of the Ontario Rural Council. This overview is intended to be descriptive so I will begin by describing antecedents to the development of the organization largely focusing on the historical context, specifically Ontario’s economic and political climate, and then outline the structure and function of the organization. Structure and function were described to me by the key informants interviewed for this research. This information in addition to my personal knowledge of TORC, as well as internal documents and reports created by TORC, forms the majority of sources used for the chapter. Also included in this chapter is a timeline to assist the reader in creating a cognitive map of the growth and development of the organization over time. This timeline incorporates some of the many various projects, funding sources, and human resources that were accessed by TORC over the decade of its existence.

The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) was conceived during the genesis of Ontario’s version of the “Common Sense Revolution.” The welfare state values that had distinguished Canadian government for a significant part of the twentieth century had been eclipsed by fiscal policy concerns, concerns which included the nation’s debt. As mentioned in Chapter Two, despite Federal government efforts to stem the deficit tide by curbing spending the net debt in 1992 exceeded 60 percent of Gross Domestic Product.  

The “Common Sense Revolution,” (CSR) was inspired and supported with roots in Britain, Australia and to some extent in the United States\(^\text{23}\). While all versions of CSR have economic themes in common, in 1995 Ontario’s CSR platform focused on the following main components: 1) a reduction in government spending and a balanced budget within 5 years; 2) a reduction in taxes, particularly, at least initially, personal income taxes; 3) a reduction in provincial welfare rates; 4) and job creation (Walkom, 1997, p.403).

Implementation of Mike Harris’s (leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario) CSR commencing in 1995 was swift and by the accounts of key informants interviewed in this research, harsh. Harris has been quoted as saying: “The people of Ontario voted yesterday for change. We intend to move “(Walkom, 1997, p.402). And move he did. In 1995 Maclean’s reported that in the first budget, the government (spear headed by the finance minister Ernie Eves), slashed 6.3 billion from Ontario’s 56 billion dollar budget, beginning a process that was scheduled to occur over a three year period. This fiscal program was accompanied by the announcement of a planned 30% reduction in personal income taxes.\(^\text{24}\) A partial list of the cuts incorporated into the Tory’s first budget are:

1) A reduction of 21.6% in provincial welfare rates,

2) A reduction of 18% in hospital funding over two years,

3) An introduction of user fees for Ontario’s Drug Benefit plan,

\(^{23}\) “The phrase Common Sense Revolution (CSR) has been used as a political slogan to describe common sense conservative platforms in Australia and the U.S. state of New Jersey in the 1990s. However, it is most widely known as the name of the political movement and policy document advocated by Mike Harris, the Progressive Conservative premier of the Canadian province of Ontario from 1995 to 2002.” The Common Sense Revolution, (n.d.), In Wikipedia; Retrieved January 18, 2009, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Sense_Revolution

\(^{24}\) When it was discovered that this promise would cost upwards of 5 billion, the measure was deferred.
4) A reduction in funding to municipalities from $1.9 billion to $736 million over two years,

5) A reduction in funding to Ontario’s educational system of $800 million, both public and postsecondary in the first year alone.  

For the first several years of the Tory mandate, Harris cultivated and won wide-ranging support for his largely fiscally-focused vision of Ontario and based on that support, the Progressive Conservatives won another majority in 1999. As the impact of the budget cuts began to make themselves felt however, Harris’s support began to erode. Dr. David Docherty reflecting on the impact of the CSR on both urban and rural Ontario states:

It was shortly after their re-election [in 1999] that Eves and Harris began to run into difficulties. The impact of their budget cuts was beginning to be felt by more and more Ontarians. While they still enjoyed support for the direction they were taking Ontario, the speed with which they moved alarmed more than just the "special interests" they liked to criticize. Cuts in health care and education were being felt not just in urban areas, but in the 905 belt and in rural Ontario, the heart and soul of Conservative support. The water crisis and tragedy in Walkerton, hit a year after their re-election. During the premier's first visit to Walkerton he expressed sympathy but did not apologize for the crisis. Instead he repeated his view that past governments should be held to account as much as his.

While the Walkerton water crisis eventually became the most notorious rural issue stemming from CSR budget cuts, other initiatives, such as municipal restructuring and amalgamation, the closing of rural schools, and the threatened closure of hospitals also impacted rural Ontario. Another, much lower profile issue than others just mentioned, was the Tory’s significant funding reductions to agricultural and rural programs. These programs had over

the years become an important resource for rural and agriculturally based Ontarians.\textsuperscript{27} According to Ontario budget papers of May 1999, between 1995 and 1999, OMAFRA’s operating expenses decreased by 22\% and capital expenditures by 100\%.\textsuperscript{28} How did these issues, generated as a result of CSR fiscal policy and subsequent devolution, affect daily life in rural Ontario? According to the accounts of the key informants interviewed for this research, the impact on rural of the CSR was a sharp decline in access to services, and as a result a decline in the quality of life for rural residents.

While the political and economic environment in Canada and Ontario clearly provided an impetus for rural dialogue and collaboration outlined in TORC’s mandate, the larger American context also provided a realistic and credible vision; in particular the State Rural Development Council (SRDC) movement in the United States.

Born in 1990 as part of a national initiative on rural development, the [State Rural Development Council] SRDC movement was based on the need to rethink and reinvent how federal and state rural development policies were made and how programs were designed and delivered. This need was wide ranging. It related not only to shrinking public resources and the increasing complexity in the nature of the issues that rural communities face across the country, but also to a fundamental shifting, or re-conception, of the roles of government on national, state and local levels. The trend toward devolution called for different ways of doing the business of government, as well as public policy processes that were more collaborative and participatory. (Ho, 2001, p.48)

By 1995 the SRDC movement had been underway for five years, providing a formative map, at least conceptually, for a similar Canadian based organization. The antecedents of both a

\textsuperscript{28} Ontario’s Environment and the Common Sense Revolution by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy p.1-6
new provincial reality (CSR) and the relevant vision provided by the SRDC program inspired the concerted effort of key rural leaders. According to Mary Robertson, founding member and the organization’s first Executive Director, the process of planning and negotiating an organizational vision and mission took almost two years, during which time, and for several subsequent years, TORC’s organizational existence was as a project of the Foundation for Rural Living (FRL). Nineteen-ninety-eight is generally recognized as the year that TORC was founded (although not incorporated) with a mission to act as a catalyst for rural dialogue, and collaboration expressed as follows in the articles of incorporation, By-Law No.1:

To preserve and foster Ontario’s rural heritage by providing educational programs, conferences, seminars, public meetings, to increase appreciation and awareness of rural heritage issues or of the usefulness of rural culture, structures, technologies, infrastructure and history.

To undertake public-spirited research documenting, determining, investigating, and analyzing within the rural community general social and public trends, activities and statistics with a view to make all research findings available and providing effective models for collaboration to enhance rural leadership and organizational capacity.

The perceived need for an organization that would create an opportunity for dialogue in rural Ontario was one that was shared by not only by rural leaders and community based organizations but also by both the provincial government (OMAFRA) and the federal government through the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP). According to the CRP, the CRP is “The Partnership is about operating within the federal government to ensure that federal programs, policies and activities provide support to rural communities. An Interdepartmental Working Group, consisting of representatives from 32 federal departments and agencies, and Rural Teams working in each province and territory, are responsible for implementing the Partnership.”( accessed on http://www.rural.gc.ca/crpfacts_e.phtml, April 3, 2008)

29 FRL was established in 1979 as a charitable organization by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.
30 TORC By-Law No.1 2002-2004 p.1
31 According to the CRP, the CRP is “The Partnership is about operating within the federal government to ensure that federal programs, policies and activities provide support to rural communities. An Interdepartmental Working Group, consisting of representatives from 32 federal departments and agencies, and Rural Teams working in each province and territory, are responsible for implementing the Partnership.”( accessed on http://www.rural.gc.ca/crpfacts_e.phtml, April 3, 2008)
partners brought with them access to funding, and funding programs that would be the financial foundation of TORC’s operating budget over the next decade. These grants began with a commitment of $80,000 per annum from both the federal government through the Rural Secretariat and OMAFRA. While not providing “core funding” over time these relatively dependable contributions made TORC’s existence a reality.

4.01 Structure and Function of TORC

The original and later incorporated (2001) structure of TORC consisted of two groups: members and the board of directors. Members were divided into five sectors outlined in TORC bylaws (figure nine). The five sectors were:

1) Economic and Infrastructure Sector; comprised of such members as telecommunications companies, utilities, various economic development associations, and private sector companies.

2) Resource and Environmental Sector; members were agricultural associations and conservation organizations.

3) Community and Human Services Sector; members were rurally based education and training organizations, universities, health associations, and other service based organizations.

32 Core funding is funding which can be used to build and maintain the administrative functions of an organization. Over the last two decades government granting programs have moved away from acknowledging core funding as a legitimate expense, concentrating instead on project based funding.
4) Government Sector; members varied over time; for example at one point the following Ministries, Programs and Associations comprised this sector membership: Industry Canada, Fed Nor, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rural Secretariat, Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and the Canada-Ontario Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund.

5) Regional and Individual Members, a category that was generally, though not always populated by board alumni.33

Why the original membership of TORC was limited operationally (although not according to by-laws) to 30 members, later increased to 40, and finally to more than 50 members in 2007, has been attributed to the thinking of Elbert VanDonkersgoed, (not a key informant). His thinking included his vision that what rural Ontario needed “was a small articulate group that could make policy recommendations.” The founding members were also committed to maintaining equity across the designated sectors and to having leaders at the table or “those that could speak on behalf of their organizations, were highly informed, and had the authority to commit resources either financial or otherwise.”

33 Based on the TORC Member Directory 2006
TORC’s board had the required corporate officers who volunteered on a rotating basis from among the board membership. The officers for the most part served on the Executive Committee whose members included a President/Chair, Vice Chair, Past Chair, Secretary or Secretary-Treasurer or Treasurer. Each of the five sectors were represented on the board in addition to members from among the working groups, up to a total of 12 board members.

### 4.1 Activities

TORC’s organizational activities, designed to fulfill its mission of facilitating dialogue took various forms, the first of which was the convening of three member round tables annually. These round tables allowed members to update others on their organization’s activities as well as to address areas of concern (rurally related), identified by themselves, other members or as requested by other stakeholders of TORC. Round tables were originally held in conjunction with three forums that were open to the general public. The forums were held to discuss issues of concern in rural Ontario, identified in consultation with the membership,
which over the years expanded to full day sessions, and which were held at more frequent intervals.

In addition to the member round tables and forums, the Council also organized a regional conference, annually or semi/bi-annually depending on available funding and human resource capacity. These conferences framed as “rural development conferences,” presented ‘rural’ through various lenses and have, according to anecdotal evidence, made significant contributions to the general public’s understanding of rural issues and concerns.

Finally, usually four (however sometimes numbers varied), broad based working groups played a central part in TORC’s commitment to collecting “ground intelligence.” These groups facilitated dialogue and community collaboration, sometimes to the extent that working group commitments had been seen to overwhelm/subsume TORC’s stated organizational strategic directions. 34 Membership in these working groups consisted of both TORC members and non-TORC members. While the focus of working groups changed from time to time, at one point in time (2006), the working groups were; Health Working Group, Environmental Working Group, Capacity Building Working Group, and the Rural Youth Working Group.

From time to time TORC also partnered with other organizations to undertake individual, “stand alone” projects not associated with their regular activities. These projects varied

34 One key informant describes the situation as follows, “I think we need and want strong vibrant working groups but in some ways, because of the work they do, they can and sometimes do set TORC’s agenda a little bit.”
widely in emphasis and in terms of the role TORC took in the execution of project activities. Some examples of early projects include the following:

The Data Services Improvement Program, Connecting Rural Ontario (DSIP) 2000—“In the long-term it was intended that the initiative provide a necessary enabler to public and private sector groups for the advancement of data dependent applications and to ensure a sustainable economic development and improved quality of life in rural Ontario.”

TORC served as an administering partner.

Ontario Rural Capacity Assessment Project (ORCA) 2001—An initiative of TORC’s then active community economic working group. “The goals of the project were to develop an inventory and assessment of community based organizations and services, as well as to consolidate service information for key federal, provincial and municipal organizations with a focus on CED.”

TORC also piloted the data base (template), and served as project manager and partnership convener.

Rural Dialogue Project, 2002-The Project was generated as a result of the Federal CRP initiative to conduct dialogues with rural people and stakeholders across Canada in order to ascertain their concerns as they pertained specifically to rural. Six rural dialogues were held in Ontario. TORC served as the project manager and funding broker.

35 From the DSIP Report, 2000
36 From the ORCA Final Report, 2001
37 From Rural Dialogues, “Assessing Our Partnership Experience,” 2002
The projects briefly outlined were significant in both scope and size. The DSIP program for example embraced the entire province (had national implications) as well as a budget in the multi-millions. Certainly it was the first significant, as well as the largest, of TORC’s projects. Over time the scope and size of these adjunct projects appears to decline. Emphasis also moved from projects that were technology and communications focused, to projects that were more social and (later) community economic development oriented, smaller and closer to home. This shift in orientation appeared to be accompanied by a commitment to building TORC’s internal and administrative capacity and is outlined in period two of the section entitled Organizational Periods (table one).

4.1.1 Rural Online Communication Project

The two TORC projects that illustrate TORC’s early leadership were the Rural Online Communications partnership, referred to as ROC and the Data Services Improvement Program, referred to as DSIP. ROC’s partnership was comprised of TORC in conjunction with the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, Junior Farmers, Ontario Institute of Agronomists and Foundation for Rural Living, all of who collaborated to develop what they believed would be innovative online tools and resources. The perceived need for the portal was high, and the proposal was well enough constructed and rationalized that the partnership managed to raise more than $150,000 from various sources for development.

The tools that were to be developed and then available on the ROC website were:

1) A member-only log-in to the various tools. External users were to be allowed limited access to the site.
2) Calendars for the 5 partners, each showing public events with private events only accessible to those logged in.

3) Discussion forums for members and guests.

4) Document repository, public and private access.

5) Human resources directory, largely for staff and board but also available on a limited basis to others.

The capability of the website TDG\textsuperscript{38} committed to build the “partnership” was complex and cutting edge in 1999. There was no road map, nor as was later evident, did the project have the human resources to develop the agreed applications. As a result the project process was fraught with difficulty, and one key informant assessed it as being in trouble almost from the beginning. There were many misunderstandings and differences between the contractor and the partnership, to the extent that by August of 2000 the relationship had been irreparably damaged. In response to the crisis generated by this event, Executive Directors from each partner organization took time from their own organizational responsibilities, and on a rotating basis supervised the work which included hiring a project manager and technical staff to finish the website. According to the recollection of the key informants, regardless of the substantial efforts of all partners the site was only ever partially functional.

Discussion of this project with key informants provides some evidence and insight into TORC’s role as a leader in technology, certainly from a technology user’s perspective, at the beginning of its existence. In addition it confirms, at least anecdotally, what is now relegated to the status of common knowledge, that technology is a built resource which can be used as a tool to facilitate communication and the development of partnership building. In this case

\textsuperscript{38} Telecommons Development Group, the web developer for the ROC project.
it contributed to partnership building through the distribution of its e-newsletter as discussed in the next pages, but also because in the case of ROC, it created an environment of crisis which forced people to work in partnership i.e., technology not necessarily required.

4.1.2 A Partnership Plan

The ROC documentation made available to me during the course of this research included an agreement entitled; The ROC Partnership, “A Partnership Plan.” This document was dated May 1999. It included the following eight sections 1) Purpose, 2) Values, 3) Strategic Plan, 4) Roles and Responsibilities, 5) Operating Principles, 6) Financial Commitments and Processes, and 7) Communications. The agreement had signature lines for every partner.

This was the first genuine partnership plan I had encountered in either published or grey literature. While the plan itself was meticulously constructed, key informant responses to questions regarding the rationale for development, and an assessment regarding the success of its implementation were surprisingly vague; some might deduce that while document was important to some, perhaps the author, others might have seen it being of little value, to the extent that by the time we discussed it, it had faded from memory.

4.1.3 Data Services Improvement Program

Although ROC was a failure by all accounts, another project, this one successful, was conceived and executed within a year of ROC and established TORC as a leader with a technological vision for rural. This project was underway during roughly the same timeframe as Castells (2000) was writing his book and fully a decade ahead of the provincial

39 Developed and implemented in a real, not theoretical situation
initiative to increase broadband infrastructure in rural Ontario. The project was the Data Services Improvement Program (DSIP). According to the DSIP (2000, October, p.7):

The purpose of the Data Services Improvement Program, Connecting Rural Ontario was two-fold:

1) To provide common data services capability to all communities in Ontario located south of Perry Sound
2) To increase the awareness and acceptance of community stakeholders to the benefits of information technology and engage community.

2) In the long-term it was intended that the initiative provide a necessary enabler to public and private groups for the advancement of data dependent applications and to ensure sustainable economic development and improved quality of life in rural Ontario.

The financial investment made by various partners and stakeholders totaled nearly 13 million dollars. For this investment, the private sector partner, Bell Canada would supply upgraded speeds which were extremely fast for the time. The executing partnership was comprised of two not for profit organizations, TORC and Regional Networks for Ontario (RNO), one private sector participant- Bell Canada and one government department- the Ontario Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. Two other stakeholders made major contributions to the initiative: the federal departments of Human Resource Development Canada and FedNor. While the rural communities scheduled to receive the upgraded services were seen to be an integral part of the program (2000, October, p.8) they were not seen as partners. Rather these “stakeholders” were identified as being in need of information technology literacy, more resources and awareness-raising. On the basis of this needs assessment the residents of these communities were targeted for “community processes”

40 56-64 Kbps to 1.53/1.54 Mbps
which would address these deficits. None of the key informant’s discussed the success of this phase of the project strategy although the final report (DSIP, October, 2000, p.9) states that a survey conducted in rural communities at the conclusion of the project indicated that it was a success.

4.2 Human Resources

The human resource capacity TORC has had at its disposal over the years appears in sharp contrast to its significant agenda. Previous paragraphs have indicated that organizational activity was substantial and ambitious although human resource capacity was limited and subject to the vagaries of a largely volunteer workforce.

While the number of paid staff fluctuated over time, the “core” remained relatively stable. This core was comprised of an Executive Director, an Administrative Coordinator and a Communications Coordinator. When projects required (and budget allowed) temporary staff were contracted to deal with additional duties i.e., an Event Coordinator to organize annual conferences and forums. The role of bookkeeping was contracted out to another organization who at the time was sharing space with TORC, and who was subsidizing their own finance staff position with external contracts, such as the one with TORC.

The success of this kind of arrangement varies as does the success of volunteer dependent work. Regardless of the challenges associated with relying on human resources obtained from a volunteer base, TORC managed to leverage this resource extremely effectively. Volunteers populated the board of directors, working groups and various project based and standing committees such as the research and conference committees. In fact according to a
number of key informants interviewed for this research, that without committed volunteers TORC would only have been able to accomplish a fraction of what it did.

### 4.3 Organizational Periods

While technically the Board of Directors is the primary vehicle for leadership in any organization, the importance of the Executive Director cannot be underestimated. Over the decade of its existence TORC had four Executive Directors. Each of these individuals had a significant impact on the organization, each facilitating distinctly different periods in the organization’s history:

1) **Founding ED:** (approximate timeline 1998-2001) this period appeared to be one of growth and vision. It was characterized by large projects, partner representatives around the ‘member round tables’ that had decision making power, and the receptive ear of funders.

2) **Consolidating ED:** (approximate timeline 2001-2005) In this period there appeared to be an emphasis on building the administrative capacity of the organization as well as on consolidation of TORCs position in the rural community. It was characterized by smaller projects, second generation partner representatives, and less receptive funding partners.

3) **Provisional ED:** (approximate timeline, 3 months in 2005) This period is said to have begun as one focused on reassessment of the organizations mission and mandate, but that quickly shifted as the provisional ED resigned three months into the original six
month term. Following the resignation, the board stepped into the management role for an indefinite (at the time) period which concluded in the spring of 2006.

4) **Concluding ED:** (approximate timeline 2006-2010) this period was one of assessment and realignment, characterized by entrepreneurial repositioning of TORC as a desirable partner and convener in project work, second or third generation of member/partners including a growth in individual memberships (not associated with organizations) and the conclusion of traditional funding relationships.

## 4.4 Funding the Enterprise-Sustainability Crisis

The issue of sustainability preoccupied TORC for many years. While funding was sufficient for initial projects and planned activities, it was granted with the condition that TORC would look for, and cultivate self-sustaining activities. Subsequent funding through this and various other programs was contributed with the same conditions attached, regardless of the fact that increases in TORC’s activity over the years meant that the level of available funding had become less and less satisfactory, at the same time as accountability conditions regulating fund use became more and more restrictive.

TORC’s efforts to investigate sustainability options over the years have been many and varied. Beginning as early as 2002, TORC, in conjunction With 4-H, the Centre for Rural Leadership and the Ontario Agricultural Training Institute embarked on a process to study the viability of creating an organization that, while maintaining critical individual missions and mandates, merged shared functions such as administration, some programming and facilities. TORC has also had a committee of the board whose primary focus has been
sustainability. None of these efforts however, met with tangible results, a situation which reached crisis proportions in 2008.

4.5 Postscript

In March of 2008 one of TORC’s key funding partner, the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, concluded the Rural Community Capacity Building Program, the vehicle through which TORC had receiving funding during the last contract period. The RCCB program, unlike others before it was not replaced. With no alternate source of funds available, these events touched off a “sustainability crisis” for TORC leading to the consolidation of doubts regarding organizational viability.

In response to this crisis TORC requested, and gained the assistance of it’s other key financial partner, OMAFRA, managing to leverage enough funds to maintain the organization until March of 2009. The funds were provided on the condition that TORC contract a consultant (also subsidized by OMAFRA) to study the situation and table recommendations regarding sustainability and partnership options.41 The steering committee for this project was comprised in part of members from the Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL), TORC and OMAFRA. Identified as the obvious ‘partner’ for TORC in the initial stages of the process, TCRL (and TORC); 1) were assessed for sustainability; 2) opportunities for potential partnership and collaboration were identified; and 3) of the identified opportunities, some were recommended as worthy of further investigation.

41 The consultants chosen were Chartwell Inc.
The final report, issued in December of 2008 presented the following conclusions: 1) that TORC was not sustainable and that 2) TCRL was sustainable. While the report had some suggestions regarding budgeting and business planning i.e., “budgeting must plan for surplus to cover overheads”, its main recommendations focused on the merger or ‘partnership’ of TORC with TCRL. Within this scenario TORC and TCRL could develop the relationship by sharing the same space and specialized resources while investigating the feasibility of a merger. According to Chartwell, “A merger provides the greatest net benefits to significantly enhance the sustainability of both organizations by increasing revenues, cutting costs and providing access to specialist resources “(fund developer, communications specialist and business developer). The membership of TORC met on January 15, 2009 to discuss the highlights of the Final Report and pass the motion to accept the recommendation of the Board to amalgamate. TORC and TCRL amalgamated in 2010 to form the Rural Ontario Institute. Table one is a summary table of TORC’s major resources, projects and staff from 1998-2009.

---

42 For the purposes of this report sustainability was defined as the capacity of an organization to deliver effectively on its mandate indefinitely within its existing and realistically projected resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Periods</th>
<th>Partial List of Funding Accessed</th>
<th>Selection of Partnership and Contracted Projects</th>
<th>Composition of Staff component at the end of each period</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 1: Summary of Major Resources, Projects and Staff
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Periods</th>
<th>Partial List of Funding Accessed</th>
<th>Selection of Partnership and Contracted Projects</th>
<th>Composition of Staff component at the end of each period</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisional ED:</td>
<td>OMAFRA-Discretionary Funds $80,000 per annum OMAFRA-In Kind Contribution-3 months salary for Provisional ED AAFC-RCCB $80,000 per annum</td>
<td>2006 Rural Development Conference-Community Building Through Innovation: Celebrating Today’s Rural</td>
<td>ED-FTE Administrative- Coordinator FTE Communications Coordinator-FTE Conference Coordinator-FTE for several months, contracted Bookkeeper PT, contracted</td>
<td>Sponsorship of: Innovation Pathways: Tools for Rural and Northern Community Innovation Working Groups Forums (3-4) Rural-Urban Summits (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(approximate timeline, 3 months in 2005 to September in 2006)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding ED:</td>
<td>OMAFRA-Discretionary</td>
<td>Rural Entrepreneurship Study Tour for University of</td>
<td>ED-FTE</td>
<td>Working Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(approximate timeline)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Periods</td>
<td>Partial List of Funding Accessed</td>
<td>Selection of Partnership and Contracted Projects</td>
<td>Composition of Staff component at the end of each period</td>
<td>Other Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2009)</td>
<td>Funds $80,000 per annum</td>
<td>Kentucky-2007</td>
<td>Administrative- Coordinator FTE</td>
<td>Forums (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AAFC-RCCB $80,000 per annum</td>
<td>Health and Learning in Rural and Remote areas for Canadian Council of Learning-2007</td>
<td>Bookkeeper PT, contracted</td>
<td>Partner in Rural Leadership Initiative with Centre for Rural Leadership and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Project Management, Community Broadband Tool Kit for Ontario Ministry of Government Services-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2008 Rural Development Conference, Leading the Rural Renaissance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Research Findings

Research findings presented in this chapter are drawn from documents obtained during field work and interview transcripts illustrated by salient quotations. These findings are summarized in table two, which displays the text in categories of operational realities constructed as a result of analysis, and which illuminate the research question. Although the display phrases are abbreviated, the quotations from which they were extracted are substantive enough to ensure that a phrase or statement is not taken out of context.

5.1 Operational Realities-Facilitating and Not

The operational realities outlined in table two appeared to exist, and sometimes coexist within TORC over the lifetime of the partnership. These realities have been divided into three categories: a) structure and resources; b) characteristics of member partners and; c) communication patterns. From the interview data I extracted those that were immediately obvious, and then constructed the balance based on the original twelve, consequently ending with twelve pairs of operational realities. Conceptualization and extrapolation was based on the assumption that these realities are dynamic and exist as continua, changing over time.

My understanding of the temporal aspect of each operational reality and its estimated timeline within the research context is reflected in a diagram similar to the one which follows in figure 10.
This diagram illustrates the continua of structural transparency. On the reader’s right is the end of the continuum that represents a partnership or organization that is not transparent. Many member-partners interpreted this kind of organization as being one that is usually incorporated. On the reader’s left is the end of the continuum that represents the completely transparent organization. While TORC did not ever reside at either extreme end, it did eventually move from transparency, which generally characterizes an unincorporated network, to being less transparent. On the diagram note the change in position of the organization over time starting with the period (1998-01) when it is the most transparent, to later years after incorporation (2002-09) where it’s structure is reported to be less visible, or to some not visible.
## Table 7: Operational Realities that Facilitate and Present Barriers to Partnership Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Structure and Resources</th>
<th>A) Structure and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The partnership is adequately resourced with financial capital</td>
<td>1. The partnership is not adequately resourced with financial capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The partnership is adequately resourced with appropriate human capital</td>
<td>3. The partnership is not adequately resourced with appropriate human capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The structure of the partnership is transparent</td>
<td>5. The structure of the partnership is not visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The value of the partnership is established</td>
<td>7. The value of the partnership is in question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The mandate of the partnership is explicit</td>
<td>9. The mandate of the partnership is obscured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B) Characteristics of the Member-Partners</th>
<th>B) Characteristics of the Member-Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The partnership has ‘engaged’ members</td>
<td>1. The partnership has ‘engaged’ members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The members possess strong social networks</td>
<td>3. The members have weaker social networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Members give their first priority to the partnership</td>
<td>5. Members give their first priority to others not the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Members are aware of the “power dynamic” within the organization</td>
<td>7. Members are not aware or choose to ignore the “power dynamic” within the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Leadership within the partnership including succession is planned</td>
<td>9. Leadership within the partnership is ad hoc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C) Communication Patterns</th>
<th>C) Communication Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Communication, both internal and external is effective and consistent</td>
<td>1. Communication, both internal and external is flawed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There is access to and innovative use of communication technology</td>
<td>3. There is reduced access to and innovative use of communication technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 which follows this text contains examples of various documents accessed during the research and where these documents contributed to the discussion. This table is by no means comprehensive, rather is it a convenience sample of documents used during the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TORC Document</th>
<th>Contribution to the Thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Service Improvement Program. (2000, October). <em>DSIP report – Data services improvement program: Connecting rural Ontario.</em> Ontario, Canada: Author.</td>
<td>Discussion regarding the DSIP project and the success of the DISP project, chapter 4 and 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Rural Council. (2004, March). <em>Rural community capacity building program networking initiative contribution agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Rural Council (TORC) (Project No. ON-NN-0001).</em> Ontario, Canada: Author.</td>
<td>Discussion regarding in-kind to cash ratios, RCCB award rounds, chapters four and five.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8: Contribution of Documentation to Thesis**
5.2 The Partnership is Adequately Resourced with Financial Capital

When key informants responded to questions regarding the context within which TORC operated, the most prominent resource related issue, and with few exceptions the most emphasized discussion point during every interview was financial, specifically lack of access to sufficient funding.

“Well certainly the economics impacts it, so money makes the world go round; money is often the lubricant for partnerships. So, I think one of the contextual issues that has faced TORC from my perspective, and for the period that I was engaged, is being fiscally challenged.”

The expression or framing of the issue varied, and was generally dependent on what sector the respondent was from. If the key informant was from the non-profit sector, the environmental issue would be expressed as lack of access to sufficient funding or funding cuts. If the key informant was from the public sector the environment was more likely to be described as being one of fiscal restraint and increasing accountability such as the one that follows:

“Ok, so for me politically the environment is such that accountability has become very important to all federal departments and ministries, but certainly federally and so, you know we look for very specific performance measures, very specific deliverables whenever we entertain funding anything. So you know from a funder’s perspective it gets a little harder to justify even a normal contribution and I can’t begin to tell you the level of work I have.”

Regardless of the perspective, there evolved over time a common understanding of TORC’s financially precarious position. Being financially challenged however, had not always been the norm; one key informant describes a time when money was not a problem at TORC:
“Look at TORC, at the beginning we didn’t have any trouble getting money and projects started coming in if you had an eye to opportunity…and how to build the right partnerships. You know money came and I know the accountability is greater now and it’s more of a problem,…the government money and that sort of thing but the money, that DSIP project was two million if I recall, a two million dollar project and it looked like the opportunities were there.”

The temporal aspect of access to sufficient funding echoes a familiar pattern in the sector; while the first three years were sufficiently capitalized, a shift began in 2001. At that point money became increasingly more difficult to access and TORC joined the ranks of the underfunded NPO.

5.2.1 Sources of Funding

TORC received its funding from three main sources the first of which was “major project”

44 funding through government. This source drew from a provincial and federal ministry; The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) through the Rural Secretariat and associated programs. Both OMAFRA and AAFC required that TORC sign a contribution agreement, a requirement which necessitated incorporation. The AAFC-Rural Canadian Capacity Building (RCCB) program, through which TORC obtained its federal funding during the last 6 years, existed until approximately 2009. The RCCB program awarded TORC two, three year terms, for a total of approximately 80,000/year. This funding was matched by OMAFRA. To secure the funding TORC was required to complete funding proposals with expenses itemized and framed within the context of a project, one

44 My term used to differentiate it from normal project funding which it technically was.
45 I was unable to verify the year the program concluded.
proposal for each funder, an associated project budget and in 2007 an organizational-
project evaluation. Yearly reporting was also required for both funders. While both
funders signed three year contracts with TORC, the 3 year periods were not
synchronized, as illustration in Figure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OMAFRA Funding</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAFC Funding</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This reality added yet another layer of uncertainty to TORC’s financial circumstances as
the lack of synchronization meant that the full $160,000/annum was only secure for 18-
24 month periods. In addition the short time periods between contracts meant that
TORC needed to write proposals constantly, a situation which taxed the already thinly
spread human resources of the organization.

The second source of funding came from membership fees; of which a single
organizational membership contribution was approximately $500/annum. However this
revenue line item was never budgeted to exceed 20,000 in TORC’s annual budget. While
this was not a large part of TORC’s income, it was the component which drove the value
debate. Although value is material for another segment of this chapter it also has
relevance here. One key informant summarizes his concerns regarding the value TORC

Figure 6: TORC Contract Timelines
provided and why he, on behalf of his organization did not renew the membership as follows:

“I didn’t see value in what we were getting for five hundred dollars. I didn’t do it out of spite or out of anger. I just couldn’t justify to my board five hundred dollars[...] five hundred dollars is a lot of coin. So I had to be able to show and I know for a fact that’s why the centre left [...] that was a number of years ago as well, just more value in a membership.”

This was not an uncommon perspective, but it was one that was held largely by private sector members. Other NPOs seemed to regard memberships as a money shuffle, from one underfunded organization to another. What this example also presents is a flavour of the kind of resistance that TORC would have had to overcome if it had attempted to increase revenue by significantly raising membership fees.

The final source of funding was ‘other project’ funding. In addition to the “normal” or what I have termed major project activities of the organization such as forums, working groups and other dialogue generating activities which were funded through AAFC and OMAFRA, TORC engaged in other projects, some examples of which were outlined in chapter four. These more detailed accounts of the ROC project, the DSIP project and ORCA illustrate how, in some cases TORC was able to leverage a significant contribution to its own bottom line from managing projects. This happened in one of two ways. The first was for TORC to apply for project money that would benefit TORC itself as well as other project applicants, and then serve as project administrator; as was the case with ROC (Rural Ontario Online). In this situation TORC was a part of the partnership that would directly benefit from the resulting website, and it also assisted in
administering the project. Administration or project management in this context generally includes being the signing organization on the contribution agreement, generating required reports, managing the finances, liaising with the funder and making sure that work is proceeding as it should. What emerges as the expectations of project work are outlined, is that frequently multiple roles are required. In this case for example not only did TORC’s ED serve in the role of project manager and partner, but she was also involved in technical oversight when the contractor failed to deliver as promised.

The second way to leverage funds from projects is by managing projects for others. DSIP, discussed in Chapter 4 fit this model of project managing, as did another TORC-Federal project, the Rural Dialogues. Managing projects for others does not however, generally contribute to an organization’s own mission in any but a financial way, unless of course the mission of the organization is to manage projects. Project funding has also been identified as a key reason many organizations lose sight of their mission. This inherent weakness was highlighted by several key informants and is illustrated by this quotation.

“If you don’t stay poor enough then there is no incentive to go and try and get more money to do the things you need to do, but if you are too poor you spend all your time looking for ways to find money which takes you off your track. And I think, TORC to a certain extent...The FRL to a large extend have sometimes been pulled off target because the grant was over here and if you just tweaked something a little bit more that way then you’d have the money or the person. And it lasts only as long as that project lasts, but at least it gives you a little bit of money to put back in the pocket to do the things you want to do, but then you don’t have the time anymore.”
5.2.2 Core funding

The need to develop project funding in the absence of core funding has been keenly felt by TORC. Core funding or base funding refers to funding support for administrative structures and organizational development, and is no longer common in the non-profit sector. One key informant discusses the importance of the “core” and core funding:

“You know, everybody wants to fund this piece, that is the results piece. What are you deliverables, what are your outcomes, what are your impacts […] what do you resolve. And so you have got all of these little boxes and that is what they want to fund. […] But, I think what also needs to be funded is this piece here. This is the process piece, this is where lots of learning happens, this is where partnerships are developed and this is where ideas grow… and organizations grow and become responsive to what they are there for in the first place, but a lot…many…most of the funding agreements that I have ever seen or been involved in, have been about this piece. Nobody wants to fund development…and this is what people would have called core funding. So all of that is gone and it’s only about results, it’s only about the results on a specific project.”

The demise of core funding marked the beginning of nonprofit financing that focused on project funding. TORC was formed during what might be identified as the transition between periods, and as a result was almost always exclusively funded through projects.

What seems clear from this research however is that core funding has different meanings for different people. Here is a key informant’s description of his initial realization that funders had a different interpretation of ‘core funding’ and ‘project funding’ than did TORC:

“So I think the collective will is to move away from our one […] funding partner, because it’s just not been a positive relationship. And what’s interesting is that I’ve sort of gotten more involved in sort of understanding some of the history too. I actually went down to […] and met with the […] on my time, just to get better educated, help me
understand how this works right? And one of the takeaways for me was that the money that they give to TORC, had given to TORC, they’ve always seen that as project money, as opposed to core money to create an organization. [...] So, you know, I think, once that light bulb went off for me... we need some core funders who see it as supporting the infrastructure of what it is we do on an ongoing basis, and to me that doesn’t feel like the [...] anymore. Now they may have some other pot of money that feels more like core funding, but this particular pot that we’ve been accessing for the past number of years, is very clearly project money for them.”

What this confirms is that there were multiple perspectives within TORC’s operating environment which were maintained throughout the relationships and the funding cycles.

It also highlights the dependent nature of the relationship, a dependence which, according to the opinion of the following key informant can be detrimental.

“But from our perspective, when we are looking at organizations and non-profit organizations that serve rural communities, and how they are now generally funded...they are not funded in a way that creates independence for them...they are funded in a way that keeps them dependent on a funder. So as long as you’re doing what the funder wants, as long as you are meeting the funder’s criteria. It might not be the best thing for the community, but it meets the funder’s needs, but how can we possibly evolve towards being an independent organization that really can be part of something bigger. So I think our funding is one of our critical issues...”

This key informant goes on to discuss other negative outcomes of project funding relationships generally, in particular what some would identify as moral hazard.

“Yeah, only incremental cost directly related to the project can be funded and will be considered, so that’s this kind of thinking, it’s not that kind of thinking. [...] because if you are talking about networking, in particular, networking processes, relationships, then this is all an up-

---

46 Not specific to TORC’s situation but referring to any project funding received by any organization.
front piece, it’s probably not incremental. So, how does this funding application really support [for example] networking."

5.3.3 Major Funders

What environmental change(s) caused a shift from base, or core funding to project based funding? The first change was a reduction in funders and or funding programs. In TORC’s case these funders were for the most part government, and according to one key informant, were themselves more subject to significant limitations and accountability requirements than in the past:

“So there is a lot more checks and balances within the government system and a lot more rules and regulations and tie back to broader government mandate, departmental mandate, organizational priorities and so there is… for me there is imperilments to that I mean it’s not a free flow of money in any sense and yet on the other hand I do see where it’s important that they continue to receive financial support so I am prepared to do that but it is, it is harder within the context of accountability.”

This culminates in what appears to be a somewhat critical view from government and other sector partners, about the role of funders in the partnership and raises questions regarding the integrity of the concept of partnership if funders are partners. The following quotation illustrates one perspective:

“I think they [government] should be a partner but here’s the rub, I mean you have to have money but a partnership is much more than the money that you need and it’s the real work around that table of implementing and reaching that goal, it’s the teamwork, it’s the project work together. And I don’t know, I mean there is something about government bringing in all the money and calling the shots. So I don’t think it’s healthy for them to bring all the money. This is a reflection I have from working on some other projects.”

____________________________

121
Along with fewer funders has come a reduction in the number of funding programs resulting in a highly competitive funding environment. Given this context it is not surprising that current funders are encouraging, if not requiring partnerships from applicants. The end result of fewer dollars being made available to larger, partnership based groups, is that the stakes for these mandated organizations are also higher than they have been in the past.

5.2.3 Other Funding: In-Kind

While TORC struggled to find monetary funding, it appeared to be the recipient of abundant contributions of volunteer time\(^47\). This was the most accessible financial capital available to TORC, and TORC relied heavily on these donations. One key informant mentioned that it was his observation that reliance on volunteer time increased over time at TORC beginning in 2002.\(^48\) Because of this resource TORC’s contribution in project partnerships that required contribution agreements was almost always in-kind, comprised of a combination of volunteer and staff time.

> “Sometimes in partnerships with the government we might put money in when we expect a volunteer organization to put all their efforts and time in. […] I’m not always sure that is an equitable situation, because it costs a lot in human capital and the government can just put a cheque in. So sometimes it’s not equal.”

The ramifications of this dependence on volunteer contributions speculates one key informant, is that it is the individual who bears the cost of project funding and partnership building at TORC.

\(^{47}\) Although abundant it was not always the right match (more on this later).

\(^{48}\) The human resource aspect of the broader discussion will be pursued in a later section of this chapter.
“And so what’s interesting to me then is, what is the cost of that we are not capturing in this part here and in terms of who is bearing that cost. ‘Cause I think its individual people who are bearing the cost of developing those new partnerships and those new relationships and those new networks. And they have to do it over, and over, and over and over again and people think the organization is baring the cost…it’s not, the organization is about the people who are in the organization, and they are the ones who are bearing that cost and if I become more cautious about investing in those partnerships because I’ve invested too much in a past partnership, how likely am I going to be to pick up a new one…or pick up one that I might have to work at. So this is really complex.”

Of the many potential problems that this situation could generate, the most significant is the normalization of dependence. In this case normalization creates an expectation on the part of society that individuals will continue to carry the cost, and as such the situation is sustainable. This contrasts sharply with many NPO perspectives that would attest to the contrary, that actually individual volunteers burnout and so cannot continue to carry the burden of financing NPO’s.

The temporal aspect of access to financial capital echoes what has become a familiar pattern in the not-for-profit sector; while the first three years, from 1998-2001 are sufficiently capitalized, a shift begins in 2001. As illustrated in figure 12, money becomes much more difficult to access and TORC moves to the right on the continuum, toward lack of access to capital and thereby joins the ranks of the underfunded NPO for the remainder of its life.

![Access to capital diagram](image_url)

**Figure 7: Access to Sufficient Financial Capital**
5.3 Human Resources in the TORG Partnership

“I think what is key to any partnership are the people at the table. If they come with a sole agenda and aren’t cooperative then the partnership can struggle and waiver and not be as successful. So I think the people, the partners, at the table are very important.”

As indicated by this introductory quotation, intuitively it seems clear that the key to the successful operation of any partnership and organization is sufficient and appropriate human resources. As indicated in the previous section, for much of TORG’s existence obtaining this balance has been a struggle:

I would say that, in my last couple of years our vision, our aspirations, and our desires are nowhere near our capacity. So to me there’s a bit of a chasm between what TORG is and what it could do versus what three staff with a few volunteers could sort of reasonably put together right? So to me that has always felt like a huge disconnect.

The most visible part of any organization is the front line staff. As a result, when cracks form it is generally staff who fill the void and in this TORG was no exception. In TORG’s later years however the staff appeared unable to maintain the tenuous balance; becoming over extended to the point where the ED was forced to say no to new requests for collaboration or assistance that required staff assistance. Here is a key informant’s memory of one such situation.

“A LHIN\(^{49}\) approached TORG and said, “We want you to co-sponsor a new rural health table.” I thought, “That’s fantastic. They’re actually going to take rural seriously” Quite rightfully ------- said, “That’s fantastic, staff can’t do that. We can’t do it.” Which is I think was the appropriate response, so I go back to my rural working group and say, “The question for organizations around this table is, can we make this

\(^{49}\) Local Health Integration Network
work?” And yes we can. So one of the partners of the round table on rural health was the community health center at St. Jacobs, well they’re going to provide the administrative support, someone else can provide the meeting space, someone else may actually provide little bit of research support. So we’ll make it work, but TORC’s staff is not involved, per se. And that to me goes back to this having to think back to the government’s management model of an organization, it’s kind of like, it’s a network of networks of networks, right? You just sort of pull from those networks going, “Do we have collectively enough resource to sort of apply to something and make it work?” So it’s interesting, a different approach.”

As highlighted, this approach is certainly unique; it uses only the resources that have been volunteered, and on an ad hoc basis. But while innovative, it is an approach to which many might take exception as it provides opportunity to stray significantly from organizational mandate.

“Because the working groups are, I think fairly empowered and have lots of talented people on them, from an organizational point of view, there is a little bit of a tail wagging the dog issue. And I’m not sure how I feel about that in terms of TORC, I think we need and want strong vibrant working groups but in some ways, they, because of the work they do, can and sometimes do set TORC’s agenda a little bit. Yeah, as opposed to working with, “This is what we need you to do.” The working group will say, “TORC this is what we’re doing.” And there’s a little bit of pendulum swinging there. And I don’t know how I feel about that, that’s sort of the way it is, I don’t know if that’s good or bad, but that’s the way it is right now.”

Even when volunteer and staff time was committed through normal organizational processes to regular program activities, the financial aspect of the time commitment was significant although not well recognized when volunteer hours are on the table. The following quotation chronicles the impact of a major project, the conference held in 2006, on both volunteers and staff of TORC. It highlights the significance of the volunteer
commitment in time; the framing of which is from the perspective of professional services and the equivalent cash value of the contribution:

So that was a huge commitment that we asked of those two members. – […], who was a member of the board, and […] who just came from the general membership. So, that was a huge…and when they were asking us about resources, you know, I half kidding said at one point well let’s think of them as a consultant so minimum thousand dollars a day plus travel expenses, so that is two thousand dollars for every meeting that they are sitting around so it is a fairly significant contribution. They are both professional people, they both have lives, they both have work, so I think it was incredible… from the TORC perspective with the volunteers, it was added on to their lives, whereas from our partners, the people sitting around that table, it was carved out of their working schedule, which is a real difference and there wasn’t an appreciation for that from the other funders.

This quotation picks up a thread from a previous paragraph on in-kind contributions. The implications for TORC’s operations are evident when one views the following two tables which account for the in-kind contributions to the RCCB project during the course of the contract period 2004-2006. It is important to note that ratios of cash to in-kind contributions varied from program to program, ranging from 1:1, to as much as 1:3. In the RCCB program the ratio of cash contribution by government to in-kind contributions required by partner organization was 1:1. That meant that if the partners were asking for $80,000 cash from government, they would have to contribute at least $80,000 (matching) cash and time. Frequently the applicant was required to contribute a minimum cash contribution in addition to the in-kind contribution. When present, this requirement frequently presents a barrier to applications for project funding.
5.4 In-Kind Compilation for RCCB Project 2004-2006

The information shown in tables three and four, was prepared by HB Cummings and Associates for the TORC evaluation in 2006. These calculations are based on an in-kind contribution rate which has been fixed at $500/day and that each meeting averages .75 of one day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TORC Administrative Meetings</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual General Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2004 Annual General Meeting</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2004 Annual General Meeting</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2005 Annual General Meeting</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AGM Participation</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Board Meetings in 2004</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Board Meetings in 2005</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Board Meetings in 2006</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Participation in Board Meetings</strong></td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conference Planning Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 2004 Conference Planning Meetings</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2006 Conference Preliminary Meetings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 2006 Revised Conference Meetings</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Participation in Conference Meetings</strong></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Participants in TORC Administrative Meetings</strong></td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-Kind contribution for administration purposes:
- \( 491 \times .75 = 368.25 \) days
- \( 368.25 \times 500 = \$184,125 \)

*Table 9: TORC Administrative Meetings*
Prepared by H.B. Cummings and Associates, 2006
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Meetings &amp; Strategic Planning</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2004 Strategic Planning Meeting</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2004 Business Meeting</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2004 Business Meeting</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2005 Business Meeting</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2005 Business Meeting</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2005 Business Meeting</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2006 Business Meeting</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Participation in Business Meetings</strong></td>
<td><strong>196</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In-Kind contribution for business meetings:**

\[196 \times 0.75 = 147 \text{ days}
\]

\[147 \times 500 = $73,500\]

**Table 10: TORC Administrative Meetings**

Prepared by H.B. Cummings and Associates, 2006

Total in-kind contributions for the RCCB project for 2004-2006 was $257,625. This $257,625 of in-kind time was contributed by both staff and volunteers in return for $240,000 in cash from the CRP. While this in-kind calculation tracks meeting time, it fails to account for the many hundreds of hours volunteers spent outside of a meeting room either participating in projects or other operations of the organization. One board member, extensively involved in the financial matters of the organization such as budgeting and the audit process, estimated that his contribution, incorporating the meetings listed in the previous tables, and over the same period was $25,000, $35,000 and $45,000 for a total of $105,000. The prevalence of such volunteer contributions in TORC and in other organizations like TORC supports an earlier key informant’s comment that individuals are bearing the cost of partnership building.
Even though dependence on volunteer time is significant, staff continue to carry the lion share of the organizational load. The value of staff time as an in-kind contribution for project work is also frequently a point of contention. One key informant had this to say about her experience:

There were a couple people working with them that really were trying to serve the project and really took on that notion that they are indeed a civil servant trying to help organizations like TORC to thrive and be effective and meet […] objectives as much as local objectives. But there were equally people in that system that had very narrow ideas of accountability and a real clear sense of this is right and that is wrong and were quite[…] in their approach if you didn’t meet whatever it was that they wanted. And their expectations were high and well beyond the cash value. I mean at one point I tried to say “You pay us x dollars, that would be x % of your salary. Which would mean we would get your services for like 50%, 85% of the year so why would you expect that 4 people would put in 110% on your project when you only actually pay for half a person’s salary?” And even those kinds of blunt arguments never hit home.

The following quotation speaks to what a key informant board member observes when a project the size of the conference is underway. Clearly the impact is significant and wide ranging, and again the concern regarding financial matters is evident. There is also a feeling of helplessness reflected in this statement stemming from the outsourcing agreement. Although common in the sector, it is a practice that has had its problems and critics.

Then there is the impact on the office itself and the other functions and, in particular, on […] So, I think one of the things for an organization like TORC is that we took on a project that would have been much larger than the conference we would have ordinarily had, but there is a ripple effect through the organization and it’s kind of like a storm brews and you really can’t predict what the actual impact is going to be, so you can sort of guess but it’s kind of like predicting weather
right. Might know it’s going to rain but…it really goes through the organization. That has an impact on all the activities that you are engaged in and I mean, we were challenged too in terms of our financial accounting and who was doing that and sharing that with another organization which was in some sense a partnership around sharing or contracting at least a part of their staff time to do it and a part of that challenge was having them being responsive to our needs at the same time that they were trying to be responsive to their principal employer. And so, there were a lot of things around the conference around the financial end of it that we were just not very clear about. I don’t think we were up to speed organizationally to deal with the complexity of some of the financial issues.

While outsourcing may be the answer for some situations, the question remains, who manages the gaps that inevitably occur when large projects are organized in the absence of sufficient staff and other human resources? Another key informant, this time a staff person expands on how the gap is closed:

We knew it was going to be tight but we knew that we could deliver, so everybody has to step up and add that to their plate because it’s, it’s vital to the ongoing sustainability of TORC to take advantage of that initiative. It’s really not an option not to. So, but then it further weakens the structure because now we are spread even further on what we need to accomplish. So if we had financial resources we could still say to this new ministry, we will take you up on that but we also have the ability to hire someone to help us so that it doesn’t weaken us internally. And when I say weakened what ends up happening is we have to put all of our energy into those two events so other aspects of the organization, whether that be well, it’s time for year-end we need to address that, it’s time for me to edit one of the other forum reports that have come in so we can make sure we have that deliverable, like all of the other aspect of the organization are deliverable, there are accountabilities are put on hold so we can focus on those two forums because we can’t hire additional people or we don't have them in our structure to say ok you guys take care of that and we will take care of this over here.

Clearly the management required to balance the operational requirements of major projects and the ongoing organization is significant, particularly the human resources
which include: 1) project management staff and volunteers, 2) as well as partner organizations and their staff and volunteers. Add a few levels of complexity with numerous projects and associated expense accounting and other kinds of accountability that is required for funders and it very quickly becomes a job that is too complicated and or time consuming for most volunteers and many contractors. What is also evident in the quotation is that each individual has different priorities, motivations and skills and regardless of how many people are involved; sometimes the people with the right motivation, knowledge and abilities are not available.

Now I have to work on doing graphic work on this report that, not that I am not capable of, but it’s not my strength the graphic end. Again if we had resources I would send it out to a graphic person but we don’t so I goof around a bit with publisher and I can do it and it’s not that I mind doing it but now have, I don’t really have, in other words I am probably…. For the organization it’s probably not best for me to be doing it because it’s probably taking me longer to figure out how to do that graphically and to take the time to go through it then a graphic artist who is familiar with those programs.

This leads to a host of inefficiencies and false economies as essentially it is part of a bigger, “wicked problem.” At TORC, as in many other organizations, staffing and staffing requirements fluctuate according to funding availability and in response to other unavoidable situations such the loss of an Executive Director. When this cycle is in a downturn and attrition or layoffs occur, remaining staff spread their talents and efforts across roles and responsibilities outside areas of expertise, the result of which has the potential to, as discussed in the previous quotation, decrease their effectiveness in their own role:
There was a real impact on staff in terms of their day to day activities, their normal sets of responsibilities and then the responsibilities being exacerbated by having the bulk of the work, the detailed grunt work done mostly by TORC staff which was usually beyond the balance of their job descriptions and what they were normally paid for.

Frequently the immediate response is simply to add to staff the structure; yet for many organizations TORC among them, there are no resources available to solve the dilemma by hiring:

The organizational structure needs to be expanded. Again it goes back to the money issue. We need an events coordinator or we need a program manager, somebody that sort of coordinates these activities. [...] The resources, I don’t know whether it’s another one or one and a half, two bodies. But it needs to somehow get above that barrier, but again it comes to the underlying issue of money.

Recruiting and retaining volunteers and staff with the appropriate, required skill level to support the work of TORC has been a challenge. In an effort to solve this dilemma without committing already over committed financial resources, many organizations including TORC have service contracts, most frequently with accountants or bookkeepers. In TORC’s case, TORC shared the services of the Foundation for Rural Living’s bookkeeper. A previous quotation discussed this arrangement within the context of the conference project. What also came out of that quotation was that this was not an entirely satisfactory arrangement largely because the bookkeeper’s priorities were with FRL, not TORC. One key informant, this time from FRL had this to say about the arrangement:

I am going to be honest, I think it’s about trying to survive yourselves, I think it’s about no longer having the capacity to give outside of yourself. So I think individually and as an organization or coming to
the place where that is what you believe, that you don’t have any more
to give to another organization because your own organization is
suffering and your own organization is as vulnerable as the other ones.
And when you are being paid by your organization, you have a
responsibility to fulfill your…your obligations to that organization, first
and foremost. And I can say from my own personal experience, that I
reached that point […] a while ago.”

This quote raises some interesting issues with respect to the efficacy of work sharing and
contracting out but also in reference to the emotional demands these arrangements place
on staff. Many private and public sector organizations have rules prohibiting multiple
employer situations or “moonlighting.” Yet in the NPO sector this situation is relatively
commonplace, resulting as it does from the financial situations of many organizations.

“We all only have 100 percent to give. And so if you decide that you
are going to give to a partnership situation and you only have 100
percent to give, what…what’s happening there. So as in individual I
have to decide that I’m willing to work more hours and that means my
home life and my family life and my personal life…gets decreased or
diminished…or my paid work at FRL needs to get diminished so I can
take that on. But if it is just me giving up my personal capacity in order
to contribute to a partnership situation, then at some point I need to get
some of that back, otherwise it’s not going to be sustainable and I am
going to resent it and it’s…it is going to fall apart. So, I think in
partnerships people really forget about that; they only have 100 percent,
and if I was going to give to you, I need to somehow get something
back so that I can still be 100 percent.”

Clearly some partners within the TORC partnership do not get back enough to top up, or
replenish to the required 100%. In these circumstances the quotation carries a warning
and begs the question; what happens when this deficit continues over time? The answer is
what some, including the next key informant would describe as “burnout”, a situation
which leads to high staff and volunteer turnover:
And so, I think why TORC and FRL aren’t so close now, is certainly TORC went through a very vulnerable time…and part of our relationship, our partnership with TORC was a paid kind of relationship. So, what we gave out was time and what we got back was money for our organization, except the time going out was more than money coming in and the other part of that was, the time that was going out was not recognized by this organization and the leadership of this organization at the time that needed to be replaced in some other way by the money coming back or some other way. And so the partnership really, and the successive partnership fell to one person. So the organization was benefiting and FRL was benefiting from the purchase service arrangement, but I wasn’t. So, from my perspective, that was one reason why we haven’t really carried on, because I wasn’t able to carry on and continue to do that.

As indicated the retention of both staff and volunteers can be a significant problem for organizations and not only from the perspective of getting work done. Lack of continuity also impacts an organization’s ability to maintain the vision and momentum. The concept of organizational memory has relevance here and when it becomes discontinuous even fractured, according to one key informant it leads to situations where the same mistakes are being made again and again.

Well I don’t know that we build on where we are at. You know we don’t know…we haven’t figured out how to cash the intellectual intelligence, the cooperative intelligence and memory and all that stuff. It just kills me to when I go back to thinking about new ideas as if they had never been discussed before and they might have been discussed within this organization. Not just TORC but other organizations, we just keep moving back and then we change people and then we start from the beginning again. Instead of bringing…instead of bringing better, stronger people in which will take an organization forward. We kind of lose people and then we start…we kind of go backwards. And I don’t know if it’s part of the Rural Leadership problem that we don’t have enough good people to take the lead on these things.

In general the predominant message regarding the levels of staff and volunteer time available for TORC is that, (outside of extremely brief time periods) there has never been
enough available to meet TORC organizational goals, a problem which contributes to a situation where aspirations exceed capacity. This reality is reflected in figure 13 which has only one point on the continuum, reflecting a general deficit throughout the organization’s life-cycle. The lack of sufficient and appropriate HR according to more than one key informant, from time-to-time also extended to senior leadership. These human capital gaps were generally attributed to a lack of financial capital, particularly a lack of core funding.

Sufficient and appropriate HR --------------^---Lack of sufficient and appropriate HR
1998-2009

**Figure 8: Access to Sufficient and Appropriate Human Resources**

**5.5 Structure of the Partnership is Transparent**

**5.5.1 History of Structural Development**

The story which emerged from these interviews traced the origin and evolution of TORC, starting with its formation, at which it was characterized as an umbrella organization providing a wider platform for rural issues:

I guess that’s why I was at the original ‘bring us together’ kind of a meeting. I felt that there needed to be an organization that was broader than some of us. My organization was looking at leadership and other organizations had their own niche. But I saw the Ontario Rural Council as being more of an umbrella, a wider platform, at which we could all come together and speak about rural issues. So that’s what I thought the value was and that’s why I was part of helping create it.
While TORC started as a loose affiliation which was transparent in nature, described as being flexible and able to move quickly, these benefits were soon out-weighed by the need to get things done and the consequent, associated need for resources:

“The reason I was excited about us starting TORC is because it was quite different from any other organization. That’s a double edged sword. It was kind of this loose, it didn’t have a structure to the organization, it was people coming together. It was a really easy thing to move. When something is not too structured you can kind of manipulate it a little bit and move things around quickly. That was what attracted me to it in the first place. I thought this is a really cool concept. But I think that it maybe was before its time and if we were starting it now we might have had a better chance, I don’t know. It was a kind of a mechanism as opposed to becoming an organization. And I think now we’re thinking about how do we continue to work with the others at FRL and the great things that are happening between those two organizations but what else can happen? The Centre for Rural Leadership is right across the hall and there are other things that could happen. I think that perhaps if it had stayed as a mechanism instead of an organization it would have had a little more flexibility[...] Part of it was because of funding requirements that it became incorporated. Because I think that if we’d been able to accurately flow funding from one organization to the other, it would have remained as a much tighter entity. But we had to be incorporated in order to funnel funding through TORC. I’m not sure that was the best thing to do, but I think we had to do it.

In the years following incorporation many of the founding members left TORC and were replaced by other, generally less senior organizational representatives. These new representatives were understandably less aware of the structure and component processes than were the founders of TORC. The necessity to establish relationships with funders was another driving force in TORC’s incorporation, not only because it would be able to enter into legal agreements, but also because it would as a result, assume a structure that was comprehensible to funders. In this way TORC engaged with funders on their terms,
and while it sacrificed flexibility and transparency, almost immediately positive things started to happen for TORC and other organizations that shared a common office space.

And then from there what I thought was a really interesting thing that happened is that some of the smaller organizations that were part of TORC cohabitated at one Stone Road in that corner on the 4th floor and then it was we would see each other on a daily basis and then it was ‘what’s going on with your program?’ and I mean outside of regular meetings and regular communication you’d get there was that personal exchange and feeling like we could work together on things.

From this relationship emerged a synergy that led to the development of a project proposal for a rural website portal, rural Ontario, ROC detailed in chapter 4. These were early days for projects of this nature and this was one of TORC’s first. One key informant describes how the relationship between office co-habitors and partners developed to the point of working together.

So then I remember I think TORC came and spoke at Ag Leadership meetings and we attended many of those forums and we would communicate about those to our Ag Leadership network etc. so back and forth that way. And then because we cohabitated, because we all knew each other…the executive directors for example around there, we all knew each other’s lives. So we got a history and it was a positive history together. So then we started, we all wanted this website or this thing that would help us with working together administratively so perhaps, we could share things better. A website, we wanted something where it was easy to upload things. We could upload ourselves, our discussions, forums, online. And it was going to cost more than any one of us could afford so we thought let’s see if we can go together, if we can work together to access money and to create this website or discussion place that was bigger than any one of us but could continue on."

Figure 10 on page ….141 reflects the temporal aspect of the structural operational realities identified as a result of this analysis. Both realities have impacted TORC at
some point in its evolution; approximate timelines are also identified, 2002 and incorporation marking the beginning of a less visible structure. In this case the facilitating operational realities and the operational realities that provide barriers to effective partnership practice are not necessarily intuitive. Depending on the organization’s goal, either reality could serve in either role. If for example the goal of the organization is to secure funding, then the transparent nature (unorthodox) of the structure may be a barrier. In general however transparency is seen as facilitating relationship development. By the same token an organization whose structure is less or not visible, is traditionally seen as presenting barriers to partnership development, which in this case was required as a pre-requisite to contracting with the government.

The actual corporate structure of the new organization as described by a key informant was an association that was membership based, and limited to 40 members as outlined in chapter four. In the following quotation the key informant also mentions that this limitation regarding membership may have impacted TORC’s ability to speak for rural. This opinion was not uncommon, and over time the logic of the argument eventually prevailed:

Yeah I guess that when I think of our structure I would say we’re structured as a membership association, right? And there’s different ways to structure things, although that’s how I would describe TORC’s structure. And then from that membership, we derive a board of directors and small management group. When you think of TORC as sort of a network of organizations, I think the huge limiting factor has been and again, I don’t quite understand the history, but someone said we are a network of 40 organizations. Forty and they capped it; we can’t be less than that, we can’t be more than that which in hindsight to me seems weird, we could be a 400 organization. You know what I mean, but someone said, no we’re 40. And you know I think that
created some limitations on what TORC could do and what it could become. Because it sort of became a club, so what do the 40 people think? As opposed to what does rural Ontario think? You know what I mean? So I think in hindsight, structurally, that was a limiting factor and we’re certainly taking steps to revisit that, because my understanding of any sort of membership organization is, if you pay up, anyone can be a member. I mean, you could put certain limitations around that, but I’d rather see membership being open to just about any rural individual or rural organization that wanted to be a member. So that to me is a structural issue.

5.5.2 Purpose of Structure

Members understanding of the purpose of the structure varied from the majority who had little or nothing to say about structure, to others who had clearly given it a great deal of thought. Here is one key informant’s assessment of why the structure of TORC is important and why in this case it works to the benefit of members.

Does the structure affect the partnership? Well it’s kind of like the chicken and the egg question a bit, right. Because the structure … is the structure designed to best facilitate involvement of existing member or is the structure designed to advance, you know, a particular agenda. And I don’t mean that in a political sense, but to advance particular issues or to get particular pieces of work done. And the members fit in as they see best, which … which is it?

I would say on the face of it that the structure seems to allow for different levels of engagement. So if you can afford a lot of time, and are interested, you could express interest on sitting on the executive committee. If you didn’t have a lot of time, but were interested in something particular you could sit on a working group. So, in that way, it seems to accommodate a range of availability.

5.5.2 Decision Making as a Structural Component

The organizational function most likely to be identified as structural is decision making and the primary decision making body is the board. While the partnership concept that generated TORC appeared to be a good thing; i.e. marrying government, both federal and
provincial with organizations that represented a cross section of rural Ontario, the reality of the working relationship was sometimes far from harmonious as committee members who represented the partners had significant differences in expectations regarding appropriate contributions of time and money. These differences extended to their understandings of how the partnership would make decisions. One key informant described a situation where this was in question as follows:

We all agreed that we would form a conference committee, provide equal number of representatives; the […] at that time had some capacity issues and there was a turnover of people. And so could not provide the four members agreed to in the beginning, and of course the conference committee could not wait. It was decided that they go ahead with the work. But after the […] provided full membership on the committee, because they had started taking decisions on their own and that every meeting the […] members could not be there physically or through conference call, most decisions were taken by one particular partner or bulldozed through. These were the terms used by some of the members who participated in the committee. Its very unfortunate when the consultant who was hired has more say in what happens than any of the committee members.

When asked to clarify why s/he thought this had happened s/he replied that it was his/her perception that because the federal members of the committee were not located in Guelph their ability to participate face-to-face meetings was reduced, at the same time this limited their participation to the extent that their suggestions regarding the conference were glossed over or ignored. In other words they believed that they had no input into decisions at least in part because of proximity, or more accurately lack of proximity. In this way structure had a significant impact on decision making.
5.5.3 Boards, Working Groups and Committees as Structure

The TORC board figured prominently in key informant responses and discussion about decision making. In the case of TORC as a partnership of the whole, the role of the board and the kinds of decisions it needed to take as a result of that leadership role were a part of the administrative structure of the organization and varied temporally. Several key informants discussed the period of time when TORC was between executive directors, one described it as an ‘anomalous’ time. During discussion of this time period, references such as; “the board was far too engaged in the day to day decisions of the organization, but by default there really wasn’t another choice,” were common. The increased board attention required by the organization is evident when one views a record of the administrative meetings held by the board over other three years 2004-2006. In 2004 there were seven meetings, in 2005 it peaks at twelve and in 2006 following the hiring of a new executive director, there were three. Other administrative meetings included annual general meetings, and project related meetings included conference planning meetings.

TORC also had working groups and of the five working groups described in chapter four, four were active in the 2004-2006 time period, collectively holding 24 meetings. TORC had three additional committees which also held 24 meetings over the same 2004-2006 period. These committees were: sustainable finance, research and communication. The work of the committees and the organization was advanced and frequently even accomplished through these meetings.
5.5.4 Documentation as Structure

The documentation that gives shape to organizational structure includes such things as bylaws, operational policies and others such as the strategic plan etc. Project documentation can also be part of structure, for example the ROC documentation made available to me during the course of this research included an agreement entitled; The ROC Partnership, “A Partnership Plan.” This document discussed on page 105 of this thesis while seemingly impressive, saw assessments regarding the success of its implementation as vague to non-existent. That aside, a significant body of documentation outlining the shape, identity and purpose of the organization was completed over the years. For a list of some of these documents see Appendix A.

Stewardship of the documentation and records was ably fulfilled by board and staff, staff being the touchstones of organizational continuity both in terms of their personal affection for the organization as mentioned in the section on human resources and as perpetuators of the organization’s history.

Figure 10 notes the change in position of the organization over time starting with the period (1998-01) when it is the most transparent, to later years after incorporation (2002-09) where it’s structure is reported to be less visible, or to some not visible.

5.6 Engaged Membership-Partners

Directly associated with human resources and supporting structure are the qualities of the member-partners. According to many key informants the quality of the TORC experience related largely to the membership and in particular who was representing the member organization. This seemed to have relevance on several levels, the first level had
to do with organizational position, i.e. did the representative have decision making authority which would allow them to commit organizational resources without extensive “at home” lobbying. This aspect of being in possession of authority in the organization that the member is representing is discussed by a key informant:

You need to have the right people representing the different organizations. So if this is your membership, it’s not ok for me to send a junior staff person who can’t make decisions...It’s not ok for me to send somebody just to have a body sitting at a back table. If you’re serious about a partnership, it needs to be the person who has the full context or the big context of what your organization and your work is about, so that you are drawing all of that knowledge and bringing it in...and so is everyone else. So it needs to be the person who has that information. It also needs to be the person who is...able to make commitments, because it’s not just about showing up at a meeting and sitting around at a table and hearing updates.

Again, as touched on in the discussion on structure, the people who represented the member organizations changed over time, the founders replaced, according to several key informants by less senior people who had a less developed appreciation and understanding of TORC’s work:

“One was, I’ll call them the second generation TORCers, so the person who was inspired to join TORC in the first place retired, moved on, had enough meetings and needed to do something else. And the replacement sent by their organization often didn’t have the enthusiasm or commitment that their predecessor had. So that was difficult.

We’re always asking the question ‘who’s not around the table?’ but I like to ask the question ‘Why are we at the table? Why are we here?’ I think that’s how we should often start things. What I think is sometimes missing is that in the early days we had the decision makers around the table and sometimes now we get people that can’t make a decision right away, that don’t have the clout. And that changes the

---

50 One could argue that the founders were the most engaged members.
nature of things. They don’t think it’s important enough to send their
top person then let’s look at why it isn’t. I’m not sure they’re using
TORC in the way that they could be. And part of that is that they’re not
sending the right people there and part of that is that they’re on their
Blackberries instead of being engaged and they’re not asking the
questions. I think TORC could be informing policy right there.”

The second category of characteristics related to engaged members were the personal
qualities of the individual themselves; were they connectors and were they were actually
personally interested and engaged in TORC’s mandate. This issue was also identified in
the previous quotation.

Several other salient points were made with respect to the importance of members. First,
as identified in financial capital, the organization gains a great deal through donations of
time from individuals. As such the relationship between member and TORC should be a
reciprocal relationship. This comment is clearly based on the assumption of equity or
even equality in partnerships. The following quotation by a frustrated board member
illustrates this perspective:

Where the problems came in, is in the delineations of roles and
responsibilities within that partnership vs. the funding roles and from
my perspective the inability of our partners to separate their partnership
role from their funding roles. So often we would be required or asked
for information within the context of a partnership which from my
perspective is very inappropriate, so my response would be, do we get
to see your books?

The next quotation questions the assumption of equity implicit in the previous quotation
by highlighting again, the fact that individual members contribute a substantial amount of
time working on TORC’s behalf. In so doing the experience of TORC would lead one to
question as does the following key informant, the understanding of key funding partners
regarding both the extent of individual contributions, compared to their own in partnership contributions:

There was a real lack of understanding of what TORC brought to the table and that gets back to an earlier question that we talked about. So what we brought were bodies, that were volunteering their time and we were constantly being questioned on what we were contributing and because we weren’t contributing the same in terms of the finances, that really seemed to be problematic from what I was hearing back from our folks that served on the actual planning committee. So that was an ongoing issue and it really surprised me that our partners and funders didn’t understand that and so it came back to one of our partners saying well our people are volunteers too. Well no, your people are sitting around the table and they are getting a wage and it’s during work time, so they may have volunteered for the activity, but they are not volunteers. They are still receiving a wage. So there is a real lack of understanding with the people that I negotiated with about what that actually looked like operationally, and it was a constant source of frustration, I think, for our people.

One of the ways individual members were rewarded for their contributions at TORC was through the personal growth opportunities which emerged through exposure to new ideas that were always on offer:

“I have a lot of other responsibilities and TORC wouldn’t make the second tier of priority organizations we’re involved in. It’s probably lower than that but that’s not to say that what the organization is trying to accomplish isn’t significant. It’s just that from a business perspective, we are the only agri-business that has maintained a membership in TORC….you know when I travel in industry circles I get to know a fair number of people. When I go to a TORC event there will be precious few if any of those folks there. That has always been for me one of the quirks and perks of being associated with TORC because it has allowed me to broaden my area of understanding and allowed me to network with people that I wouldn’t network otherwise and I think build some rapport with folks from organizations that in OIG’s perspective would be somewhat outside the mainstream but certainly what OIG wishes to do in the agricultural industry.”
If reciprocity is not established members/volunteers will burn-out and lose interest.

This aspect of burnout, common in the sector causes organizations to look for ways to maintain engagement starting with being sure that mission and vision are aligned with the interests and abilities of the members. Reasons why organizations choose to join TORC focused on TORC’s commitment to rural, and involvement being an opportunity to leave a legacy. The role of individuals in terms of facilitating these goals through the representation of their organizations was seen as variously successful over the years; again starting with a fully engaged, representative membership, which as the founding members moved on, was seen to decline in effectiveness as illustrated in figure 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaged Members -----------------^-------------------^--------</th>
<th>lack of engaged members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-01</td>
<td>2002-09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 9: Engaged Members**

**5.7 Members have a Strong Social network**

When describing members of TORC several key informants mentioned that they had strong networks. There was a general consensus that this quality was a good thing which had undoubtedly contributed to TORC’s larger network however not everyone agreed that all aspects of the network were healthy. Here is one person’s analysis of TORC’s internal network:

I can sit here and name so readily some of the key folks that have been involved with TORC over the years and it’s a small group and I wonder if we haven’t spent an awful long time building a very cozy little clique where everyone is comfortable and knows everybody else and we’re
preaching to the converted and we’re all absolutely inspired by the message but we haven’t done enough to broaden that tent or bring others in.

In addition to comments about internal networks there were also concerns expressed about what would happen to the network if TORC broadened its focus to incorporate advocacy, an initiative that was on TORCS agenda toward the end of the decade.

Coincidentally, according to the following quotation this concern had also been very real for some members at TORC’s inception:

I will tell you a bit, I don’t know it all but I know that when TORC started, OFA had signed on and […] was a pretty good supporter of TORC, but some of the OFA membership were really concerned that TORC would take on a rural advocacy role and that wasn’t their’s to do, that was the OFA’s because in the OFA’s mind rural and Ag were synonymous and if you want to speak for rural, you were speaking for Ag and so that was it.

The fact that over time there appeared to be a difference of how much of a social network members were able to access, returned the focus to the founders and their networks, and the subsequent replacement of most founders with organizational representatives who have less social capital. This shift in member composition became a familiar concern and is reflected in the diagram below.

---

**Figure 10: Members have a Strong Social Network**

---

Strong Social Network ————^———-^———-Weaker Social Network

5.8 The Value of the Partnership is Established

“Well you have to build the value proposition. You have to tell them how important the rural economy is to their business, to their country, to their customers. You have to tailor each presentation to touch on what’s important to that particular potential participant. Organizations will tell you that’s outside of our core mandate or we don’t have the human resources to participate in that but most companies of any significant size have somebody that’s involved in stakeholder relations. They may not call it that but somebody does that. You just have to find the right person and then deliver the right sales pitch. It’s not easy.”

Concern about giving and receiving value for membership in TORC was reflected in the responses of key informants, particularly on the part of government and private sector members. In addition to remarks about the need for TORC to do a better job in communicating the value TORC provides, there was also an emphasis during the interviews on the need for TORC to establish an ROI calculation that would create a hard, financially related rationalization of the membership fee; thereby demonstrating the value of a membership in the partnership. The soft side of value was the main focus of comments related to value, with specific reference to TORC’s network. Government in particular saw the network as a very desirable benefit of TORC membership according to the following key informant:

If I think about … if I think about the TORC partnership and the benefit that this office got from being involved, the benefit was direct contact with some rural organizations. So that it was … it was a connection with the community and if we needed information around a particular rural issue, if there wasn’t a TORC member that had that information, we could probably find out who it was we should be talking to. So it was access to information really, and it also provided a venue to promote or explain government programs or government policy directions. So it was a means to communication for us as well. And, if I look at, kind of, the dynamics of the TORC partnership, I mean, it certainly … it certainly raised … it was a means to raise some
issues. I mean, I don’t think it’s any small feat that the organization came to be regarded as a … a community organization specifically representative, that government needed to speak to. Like, you couldn’t ignore whatever TORC would say about whatever it was that you were doing. And I would hazard a guess that one of the reasons that the federal and provincial funding partners who provided funding for its operations did so, was in order to have a representative organization through which they could, get ideas and get advice. So it’s setting up a representative opposed to a participatory democracy, right. We will set up these representative organizations, we will talk to those organizations and we will say that we have the word of the people. So it was effective in that regard. I would say just by virtue of the reputation it has within government.

Private sector and non-profit members also mentioned TORC’s network as something that they saw value in, and that contributed not only to the organization that they were connected to but also to the lives of individual members.

I’ve been able to use TORC to broaden my networks, my experiences, and my understandings and even help further my career, whether it’s political or whatever it might be and help build the local community because I’ve got five children and two of them are grown and living in the community.

The appreciation of networks reflected in the previous quotations was confirmed by the results of a survey conducted by Harry Cummings and Associates in 2006 where 65% of respondents believed that TORC had helped them maintain their networks and many developed new networks, the average response was contact with five new networks in 27 months.

An important tool in the measurement of value is evaluation, a process that was regarded as being able to deliver results that could be used to calculate a return on investment. By conducting evaluations, TORC could for example identify benefits of membership,
thereby demonstrate the value of the partnership and so establish it as an enterprise worthy of the cost of membership fees and other funding. TORC’s first and only organizational evaluation was conducted by Harry Cummings and Associates in the winter and spring of 2006. This evaluation was a requirement of an RCCB contribution, not an effort to establish an ROI. Regardless, the evaluation product was welcome to many, at the same time the focus on ROI was frustrating to others:

It still comes down to the dollar. It’s not the value of this. It’s not the value of people, it’s not the value of the process and the learning….Our job is really not to make money, our job is to evolve ourselves and our society into something higher than we were yesterday, for all of us, not just for people who have money. But, everything seems to be based on this value of the dollar.

Few key informants appeared to be interested in discussing the value created by TORC at any length with the exception of private sector members who emphasized the monetary relationship or ROI. In contrast the non-monetary value created by TORC over the years was well understood by founders and was and is still appreciated by many members today. This value was reported as being related to the network and the forum TORC creates for the stories of rural. Others however were much less certain about what value TORC does provide, but believed that evaluation and ROI’s assist with the development of the “value proposition.” As a result, I suggest that both the facilitating factor of an established value, and the barrier of a value that is in question, co-existed over the temporal period indicated as illustrated by figure 17.
Figure 11: Value of the Partnership is Established

5.9 Members Prioritize the Partnership

Directly associated with value is the question; where is a member’s first priority? The assumption is that if members perceive value and meaning in the association, then they are more likely to give high priority to the partnership. While this situation would be ideal from the perspective of the partnership, in practice first priority (except on rare occasions) would be due to the organization being represented. This situation has been discussed as some length in the section on human resources. Because of these prior commitments or relationships a push-pull phenomenon is created. The exception to this expectation is of course the allegiance of individual members, who would at least theoretically, be free to put TORC first. Because of this expectation that the member first represent the organization of origin, I have indicated that this barrier to partnership practice dominated over time.

51 The issue of prioritizing the partnership and resultant push-pull phenomenon was first discussed at some length on pages 137-139.
Responses regarding power in the TORC partnership varied starting with those that did not believe or acknowledge that power is a factor in TORC’s partnership, a position exemplified by the following quotation:

Well power to me seems to have more of an authoritative aspect to it. It has a demanding connotation. I don’t see that. I find in this non-governmental environment, certainly with TORC, it’s more conciliatory and there seems to be a willingness to want to listen to others and have that exchange; certainly within TORC. And even with the members that sit at the table with our funding partners.

Contrast this quotation to others who believed power was a significant factor. In these cases power was linked to economic resources, i.e., those that had economic resources generally had more power:

The guy who pays the bills has the power. If its the government, if it’s Rural Affairs…if it’s the organization that’s paying 90% of the bills then they’ve got the power and you just don’t want to piss them off. And I think that’s been sort of the history of TORC to some extent.

Another key informant had a succinct analysis of the power dynamic at TORC beginning with a clear statement regarding the results of the power dynamic between TORC and its key funders, first federal and then provincial:
In this context I think it’s to affect a decision or direction. To not just be heard but that your view or desired direction has some desired impact. I would say that TORC in it’s relationships with it’s key funders, particularly with the[...], had precious little effect. They had their shopping list and their way of looking at their shopping list. It wasn’t even like you could say I can get you that but we’re going to have to go a different route. They had very text-booky way of looking…it wasn’t very practical. It was a lovely example of linear thinking but not very practical. If TORC wanted the money they were basically powerless to change what that was going to look like.

Now when I say powerless I also know that it might be formally powerless but informally people always do exactly what they need to do. They can’t pull rabbits out of hats. I think TORC was pretty clear declaring that stuff up front and promising to do our best but often not being able to completely fulfill their expectations or doing what we thought would fulfill their expectations or ought to fulfill their expectations. Their expectations grew.

With respect to the […] relationship, I think there was a better sense of power at that table. Whether the staff there were more closely linked to community groups and understood that it’s not nice and clean and linear, they were more willing to share and take your ideas and incorporate them in the work plan. In fact, they would take your work plan where the […] gave you a work plan. To me, that’s really what I mean when I talk about power.

This same key informant also discussed the ways in which TORC could exercise influence without having what many would identify as traditional power.

On the other hand, there is a kind of subversive power that happens as well. And that’s where I think in many ways TORC did have some influence; individuals in positions of power. For example, I remember sitting at a table and talking to the federal Minister of Agriculture and saying a few things and a few minutes later he was up giving a speech and was incorporating what I had just been telling him. And so you began to think there are places where you have power that you maybe don’t have formally.

Power was also linked to information i.e. people with information also have power. It was noted that members with positional power in either their own organization, or in
TORC, also have the potential to control the voice of the organization. Related to voice was the observation by one key informant that the representational aspect of the partnership, and the voice of the partnership each have the potential to be either threatened or augmented by powerful voices that dominate the agenda:

So when we get to an organization like TORC and I’m sitting in the position of Chair, there’s a power relationship there that relates to the group as a whole. The folks sitting around the table, all come with their various vestiges of power that they might have. So I made the example earlier of, you know, I’d like to think that everybody is equal and people sit around the table as an equal opportunity participator, but I also said that I wanted to make sure that we didn’t lose OFA, because to have lost OFA, from our membership, to have them not at the table, would undercut in many ways the perceived value of TORC, perceived credibility of TORC as an organization, to have somebody there from Northern Ontario and not have a federal government representative would have undercut the value of TORC as an organization. So all of those people have a role to play within TORC and with that of course comes different levels of power. So you know, Ron is good, Ron never in my view abused his position, but it’s not to say that everybody around the table, didn’t sense that, so when I’m conducting a meeting, I want everybody to participate, but I’m going to turn to Ron and make sure that he’s had his say. And that’s just part-in-parcel of the power.

When questioned about how these voices become powerful the conversation looped back to resources which in many cases are owned by funders. Other key informants, generally those that did not acknowledge power as a consideration, saw TORC as being influential rather than being powerful;

I think that their influence is not because they have power, I think their influence is because they can demonstrate a collaborative approach that has worked and they have some good examples to point to and they are trying to illustrate the value added of supporting the organization. They lack power… which includes everything from financial influence to decision making influence because they, they are a lose knit collaborative and each member is part of you know, their own
respective organization where in the power is often this way, going vertically and you know it may be too simple to say but it’s really hard for organizations to have power and influence if they have to spend so much of their time trying to secure funding and respond to the monitoring and reporting needs of any funding that they get. I mean it’s hard to be influential from that perspective.”

To the question of whether power functioned as a facilitator or as a barrier to effective partnership practice, those that acknowledged and those that were unaware of or ignored the power dynamic, co-existed within the organization across temporal periods. This diagram, like the diagram that illustrated value, is meant to demonstrate that there appeared to be many members at either end of the continuum, although not necessarily the same people, more or less stayed in a similar position on this continuum over the course of TORC’s life-cycle.

![Diagram]

**Figure 132: Awareness of Power Dynamic**

5.11 **Leadership**

Many key informants did not discuss the issue of leadership; however those that did had well established opinions based on what was reported to be years of thinking about these issues. According to some of the respondents, the situation at TORC has simply echoed a societal trend consisting first of a lack of commitment by society to building strong leaders, and secondly a reduction of investment in leadership development which has led to a lack of leadership, and resulted in discontinuity in leadership.
We just came out of the seventies, the early part of the eighties was...pretty good times in Ontario and then we hit some bad times. And when bad times come you come back to your base and say I don’t need to know that stuff, I just need to know how to survive here. That’s what’s hard. Then the government hits their bad times and did the same thing...what is it we need to do? So, they got rid of a lot of leadership training of sports organizations that came under culture and recreation, all of our stuff went by the boards.

We built a number of organizations like Master Gardeners or the Community Food Advisory Organization during our time because it was a good partnership, we worked with organizations and helped them build this entity that seemed to be fulfilling a need. Then we pulled back and then we said ok, we are out of that business now. And we had ten years now, actually a bit more than ten years, we wound up in ‘92, so a long time with that and when I talked to the staff and few others, they said you know we could really use people out here. People don’t know how to run meetings, people don’t know how to do this kind of work. I know there is an educational void happening, I know that there is an information void that happens...people don’t know...you see...and there is a number of rural magazines that need to try and fill that void of people who move to the country and part of the community need to understand. So I think that is a policy...to me that is a policy information area and training area and then there is they need... a source of funding to help them, so the three things are right but I don’t know if we can afford them all separately anymore.

The result of the change in policy, and subsequent reduction in leadership development programming has, according to some key informants, triggered a decline in the number of leaders available to rural organizations and discontinuity in the leadership of rural organizations. One key informant reflects on how this impacted TORC.

Not just TORC but other organizations, we just keep moving back and then we change people and then we start from the beginning again. Instead of bringing...instead of bringing better, stronger people in which will take an organization forward. We kind of lose people and then we start...we kind of go backwards. And I don’t know if it’s part of the Rural Leadership problem that we don’t have enough good people to take the lead on these thing. I mean where are the good people have they all gone? Are they moving out? Have they, they gone
to the city you know, bigger and better things because rural is small and not sexy and not interesting and we are not doing those great things so we lose the really good people. I don’t see their strength in the leadership we had you know from our generation,[…] Not that we don’t have good people like this now but there seemed to be a…we were riding a wave a little bit when we had a bunch of strong people.”

We have lost part… part of it is the evidence to build those rural leaders now. How do they get there, it would be interesting to look at how this part group and I have had this discussion with others before. So many of us came up through the government system and had some government experience at a time when government was building leadership and leaders and was cutting edge and that sort of thing. And a lot people came through that system one way or another had training through it because it was great. Like the training and development, there was money and it was cutting edge stuff bringing people in and there is that dynamic learning environment. Is today the same as it was I don’t believe like and I don’t see those avenues to build leadership in pools and bring them up through organizations.”

Several key informants identified a link between the lack of continuity in leadership and redundancy in organizational effort. Others had a different view, seeing that strength of leadership being built not only on staff but also on member volunteers and their contacts and networks. They believed that this augmented view of leadership places TORC firmly in the well-adjusted camp, well prepared to take on a change in mandate from dialogue to advocacy. The temporal aspect again reflected what is perceived by some as a decline in leadership particularly during the provisional period described in Chapter Four.
5.12 Communication in the Partnership

According to many key informants the ability to communicate is an important skill required by both leadership and members; necessary and in fact critical to the achievement of TORC’s mandate and associated with mandate, an increase in the depth of the dialogue. It is logical that given TORC’s mandate, communication should be something at which the organization excels. In the following quotation the key informant describes the ideal situation for dialogue and communication and implies that the factors identified were in place when TORC began its work:

but the ideal synergy is happening when dialogue is present and people are actively participating in that way. That communication is absolutely clear and powerful between people, the sense of clarity in the discussions which are occurring that is leading to high ownership and wanting to be there.[…] But they imply something, so that when success occurs, this would be exhibit C [laughter]. You’ve got high levels of cooperation, you’ve got high levels of collaboration, high levels of communication, largely occurring as a function of dialogue, again, over time, you’ve got high levels of dialogue, so therefore these things are scoring well. And where they are scoring well, then I think you probably have, from the mandate and the objectives and process that we had put in place back then, you’ve probably got a really successful thing happening.

Many key informants had no experience of the ideal and instead focused their impressions on the current state of communication. These key informants mentioned that given their experience, communication at TORC would benefit by closer attention and additional resources.
The evaluation that was done in spring 2006, whoever was consulted to comment on TORC as an organization and what their perception was. The perception was that there was a lack of communication, that we need to be stronger in the area of communication and I absolutely concur but I also know why they said that, because we were only fulfilling our funding deliverables because we didn’t have any projects because we didn’t have the capacity to do much above and beyond that. We didn’t even have the capacity to put the website up.

In addition to a lack of financial resources other barriers such as structure impedes communication. The following quotation describes a significant structural issue, the “space between” which impacted communication within TORC;

And it’s funny because I’ve never really thought of it before, but it’s the space that is, it’s the space and the current almost, between the board and the council-right? And what I mean by that is it would be so easy and it occurs at times where you have a board, which is over here doing its thing, and you have a council or membership, which is over here thinking something quite different. And I think the success of the organization in some ways is about bringing those two together so that they’re reasonably aligned and that the decisions that the board makes are congruent with the perspectives that the broader membership might take.

When asked if this situation had always existed, some identified what constituted a reduction or lack in communication as starting around about 2005. The change in practice was precipitated by the lack of an executive director and exacerbated by a lack of capital, an issue that is discussed throughout this chapter in various contexts. Here is what one key informant had to say about how this looked on a daily basis:

…what that was really about is the board operating independently of the membership and because the board was meeting so frequently and dealing with the operational realities, none of those ideas were really channeled back to the membership for approval or discussion that I remember. They were decisions that were made around the board table,
so in that sense, you know, we never consulted about expanding the forums or those types of things.

This quotation indicates that consulting with the membership on a regular basis about operational matters was at least during some periods, normal for the TORC board, but that during the time discussed in the quotation consultation happened rarely, or not at all. What it also suggests is that communication was occurring but largely between those at one level or in one group, in this case the board. It implies, although not explicitly that communication does not happen across groups effectively or regularly. The impact of this situation is a partnership where some of the partners are knowledgeable about the affairs of the organization and many are not. Of course the danger in this situation is that lack of communication becomes lack of knowledge about the affairs of the corporation, closely followed by perceptions of a lack of relevancy and value. This is a progression which several key informants recognized, commented on and saw as problematic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Communication</th>
<th>Inconsistent Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-04</td>
<td>2005-09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 15: Communication**

### 5.13 Mandate of the Partnership is Explicit

TORC’s mandate was inspired by the State’s Council Movement in the USA and the subsequent urgency which generated the formation of TORC was driven by the political changes which were occurring in Ontario discussed in some detail in chapter four. Creating this organization gave founders a forum for dialogue and the dissemination of
their convictions and values during a time when many felt that rural Ontario was threatened.

It speaks to me of a social political environment where people in the community and within these organizations started to realize, “Boy, if we don’t do this for ourselves, if we don’t take action, there’s going to be a lot more undoing in society, than we ideally would like to see.” And if we’re not prepared to step up to the plate, rural Ontario and other sectors as well would be going through the same kind of debate, remember, this is an environmental issue as well. But rural Ontario will suffer, and we, you almost think of a manifesto coming out of this, “we the people, believing in the future of rural Ontario, hereby declare that we shall do these things in the interest of enhancing, promoting, protecting rural Ontario.

The founders created the mandate and so for them the mandate was explicit, and while TORC seemed to have challenges communicating value in the partnership it did not appear to have faced the same challenges communicating its mandate. This mandate remained explicit; it was communicated to new partners effectively and as a result created a virtuous cycle which seemed to have endured throughout the life of the organization even as it survived the departure of the founders. While all key informants seemed aware of the mandate, some believed that TORC’s mandate and capacity were not well matched i.e. that aspirations exceed capacity. This is a recurring theme which the reader will have noted has emerged in several contexts. Others were dissatisfied with the fact that mandate limited activities only to dialogue, and in response members debated the addition of advocacy. This change they believed would enhance TORC’s role and ultimately reconnect dialogue with action. The amendment to the by-laws, adding advocacy to TORC’s mandate was passed in 2008. The diagram illustrates constancy in communicating mandate throughout TORC’s life cycle.
5.14 Communication Technology

While technology is a relative newcomer to processes that used to depend largely on face to face meetings; it seems clear that in this century, access to, and effective use of current information technology is integral to effective communication. One key informant describes TORC’s early lead in the use of technology:

Well you know when we first started, it was back when we only used electronic communication, and that was kind of on the forefront. Everything was electronic, we never did any [snail] mail…we were kind of on the cutting edge of rural organizations. We were not an old organization making that transition to recent technology. We started and we used it and I think that made us a bit edgy.

When TORC opened its doors in 1998, it advocated (small a), a message that highlighted the need for rural connectivity and the use of technology for communication and network building, although common now, was at the time rare. TORC’s e-newsletter was one of the first of its kind in rural Ontario and gave those that subscribed information and insight into the issues and events of importance across sectors in rural Ontario and rural Canada, also allowing them to contribute to and post their own news and information. Other more substantial forays into technological leadership were also attempted, some more successful than others. These included the Rural On-line Communication project and the
Data Services Improvement Plan, both of which were examined in more detail in chapter four. How did this initially innovative approach to the use of communication technology evolve over time? One key informant describes it as follows:

Now I think they are doing the reverse, they are not using technology to the fullest in fact they are not using it at all. We should be doing stuff with polling people, like this latest issue around proportional representation.

Discussion with another key informant confirms this perspective but also gives some context to why the change occurred:

We were in limbo, our hands were tied, we could not communicate, we had to have some sort of bare bones website which is what we did and it reflected what the board decided at the time was necessary. That is lots of visuals, lots of pictures, that kind of thing.

When asked to elaborate the respondent stated that: “you know we don’t have the money really.” Other comments regarding the current situation with respect to technology are summarized by this one:

Yeah but that’s the thing about technology, that it is always changing and you have to stay abreast of that, but ironically, as the technology became more available, more cheaper in a way, we were not able to capitalize on that.

This frank assessment of the current situation is expanded, “So, now you have lost whatever capacity you had, wherever, whatever investment you made in that overhead.” Essentially these key informants saw TORC as not only giving up its position of leadership held during the initial period 1998-2003 but falling behind or below the norm as illustrated in figure 25.
We began this chapter by painting a picture of TORC’s operating environment, particularly the political and economic context, and how it impacted the TORC partnership. It seems fitting that that we should conclude the chapter by reflecting on the broader picture, in particular how the key informants perceived that the political environment influenced TORC and how the organization framed its organizational mandate, and conducted it’s affairs. Several key informants had a particularly well developed analysis of how this kind of cyclical, political change impacted TORC. One of TORC’s board comments:

I think it [political environment] has impacted it [TORC] considerably… I… I think there was sort of a very naive perspective early on about what NGO’s could do and could not do. I think some of the structural changes, the restructuring under more sort of neo-liberal government undermined capacity of organizations, you know the whole idea of doing more with less and you know the whole working on the backs of volunteers and the increased expectations, what I would almost call the professionalization of the volunteers sector. I think we are seeing some of the backtracking on that now, I think subsequent governments have looked at it and realized, well it’s just a little more complex than that. So I think things were stripped down and now they are slowly being built back up. I think there is a little more reason being put into the programs that are used to fund these types of partnerships. But certainly it has impacted on capacity, it’s impacted on sort of issues of base budget and the ability to know that you have core funding there.
and that, I think has been one of the major challenges for organizations, is the absence of core funding.

This perspective came from a key informant who clearly is skeptical about the ability of NPO’s to successfully restructure when the flow of resources was so variable and inevitably less than in previous times. Not surprisingly this key informant has clear ideas about how these organizations should be supported and has concerns regarding the potential duplicity of government. In contrast, another perspective, this time from a government employee.

so there is a lot more checks and balances within the government system and a lot more rules and regulations that tie back to a broader government mandate, departmental mandate, organizational priorities and so there is… for me there are imperilments, by that I mean it’s not a free flow of money in any sense and yet on the other hand I do see where it’s important that they continue to receive financial support so I am prepared to do that, but it is harder within the context of accountability.

In this quotation we see a pragmatic program manager, doing what it necessary to fund TORC regardless of the change in political climate. This is just one example of the support TORC could marshal when necessary. Other NPO members brought a strategic perspective to the table. In the following quotation the key informant discussed the changes which are necessary given the new political climate and resultant contraction of available resources:

In corporate Ontario, corporate agriculture, corporate Canada whatever… there is a number of mergers, there is a number of coming together of organizations, and…and, just as a citizen you read in the newspaper…company X is doing more with company Y and things like that and so I think it’s imperative that in rural Ontario we been seen to be doing things. There is a funding issue around organizations
all asking for the same…and I speak of our organization and many of the partners that TORC is involved in are after the same dollar from the same hand, a lot of the same hand and if I go there one day and you go there the next… TORC goes there the next day and then you from a different organization go there the day after…then they will soon realize that maybe we are all asking for almost the same thing, the same dollar. So when I think of the environment, I think the environment is changing, there is coming together and mergers out there and so I don’t think we can be any different.

While strategic, in this brief statement the key informant conveys that he is resigned to doing what others believe is the right thing to do. In his words; “I think it’s imperative that in rural Ontario we be seen to be doing things […] I don’t believe that we can be any different.” While he recognizes change in the environment, he, like the program manager, is pragmatic and as many other non-profit managers, is willing to do what it takes to survive in the service of rural. At the same time we hear another muse aloud about his perception that the death of rural has been greatly exaggerated and although it will not be the same, there is a future:

The other I guess contextual piece that TORC has helped open my eyes about is how the landscape is changing, and that the definition of what’s rural and what’s not rural is evolving over time. And I probably sometime ago thought about, of sort of rural and urban as maybe a bit more static concepts. But they’re not. So no matter what markers you use to define those things, they’re evolving and changing. So even to talk today about rural partnerships, there’s always that background thing about, “Okay, well what’s rural again?” So to me its just part of the milieu, but its one that I’ve sort of been forced to think about more. In this case, I’ll give you a quick example, so you know, when the census stuff came out a couple of weeks ago, whatever, you know the Globe comes out and says, “You know, well rural is dead, it’s gone.” And you sort of go, “Well wait, that’s not my world, I live in rural, I work in rural, I drive around rural. And you’re saying it’s gone. I don’t see that, right?” So, but it does mean to me that our concept of what’s rural is changing. So that’s to me feels, and maybe it’s always been that way, that to me feels newer.”
This ray of hope is reflected in the following concluding manifesto for the survival of rural Ontario. It echoes the imperative that in various ways is present in all of the quotations in this section; 1) rural is changing but will not in fact disappear unless we do nothing, 2) We shall enhance, promote and protect rural Ontario and we shall do it ourselves-using whatever government accountability requirements facilitate leverage 3) and we will do what it takes to survive.

So to bring that full circle, well what does it mean for TORC? It speaks to me of a social political environment where people in the community and within these organizations started to realize, “Boy, if we don’t do this for ourselves, if we don’t take action, there’s going to be a lot more undoing in society, than we ideally would like to see.” And if we’re not prepared to step up to the plate, rural Ontario and other sectors as well would be going through the same kind of debate, remember, this is an environmental issue as well. But rural Ontario will suffer, and we, you almost think of a manifesto coming out of this, “we the people, believing in the future of rural Ontario, hereby declare that we shall do these things in the interest of enhancing, promoting, protecting rural Ontario.
Chapter 6:  Discussion and Summation

This final chapter will undertake to accomplish two key functions, the first being a discussion of the research findings as they illuminate the research question. Toward this end the majority of the chapter will be spent considering the findings through the lenses of the conceptual frameworks. The second task is to provide a summary of the research, an assessment of the contribution of this work to the field and some discussion regarding future directions for research concerning partnerships.

What operational realities facilitate, or serve as barriers to effective partnerships practice in Canadian rural organization and why are these occurring? How are these operational realities impacting both the individual organizations, and the multi-organizational practice of partnerships?

During the course of the research process I identified twelve pairs or 24 separate ‘operational realities’, the majority of which at some point existed or co-existed within TORC over the lifetime of the partnership. These operational realities were sorted into three categories and are illustrated throughout Chapter Five by figures which are meant to represent continua and map the temporal dimension of each within the context of the case study. These continua create the most obvious, and from a practice perspective, useful findings produced by this research. Further discussion and analysis, beyond the temporal, will suggest that a conception of partnerships that characterize these relationships as multi-dimensional is well founded.
### Table 11: Operational Realities Summary Table-12 Pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Realities that Facilitate Effective Partnership Practice</th>
<th>Operational Realities that Present Barriers to Effective Partnership Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A) Structure and Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>A) Structure and Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The partnership is adequately resourced with financial capital</td>
<td>The partnership is lacking adequate financial capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The partnership is adequately resourced with appropriate human capital</td>
<td>The partnership is lacking appropriate and/or sufficient human capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The structure of the partnership is transparent</td>
<td>The structure of the partnership is not visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mandate of the partnership is explicit</td>
<td>The mandate of the partnership is obscured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B) Characteristics of the Member-Partners</strong></td>
<td><strong>B) Characteristics of the Member-Partners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The partnership has ‘engaged’ members</td>
<td>The partnership has disconnected members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The members possess strong social networks</td>
<td>The members have weaker social networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members give their first priority to the partnership</td>
<td>Members give their first priority to others, not the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members are aware of the “power dynamic” within the organization</td>
<td>Members are not aware or choose to ignore the “power dynamic” within the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership within the partnership is planned including succession</td>
<td>Leadership within the partnership is adhoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C) Communication Patterns</strong></td>
<td><strong>C) Communication Patterns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication, both internal and external is effective and consistent</td>
<td>5. Communication, both internal and external is flawed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is access to, and innovative use of communication technology</td>
<td>There is reduced access to and innovative use of communication technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.1 Community Capitals Analysis

What follows now is a discussion of the research findings using the lens of Flora’s and Flora’s (2008) community capitals framework and others when appropriate, particularly
General Systems Theory. To re-iterate Cornelia and Jan Flora’s (2008) Community Capitals is a comprehensive, asset based theory that provides a competent framework for the analysis of both rural communities and specific to this exploration, the governance practice of partnerships within those communities. This approach builds on the work of Kretzmann and McKnight (1996), among others and is primarily defined by the view that communities have many resources (assets) and that it is the possession or potential of these assets which should drive the agenda and upon which communities build, not the lack of assets or the needs of the organization. In order for this orientation to meaningfully impact practice, proponents of this perspective must not hesitate to ask difficult questions about the role of resources in community development initiatives, and the partnership relationships which provide the social capital to operationalize those resources.

Clearly not all capitals are directly relevant to an organizational context. I am referring to natural capital in particular as typically the natural environment is not a part of organizational development assessments in the same way that the economic environment is. Having said that I am aware that it is possible to argue that natural capital is part of the broader context within which organizations exist, and that as such issues or concerns regarding natural capital, such as the weather and location can certainly impact an organization’s operations and efficacy. That relationship is acknowledged here for the purposes of this discussion and for the record, and it is also acknowledged that natural capital does not come into significant profile in and of itself in terms of this thesis analysis.
6.2 Modeling “Reality” Through Systems Theory

Conceptualizing TORC and its environment as a system facilitates another perspective which has the potential to create a different picture of what had been occurring both within and outside of the organization. For many years scholars have explained both straightforward and complex versions of reality through the use of a systems approach, illustrated with the use of graphical models. Systems analysis for the purpose of this research is based on the following assumptions: 1) systems are generalizations of reality; 2) systems tend to work in the same way i.e. with inputs and outputs of matter and energy which causes change; 3) parts of the system have functions as well as structural relationships to each other; 4) systems exchange energy and matter with other systems and the environment; 5) parts that make up a system are in some way meshed or integrated so that at some level it works well together.

General Systems Theory sees systems organized hierarchically, often composed of systems within systems. Checkland (1986) was one of the first authors to change the context and use GST with soft systems methodology, which Senge (1994) among others then went on to popularize with the notion of systems thinking, a theoretical construct which adapted systems for use in a organizational, social context.

---

52 The new context was organizations.
6.3 Resources and Structure

Life, whether it is organic or organizational cannot exist without sustenance. From a systems perspective sustenance or inputs are constituted by the flow of matter and energy. In the case of organizations I propose that the non-negotiable sustenance is both financial and human resource based, and so begin this discussion with resources.

6.3.1 Resources-Financial Capital

Butler Flora and Flora (2008), “define capital as any resource capable of producing other resources. […] Financial capital represents resources that are translated into monetary instruments that make them highly liquid, that is able to be converted into other assets.(p.175).” According to Butler Flora and Flora (2008), “for the most part financial capital has always been less available in rural areas than in urban areas (p.192). As this
is also true in the Canadian context it stands to reason that rural organizations, particularly those that have no physical assets, are doubly challenged; not only are they unable to finance activities through the leveraging of fixed assets but they operate in an environment that begins with less funding available than does urban Canada.

As noted in Chapter Five, TORC’s lack of sufficient financial capital was on the minds of all key informants. For the most part the key informant’s understanding of the severity of TORC’s financial position varied. It is my assessment that while all members may have been aware of TORC general financial deficit, understanding of how tenuous things really were, deepened as involvement with the organization intensified. As a result the general membership of TORC was actually only peripherally aware of financial concerns, in contrast to members of the executive committee who were keenly aware. The executive committee dealt with cash-flow interruptions which from time to time became a crisis. As mentioned in chapter five this precarious position had not always existed; initially money flowed in as large projects seemed easy to come by. The continuum in the diagram 6.3 illustrates the change in this reality over time.

Two events marked the beginning of the end of ‘easy money’ for TORC; 1) a change in leadership and 2) incorporation. The change in leadership, from the period of founder to that of organizational consolidator\textsuperscript{53} appeared to have changed the focus of the organization, moving it from an organization that was outward, or community facing, focused primarily on its mandate of facilitating dialogue and characterized by high

\textsuperscript{53} These periods are outlined in table 1, chapter four.
visibility in the rural environment; to being an organization that seemed to be inward facing, pre-occupied with internal organizational management. As a part of this focus on effective internal processes TORC was productive, and spent time developing standardized financial reporting techniques that did not contravene provisions in government contribution agreements and contracts. The degree to which TORC was self-absorbed during this period is illustrated by the fact that while the processes and techniques developed during this phase would have been extremely valuable to many rural NPOs, the results of this work were not disseminated.

The second event, the incorporation\textsuperscript{54} of TORC was originally intended by the board to insure the organization against financial concerns. As an incorporated organization TORC could be the principle applicant for grants and projects which required contribution agreements or contracts. Incorporation qualified TORC to become an organization that was comprehensible to granting agencies. By definition however incorporation creates uniformity, resulting in an essential and fundamental sameness in all organizations. The implications of this change from ‘network to full-fledged organization’, was a loss of uniqueness, and flexibility, two qualities through which TORC had benefitted during life as a ‘loose mechanism’. The result I would describe as a loss of competitive advantage and as such TORC quickly became subsumed with the concerns of the ‘normal NPO,’ initiating a search for core and other project based funding. Encouraged by their early success in the pursuit of project funding, TORC planned to expand its activities beginning by increasing the number of strategic priorities

\textsuperscript{54} I define the incorporation process and state of being, as structural.
in the strategic plan. This created a situation that would cause members to comment during interviews, and lead me to write more than a decade later, that their ambition exceeded their resources. Regardless, TORC was eventually successful at maintaining multi-year funding for projects that some would define as ongoing or core activities, although frequently at great personal expense and what was described by board members as significant anxiety. One major cause of this anxiety was the asynchronous contracts held by OMAFRA and Agriculture Canada, the consequence of which was that funding was only ever assured for 18 months at a time. Sometimes significant time would pass beyond normal approval timelines before TORC was informed that funding would be renewed. This left the organization to operate, sometimes for months at a time,\textsuperscript{55} with no visible means of support. TORC’s success in negotiating this terrain was based largely on its understanding of funding partners requirements developed during its consolidation phase. What became evident through the course of research was that TORC was able to negotiate a situation in which multiple agendas\textsuperscript{56} driven by different imperatives\textsuperscript{57} coalesced into mutually satisfactory outcomes. Government’s agenda was to fund projects, TORC’s agenda was to find funding to deliver the program, neither organization acknowledged that each had a different understanding of the product. TORC saw the funding as being for core activities and the funder saw the funds as being for a project, and together they both achieved their goals.

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{55} Such as during the last RCCB application process.  
\textsuperscript{56} Funder/government vs. TORC  
\textsuperscript{57} Government is subject to more significant limitations and accountability requirements than in the past.
\end{flushleft}
While Butler Flora and Flora (2008) do not account for in-kind funding in their discussions of financial capital, in-kind contributions do fit the definition of financial capital; “any resource capable of producing other resources. Financial capital consists of instruments that express exchange value and that have a high degree of liquidity compared to other forms of capital (p.199).” TORCs ready access to in-kind funding through volunteer time was significant; a situation which over time most probably extended the life of the organization. What was however evident from an examination of documentation related to the last three years of RCCB funding, was that there was the undervaluing of in-kind contributions. For example, depending on the program, every dollar received in cash needed to be matched by up to three dollars of in-kind contribution, generally calculated against the time of volunteers and staff. This set up a situation which is not uncommon in the sector, where TORC became financially dependent on the work of volunteers. Regardless of how much TORC appreciated and depended on these donations however, in the end TORC failed to establish a consistent reciprocal relationship with its volunteers which as a result reduced access to this important source of financial capital.58

**6.3.2 Resources – Human Capital**

According to Butler Flora and Flora (2008), “human capital includes those attributes of individuals that contribute to their ability to earn a living, strengthen community and otherwise contribute to community organizations, to their families and to self-improvement (p.84).” For the purpose of this discussion stipulating to the assumption that

58 More on this in resources-human capital
people cannot be separated from their attributes allows interchangeable use of the terms human capital and human resources.

Next to financial capital, human capital and or human resources were TORCs most significant resource and resource deficit. More than one key informant commented on the disparity between TORC’s aspirations and its available human resources, a realization that for many years did little to curb the ambitions of the organization. The context created by this deficit resulted in a human resource and leadership vacuum where engaged members of working groups, for example, could significantly amend or control TORC’s agenda, making commitments on behalf of the organization that from time to time may have interfered with the requirements generated through normal governance processes.

As mentioned, the donation of in-kind time from volunteers or the human resource component of the partnership was responsible for a significant proportion of financial capital. Literature on volunteerism supports the requirement for reciprocity which generally manifests itself in the form of volunteer recognition programs. This case study suggests however, that it is important to consider that the need for reciprocity may well vary with the level of involvement with the organization. For those whose involvement is multidimensional i.e. performing in the roles of staff and volunteer, volunteer and contractor or former staff, current contractor, key informants implied that the expressions of reciprocity must be perceived to be of equal value to the gift of time. Therefore if I give 10% of my time, I must get something from the experience that is worth 10% of my time. What became apparent however was that in cases where money was a part of the
compensation i.e. if a person was acting as both volunteer, and either staff or contractor, management saw the payment of wages as enough appreciation, a perception that was at odds with those of volunteers acting in multiple roles.

Related to the issue of reciprocity for volunteers is that of reciprocity for partner organizations. When the priorities and associated work of the partnership is being negotiated, (frequently the work is also being accomplished by these same partners) the unstated assumption is that the partner organization has first priority on the representative’s time. In the words of one key informant, “And when you are being paid by your organization, you have a responsibility to fulfill your…your obligations to that organization, first and foremost.” As mentioned in chapter five, what we see in this very common scenario is the development of conflicting demands, a situation that is well recognized in the private sector that as a result has organizational policies against multiple employer situations. What is not documented is what happens to the organization when the majority of the workforce, be they volunteer or employed in a contracted situation, has their first allegiance elsewhere? My assessment is that there are no options. The issue of allegiance adds a layer of complexity to the situation and is a defining factor that differentiates partnership based organizations from other organizations.

It is not difficult to see how the social and economic impacts of globalization manifesting themselves in social dumping and eventually in what Maxwell (2003) calls

59 The representative is generally an employee of the partner organization.
individualization of risk have extended themselves into this and other non-profit workplaces as conflation of reciprocity with the “over-worked and underpaid” employment situations of NPO staff as a whole; exacerbates a situation setup by unrealistic strategic priorities and tenuous employment resulting from the practice of employment contracts. Partnership building is being resourced by the contributions of individuals. NPOs although well- intentioned are understandably focused on their own survival and on fulfilling their own goals, and thereby unwittingly facilitate the process.

6.3.3 Structure-Transparency

According to Butler Flora and Flora (2008), “built capital provides a supporting foundation that facilitates human activity. Rural policies are often geared toward enhancing built capital, on the assumption that people’s lives will improve particularly people who are disadvantaged, once new physical structures are in place (p.206).”

Canadian examples that support Butler Flora’s and Flora’s proposition are the recent national infrastructure program initiated in 2009 by the federal government in response to the economic crisis as well as OMAFRA’s Rural Economic Development program. OMAFRA’s RED program focus specifically on rural infrastructure funding applied for by local collaborations in contrast to the federal program which directed funds to be applied more broadly to both rural and urban areas through local municipalities.

As illustrated, for many the term structure still conjures up visions of bricks and mortar, far removed from anything that has to do with the relationships and processes that form the substance of network and virtually based organizations. The use of the term structure in this context required that standard conceptions be broadened to incorporate more
diverse meanings than those articulated by Butler Flora and Flora. Analysis of the interviews confirmed my anticipation that structure in this context was indeed largely being understood in a more encompassing sense. It was not just about physical structures or organizational frameworks, it also included for example processes such as decision making and more broadly governance.

Structure enables. In chapter five, I noted that the facilitating operational realities and the operational realities that provide barriers to effective partnership practice are not necessarily intuitive. Depending on the organization’s goal, either reality could serve in either role. TORC’s incorporation changed its status from an informal, network based organization to that of an organization whose structure was a legal standard and therefore comprehensible to funders. Once it was incorporated the liability associated with grant and project fund administration rested with the corporate entity of TORC. As such the process of incorporation having legitimized the organization of TORC, also enabled government funding and so broadened the field of potential funders. In this context the legitimacy of the structure is essentially defined by its capacity to assume risk. What is evident is that in and of itself incorporation does not materially change to the organization, outside of conferring legal status and the liability that accompanies that status.

Structure also constrains. Prior to incorporation the words transparent, informal and flexible or a loose adherent were used to describe TORC, encompassing what I refer to as
the holy trinity\textsuperscript{60} of the network based organization. While the process of incorporation was reported to be participatory, never the less key informants discussed how the nature of the organization changed from being transparent to being opaque once it incorporated. As a result of the participatory incorporation process, the original members were all well acquainted with the new structure of the organization and associated processes. Then what constituted the perception that the organization changed from being transparent to opaque? Key informants observed that with incorporation the level of organizational complexity increased as TORC quickly took on legal obligations i.e. a lease and staff, to maintain and manage risk for the corporation. Many report that frequently as a result of becoming a corporation priorities shift and the needs of the organization become primary. This seemed to be the case with TORC which as a result of incorporation found it necessary to compete for resources in a field in which it was no longer unique. In the years following incorporation many of the founding members left TORC to be replaced by other, generally less senior organizational representatives. These representatives were less aware of the structure and component processes than were the founders of TORC and so perceived the structure as opaque. While this may be one reason, does it adequately address why this lack of awareness continued over the course of TORC’s lifetime? This situation is examined again in the discussion of communication.

\textbf{6.3.4 Structure – Mandate}

In Chapter Five I addressed mandate largely as a subset of communication but as it is also essentially a structural element; a statement that provides direction to the development of

\textsuperscript{60} Holy trinity of network based organization is that they are transparent, informal and flexible.
an organization, for the purpose of this chapter I will discuss now. In TORC’s case the mandate of the organization was inspired by the State’s Council Movement in the USA and the subsequent urgency which generated the formation of TORC was driven by the political changes which were occurring in Ontario discussed in chapter four. Creating this organization gave founders a forum for dialogue and the transfer of cultural capital during a time when many felt that rural Ontario was threatened. Butler Flora and Flora (2008, p.55) explain “cultural capital as determining what constitutes knowledge, how knowledge is to be achieved and validated. Those with power are able to define these key issues according to their own values and they provide their children with cultural advantages that translate into social and economic advantages.”

Because the founders created the mandate, for them the mandate was explicit, a situation which seemed to have endured throughout the life of the organization even as it survived the departure of the founders. While all key informants seemed aware of the mandate some believed that TORC’s mandate and capacity were not well matched i.e. that aspirations exceed capacity. This was a recurring theme which emerged in several contexts.

As circumstances and the environment change, so also should an organization’s mandate evolve to reflect those changes. Over time members debated the addition of advocacy, a role that is a key element in the creation of value and the value proposition (Belfall, 1999). While this change some believed would enhance TORC’s role and ultimately reconnect dialogue with action, it was also a change that would fundamentally change the nature of the partnership and narrow the potential member-partners base. Who were the
supporters of this new role as advocate? Key informants report that they included members from all of the five sectors represented including government. That government was in support of TORC as advocate was an interesting finding as it conflicts so significantly with government policy\textsuperscript{61}. Skeptics may surmise that this change would have created the conditions, and so the opportunity for government to withdraw from the partnership. Others, not driven by conspiracy theories would attribute government’s support of advocacy as simply a reflection of perceived need.

6.3.5 Decision Making

Because of the interdependent nature of this analysis many elements such as mandate and decision-making, have relevance to more than one category. So while mentioned briefly here, decision making will be discussed in more detail as one of the fundamental roles of leadership. Of the examples of processes and components that are structural and integral to an organization’s functioning, decision making is clearly one. Although TORC professed to be participatory\textsuperscript{62} in its processes, the fact that the partnership base of the organization was composed of diverse members with diverse interests rendered the process of decision making outside of the consensus driven board of directors subject to high emotion and conflict. The conference committee experience is one example and illustrates the acrimony that can arise as a result of different expectations. It was a difficult experience for many members of the committee; in addition to absences of members, there was also a significant turnover of representatives which in turn led to

\textsuperscript{61} Recent federal government policy and federal programs do not financially support organizations that advocate.

\textsuperscript{62} Use of the adjective participatory gives the impression of harmonious working together.
repetition and delays as new committee members were oriented. Eventually, in frustration, long time consistent committee members decided to move ahead and plan the conference despite the absence of other representative committee members. For these longtime members it was the right and practical response when members of the partnership could not fulfill their roles. While this reaction is understandable, to many it appeared not respectful of process.

6.3.6 Resources, Structure and Systems
According to Weiner (1948) Systems receive energy from the system of which they are a part. This energy is called an input and can be composed of many things such as matter and information. Output reverses the input process, both inputs and outputs cross the membrane or boundaries that delineate the system (Weiner, 1948). The systems diagram on page 190 illustrates Weiner’s hypotheses. Of specific interest here is the issue of organizational boundary and permeability.

Organizational boundaries that separate one organization from another can be defined in various ways such as physical space, culture and, as in the case of TORC, a legal process; the result of incorporation. I have argued that this change both enabled and constrained; from a systems perspective it had the potential to increase permeability to inputs as incorporation created the organizational environment which made TORC eligible to apply for funding. In the same way I suggest that it also increased inputs of both money and human resources, at least for a time. However as a result of incorporation the organizational boundary also decreased in permeability creating a clear separation between TORC and its environment. This barrier was reinforced by the change in
leadership that occurred in approximately 2002, these two perturbations resulted in a big change, in response to which, the organization became more inward facing, focused on internal processes. This quite likely accounts for subsequent reductions of inputs, both financial and human that followed initial increases.

The resources or inputs TORC depended on, identified earlier in this chapter were those of human resources and funding, both cash and in-kind. These inputs were in short supply and they were critical to maintaining the life of the organization. When one or more input declines, the system reacts by seeking a new level of equilibrium or balance. In the case of TORC reduction or uncertainty regarding the availability of both human and financial resources, a situation which remained constant over the life of the organization, led to a situation where TORC, in its efforts to achieve a new equilibrium reduced or constrained its activities and subsequently its profile in the rural community. From a systems perspective this would be explained as a process in which a negative feedback loop dampened the response. As a result of TORC’s chronic shortage of resources it seems inevitable, even reasonable that TORC’s output would fall, at least for a time, leading to reduced work products and less communication. The diagram on page 186 illustrates the dampening effect.
6.4 Characteristics of Member-Partners

6.4.1 Engagement and a Strong Social Network

Directly associated with the human resources component are the characteristics of the members themselves. Many key informants identified the quality of the TORC experience as being significantly affected by who was representing the member organization. This seemed to have relevance in two areas; first the member’s position in their organization of origin needed to be associated with a strong social network, and decision making authority which would allow them to commit organizational resources without extensive vetting. As highlighted earlier, there were many members with these qualities, initially founders who were often rural leaders. The second relevant area was the personal qualities of the individual themselves; were they connectors in the sense that they facilitated the development of relationships and the flow of information, and were they personally interested and engaged in TORC’s mandate? Butler Flora and
Flora (2008), identify these qualities broadly as social capital however their work focuses on social capital that they address as, “an attribute of communities, which is more than a summing up of individual social capital. It is a group level phenomenon. Individuals do not by themselves build social capital (p.117).” While Butler Flora and Flora make an important point, the conceptualization of social capital as an attribute of individuals rather than just groups is as well explored phenomenon, and possibly more germane to this analysis. The work of Lin and Dumin (1986) is most relevant. Their survey instrument (the position generator) is the most widely used tool in the measurement of individual social capital and is based on the idea that occupational prestige is a good indicator of social resources. The underlying assumption is that network members with higher occupational status, control more (financial and cultural) resources, and have more influence on third parties (political resources). This instrument measures access to social resources rather than relationships.

While outside the mandate of this research, I would have expected a trend toward a significant decrease in access to social resources if the individual social capital of TORC’s partner representatives had been measured over time. This process would have started with the founders, which was a membership that was heavily weighted with rural leaders and ending with a membership that was only sprinkled with leaders. This raises a number of questions; would a decrease in scores regarding access to social capital be reflected in a decrease in perceptions of the value of the TORC experience? What indicators would reflect changing perceptions of value? Retention of members, particularly engaged members might be one indicator. Member representatives reported
that they initially joined TORC because it was an opportunity to leave a legacy while others were reported to fear NOT being at the table. The role of individuals in terms of facilitating these goals through the representation of their organizations was seen as variously successful over the years; again starting with a fully engaged, representative membership, which as the founding members moved on, declined in effectiveness (given their reduced access to social resources) to the extent that some\textsuperscript{63} believed there was a real leadership gap at the end of TORC’s existence.

6.4.2 Members Prioritize the Partnership

Related to the issue of engagement is that of how members prioritize the partnership. Allegiance was initially broached in the discussion of human resources where I suggested that establishing reciprocity is important for both individuals and for partner organizations.\textsuperscript{64} In the case of TORC, it appeared that individual members\textsuperscript{65} were able to put the demands of TORC first without conflicting with the demands of a “home” organization to which they owed first allegiance. What is unaccounted for in this analysis is that in fact any volunteers are rarely unencumbered. While they may not be representing their employer, they frequently have other commitments that are no less pressing. \textit{Given this reality the issue of reciprocity emerges as one of the most important tools available to those who are involved with resource management}. There is however a fundamental assumption of equity in the concept of reciprocity that is very difficult to

\textsuperscript{63} It is important to note that others saw TORC as well positioned from a leadership perspective.

\textsuperscript{64} When priorities and associated work of the partnership is being negotiated, (frequently the work is also being accomplished by these same partners) the unstated fundamental is that the partner organization has first priority on the representative’s time.

\textsuperscript{65} Individual members were not affiliated with a particular organization.
operationalize when members and staff play multiple roles. In such cases it seems that human and volunteer resource management have a significant role to play in making sure that equity is maintained within a context of multiple roles. I also suggest that while it appears to be a critical piece of the partnership relationship, that a reciprocal relationship need not always be resourced financially. Another way individuals identify “getting back” is through the personal growth opportunities which often emerged through the exposure to informational, learning and networking opportunities that were facilitated by TORC.

6.4.3 Members are Aware of the Power Dynamic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledge power dynamic</th>
<th>Ignore power dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-09</td>
<td>1998-09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 20: Awareness of the Power Dynamic**

In this figure note that there were two kinds of members that co-existed over the course of TORC life-those that acknowledged the power dynamic and those that did not. As such the position of the marks on the continuum does not change over the years, rather each mark reflects the full life of TORC.

According to Butler Flora and Flora (2008, p.55) those with power are able to define key issues according to their own values and impose their cultural capital on others. This statement raises the question: who has power in rural Ontario, and as a consequence what cultural agendas are being pursued? Were people with power at TORC’s table, and if so,
when were they there? From a class perspective TORC’s founders were the intellectual elite and they dominated the discussion about rural Ontario, they gave it a voice and defended its right to exist outside the encroaching metropolitan zones. They were government employees, university professors, executive directors, well placed and articulate private sector members, independent consultants and others who understood and believed that there needed to be a voice for rural, and a forum for their views. Because they were the founders they developed the mission and the vision and they set the agenda. Certainly there was a shift in who was at the table, regardless of that change however the agenda had been established and remained more or less consistent over the period of time this research was conducted.

Although TORC’s founders were the intellectual elite, they had few defenses against what Weber defined as technical knowledge. Most theories of power have a knowledge component, some more explicit than others. Relevant examples of theories that display a specific link between power and knowledge include those of Weber and Foucault. Weber’s principle theorizing about the knowledge and power dynamic is evident in his articulation of bureaucracy and its associated technical knowledge. “The primary source of the superiority of bureaucratic administration lies in the role of technical knowledge which through the development of modern culture and business is indispensable (Freund, 1968, p.238).” In Weber’s (1986) view bureaucratic organizations depend in large part on technical knowledge for their source of authority or power. In the case of TORC’s partnerships, technical knowledge would include information such as government priorities (actual vs. acknowledged), fiscal imperatives such as Treasury Board
Guidelines, and accountability criteria defined by the Management Board Secretariat. All of these factors can significantly constrain the potential activity undertaken by the participating partners, but the lack of knowledge of the very existence of these criteria limits the agency of the partner organization.

An example of how technical knowledge can constrain was available in TORG’s Pilot Projects Initiatives file, the program through which TORG had received funding for the ROC project. This file provided clear evidence of TORG’s lack of technical knowledge containing notes-to-file indicating an incomplete understanding of program requirements. In some cases multiple versions of requests for the information were also on file demonstrating that satisfactory resolution was difficult to come by. This file also contained various versions of the same information package, generally financial, submitted by TORG. It was clear that the multiple requests for information and compilation of duplicate data had been arduous and time consuming. In this situation the bureaucracy was clearly the gatekeeper, imparting technical knowledge at the same time demanding duplicate information.

Foucault’s (1977) theory about the relationship between power and knowledge is related to Weber’s (1986) and has as a foundation his thoughts on normalization. He claims that belief systems gain acceptance the more people or citizens accept the worldviews of that belief system defined as common knowledge. The journey that culminates in

66 According to Foucault “the relations of power are not located in the relations between individuals and institutions or between the state and its citizens or between different social classes but rather they are diffused into the whole society (Kalkan, 2004, p.64 ).”
common knowledge has its beginning in experts who research a subject or issue. As researchers have accreditation as knowledge brokers, the knowledge produced by research becomes integrated into ideology and is then acted on. There are a number of ways these frameworks could apply to governance in general and the partnerships in particular. Quarterly reporting requirements, and responses to requests for information, produce knowledge comparable to research. This knowledge is collected by technical experts or ‘government knowledge brokers.’ These experts also have access to all of Galbraith’s (1983) instruments of power (condign, compensatory and conditioned), which are applied as necessary to obtain a positive perspective of governance partnerships. Incorporating the belief that ‘partnerships are good governance practice’ into the realm of common knowledge and legacy within the framework of cultural capital has been an important step toward increasing citizen participation, and critical to the ultimate success of partnerships as governance practice.

6.4.4 Leadership within the Partnership is Planned

The organizational body most closely associated with leadership is the board of directors. Although decision making has been identified as a process that is part of the structure of the organization, it is also germane to this discussion as decision making is one of the key roles of leadership, essentially operationalizing the strategic plan. As such I have designated leadership as being about planning in particular execution of the plan through decision making. Decision making in the TORC partnerships, both the partnership of the whole and the partnerships formed for projects was, according to key informants, clearly a concern.
The TORC board, figured prominently in the responses and discussion about decision making and leadership. In the case of TORC as a partnership of the whole, the role of the board and the kinds of decisions it needed to take as a result of that leadership role varied temporally. Several key informants discussed in particular the period of time when TORC was between executive directors. Discussions of how this varied from previous periods revealed the board’s role as being that of a working board, completely engaged in the daily business of the organization. Although some boards are by necessity and choice working boards, in this case the board conceptualized as representational and originally focused on strategic oversight, not on the day to day business of the corporation. While circumstances had a large part to do with this operational detour, TORC shared this struggle that is almost universally present in organizations. One member commented, “when I came on the board, I got the sense the board was still pretty engaged in operational decisions.” Clearly this statement indicates that there were concerns regarding the appropriateness of the board’s operational involvement which inevitably carried over to time periods when there was an Executive Director.\textsuperscript{67}

In addition to concerns about operational involvement were the concerns about representation and associated equity issues. “But most of the time, and this is the reality anywhere, partnerships are never equal, there is always disparity in partnerships.” This statement about disparity represents a point of view that is highly contested and in many cases voicing this opinion is discouraged by partners in the partnership. When organizations acknowledge inequity they can mitigate it to some extent through various

\textsuperscript{67} Without board involvement normal operations would not have been completed.
processes. The TORC board in its efforts to mitigate chose consensus decision making as a means achieving equity. Consensus requires that each person in the partnership, regardless of size, must agree with the resolution before a decision can be made. While this may reduce the power of significantly resourced partners it is also infamous for slowing down the process. According to one key informant; “consensus generates real problems with making decisions and moving forward, and TORC was very concerned with consensus.” In this respect the boards efforts were not consistently reflected in other committees or working groups leaving the Rural Development Conference committee for example to develop its own, not so successful process. Consensus also contrasts significantly with the decision making process of the working groups discussed in chapter five.

As with TORC, for many organizations decision making is a contentious process. There are many examples of imperfect processes in the not for profit sector where members are generally volunteers, unaware of, or reticent to take on the liability associated with the impact of major decisions. In many cases board members are often elected or appointed to represent an interested community and as such are expected to reflect the thoughts and opinions of that community. This can be problematic for board members because while the position may be representational in terms of board composition, the liability associated with board membership rests solely on the individual member. This reality is not well known in the NPO community and more importantly to those that sit on boards. The issue of individual liability for leaders (board members) provides evidence to support what has become an important finding of this research, which is that globalization
inevitably manages risk downward, eventually and essentially resulting in individuals doing the work and carrying the risk.

6.4.5 Member-Partner Characteristics; Systems Perspectives

Human resources play various roles in an organizational system. I have already identified human resources as an energy “input” and have noted that they could also be regarded as an element. Elements of the system in this case have been defined as members of the partnership. Elements of the system do not exist in isolation within the system, they not only provide the inputs of energy but they also have membership in their own organizational systems. In this context human resources are the connectors and facilitate the linking of the organizational system to the larger system of which it is a part. In this way the most efficient and effective members are also well networked and play a critical role in the exchange between the environment and the organization. In TORC’s case member-partners were well networked. While this was a good thing from an organizational perspective as TORC benefitted by the work of these organizational connectors and the resultant exchange from the outside; there also a downside which stemmed from the fact that most organizational representatives had at least two jobs. One job was to work for the member partner organization in either a volunteer or paid capacity. Only when there was time to spare did TORC have access to these volunteer resources to use for its own benefit. Having to depend on labour that is intermittently available is not optimal, in fact it can create a destabilizing effect on the system. The result of the uncertainty which surrounded inputs of both financial and human resources
on a regular basis, was that TORC was in a constant state of flux, when from a systems perspective it was seeking to achieve equilibrium.

Equilibrium in a system is achieved when all forces (i.e. input, output, positive and negative feedback) are balanced to the extent that nothing (i.e. no change) is happening. In the TORC organizational system, the lack of dependable inputs would be interpreted as negative feedback, causing the system to “reduce expectations and response.” As such it would reduce its profile and activities.

### 6.5 Communication Patterns-Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Established</th>
<th>Value in Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-09</td>
<td>1998-09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 22: Communication-Value**
Chapter five suggested that members who were convinced of the value TORC provided and those that questioned the value provided co-existed over the life of the organization. While Butler Flora and Flora (2008) do not address value specifically, it seems clear that value is in whole or part determined by cultural capital. In the field of organizational development\(^\text{68}\) the concept of value currently has a high profile. Value consciousness is one of the outcomes of a consumer conscious society even though meaning of value is ephemeral and case specific, particularly when the results of activities are not felt until many years later as was frequently the case with TORC’s projects. Globalization has driven this obsession with value, a pre-occupation which is visible to outside organizations through the process of evaluation. What constitutes success in achieving objectives is impacted by many things including the world views of the evaluator which is reflected in the content of the logical framework. I expected many partners would be concerned about value and in particular whether the cost of a membership was worth the investment. As a result I also expected a return on investment (ROI) calculation would be mentioned as a way that TORC could demonstrate value.

The high profile of value was reflected in the responses of key informants, particularly on the part of government and private sector members. As predicted there was an emphasis during the interviews on the need for TORC to establish an ROI calculation that would create a financial rationalization for the membership fee; in other words to capture the value created monetarily.

\(^{68}\) This preoccupation is consistent across many aspects of this consumer conscious society.
In this case the value seen to be created by TORC was well understood by founders. Belfall (1999, p. 38) identifies the foundations of perceived value as being related to the following: 1) overall product quality; 2) personal cost; 3) service quality in all aspects; and 4) the image of the association. These four factors combine to produce the value proposition. In TORC’s case the products that the value proposition would be related to are the network and the forum for dialogue created by TORC. Service quality in all aspects and the image of the organization are the two factors that are directly related to communication. TORC, like others in the sector had little to spend on self-promotion. Without resources for self-promotion what remains is for value to be assessed on outputs, “Image is the sum of its traditional program and service activities, it’s success and failures and its visible outputs (Belfall, 1999, p.44)”. That TORC was an excellent communicator when it came to its mandate stands in sharp contrast to what appeared to be less than effective communication practices overall.

6.6 Access to and Innovative use of Communications Technology

The key informants interviewed for this research saw access to technology; particularly state of the art ICTs, as an important part of the “communications plan.” This uniformity of response reflects what has become a dominant societal paradigm in recent years regarding the critical nature of ICTs to communication processes. Ebbs and flows of communication (Castells, 2000), impact virtually all aspects of rural life, which depending on its quality facilitate or provide barriers to economic and social activity. Although Castell’s perspective was urban, his framework has been adapted by many proponents including co-incidentally Ontario’s provincial government, to explain the
“wicked nature” of rural communications. Ontario’s answer to aiding the rural economy was the introduction of a new broadband infrastructure program in 2007. That this program was rolled out at approximately the same time as the key informant interviews were taking place may have influenced the responses of some key informants and while it is important to acknowledge this it is also important to note that none of these key informants mentioned the program. Instead they focused on built capital—or technology from a temporal, organizational perspective; stating or implying that TORC’s access to ICTs had changed over time.

Butler Flora and Flora (2008) state that a significant issue for rural communities is the question of who will own and maintain built capital (p 211)? Many examples of the conflict and sometimes risk this entails exist in Ontario, particularly those that began as a result of the provincial conservative policy of downloading discussed in detail in chapter four. The most famous case was that which involved Walkerton, where the unanswered question of who would fund testing programs, exposed hundreds of rural residents to potentially deadly pathogens. Ongoing maintenance and capital expense for replacement of obsolete equipment and infrastructure is also an issue when the ownership and consequently responsibility is not in dispute. This was the case with TORC as illustrated by its slide from rural technology visionary and leader to being an organization that might most charitably be characterized as trailing technologically. Rather than being the instigator and facilitator of a social network functioning as a forum for rural dialogue; the lack of access to this key component of built capital rendered TORC eventually unable to mobilize the network.
The technological components that facilitate modern communication so dominate the discussion regarding communications that it is easy to overlook the imperative of human participation. There is no doubt that TORC’s situation was difficult; staff whose job it was to facilitate communication were frequently seconded to other projects due to financial necessity. Given TORC’s mandate it should have excelled at communication of every kind, however communication between partners and with the broader community, widely recognized in the literature as a critical component of effective partnering and also reflected in TORC own documentation\textsuperscript{69}, was thus disabled due not only to a lack of mediating technology but also from a lack of facilitation. One bright spot in the communications constellation was within the board of TORC. A key informant identifies the development of excellent communications skills as being the result of becoming an operational board. However the implications of another key informant comment was that communication did not often happen across groups i.e. the board and general membership were not in frequent touch. Lack of communication resulted in a lack of knowledge about the corporation, both the challenges and accomplishments. This in turn fed doubts about the value of the partnership leading to questions regarding relevancy.

6.7 Communications – A Systems Perspective

A closed system is one where communication and other exchanges happen only between the system components and not with the environment of which the system is a part. Alternatively an open system is one that receives communication and exchanges from the environment and then releases output into the environment. Open systems are

\textsuperscript{69} i.e. the partnership plan for ROC
characterized by the dynamic interaction of components. Open systems can tend toward higher levels of organization, while closed systems can only maintain or decrease in organization (Weiner, 1948). Clearly the optimal structure for a partnership based/network based organization is open. Ideally open systems (especially in TORCs case when it is concerned with dialogue and collaboration) facilitate exchange with the outside. At the same time, funding practices, and accountability measures demanded by society put pressure on the system to close. One example of this is contribution agreements which require an incorporated organization as the guarantor.

The fulfillment of government’s requirement to incorporate in conjunction with a change in leadership resulted in a situation with the potential to create a closed structure, and indeed subsequently reduced TORC’s capacity for communication. Once incorporated, an organization takes on a life of its own and organizational efforts are frequently redirected to maintenance of the structure-organization. Because energy is now focused on maintaining the new corporate life, time for network building and maintenance is reduced. This in turn reduces capacity for communication, and so it continues in a downward spiral. Of course this line of thought raises many questions, given the fact that some networking may be necessary to maintain the life of the organization, what kind of feedback (positive or negative) would have been required to reverse the trend? As communication requires inputs that can facilitate both the purchase of IT equipment and the skills required to manage the communications function, but both inputs that had been in very short supply, was the situation reversible?
6.8 A Working Theory of Partnerships and Summation of Research

The main goal of this research was to initiate the development of a working theory of partnerships, the partnership approach to rural governance; consequently contributing to more sustainable rural communities in Canada. Changes in the global economic system have given rise to federal and supranational governments search for new ways to extend scarce resources and their sphere of influence both globally, and at the local level. This has led to an increased prevalence of the promotion of partnership practice as partnerships are seen to encourage more effective use of resources, incorporate the voice of local residents, the private and third sectors as well as others. Finally partnership arrangements spread the financial responsibility for policy implementation through tools such as contribution agreements thereby facilitating neo-liberal global political and economic systems. While informal political systems are accustomed to developing partnerships as a means to achieving mutual goals, the ‘hard right turn’ experienced in western Europe and North America required that formal political systems practice what they preached. Given that imperative what has changed in the last two decades is what appears to be the state’s purposeful promotion and adoption of the partnership approach to virtually all initiatives including those that involve rural development. As a result we now see examples of the new governance, partnership based relationships in both urban and rural environments some of these include partnerships for example between local municipalities, local law enforcement, business and many others. Economic systems, particularly those that encompass local development processes (rural, economic, housing and others) are also well versed at utilizing partnerships as a means to achieve critical
mass and by-in for development projects. Other participants such as the non-profit sector (system) continue to develop partnerships because without them, resources both financial and otherwise are much more difficult to come by.

During the course of this research I was able to examine in depth the experience of one partnership based organization, The Ontario Rural Council, for insight regarding what daily practice may be demanding of rural, partnership based organizations. While I do not claim to speak for organizations other than TORC, I believe that TORC’s experience might be regarded as a warning of what is happening in other organizations. The research related insights took the form of operational realities that facilitate or serve as barriers to partnership practice. I identified twelve pairs of realities that are examined as individual pairs and can also be interpreted as continuums. TORC moved along these continuums over the course of its lifetime reflecting and participating in what is a dynamic, constantly changing rural environment.
The operational realities outlined and discussed in some detail over the course of chapters five and six form an important and significant part of the working theory on partnerships. Taken one by one these operational barriers and realities are not surprising, or
particularly daunting, but on mass they are formidable and speak to the very real and complex task required of partnership architects, the developers and those that are operate these organizations over the long-term.

*Structure and resources*, the first subset of the operational realities included financial and human capital, as well as transparency and mandate. Financial and human capital are comparatively tangible assets. They are familiar and as a result the value and necessity of these inputs is well understood. It is also safe to say that most partnerships are lacking in sufficient amounts of both kinds of assets and in this TORC was no exception. As a result TORC invested a great deal of energy and effort on a search for sustainability, a search that was ultimately unsuccessful. Transparency in contrast is more ephemeral. What constitutes transparency varies, as does whether it is a facilitating quality or a barrier. In this context transparency was about who had, or could obtain knowledge of the corporate structure; 1) founders knew about it because they created it, 2) funders needed to manage risk and so made their own knowing about it mandatory 3) new partners frequently found the corporate structure baffling, a situation which resulted in several claiming not to know about basic organizational functions such as who made the decisions. In comparison TORC was extremely successful at communicating it’s mandate; to the extent that everyone, new and old, was not only aware of the mandate but they also appeared quite clear on the nuances and the implication of the mandate for TORC’s activities via vie advocacy in particular.

*Characteristics of member partners* appeared to play a significant role in the success of partnership in this case. Those characteristics that emerged as particularly salient were;
whether member partners had a leadership role in the organization of origin, and how they managed their contribution to the partnership within their own organizational hierarchy. It became clear relatively quickly that the ability to manage, and then leverage one's own position and networks for the benefit of not only a home organization, but also the partner organization was extremely desirable. What also became clear however was that as a result of this dual role, the partner organization, in this case TORC, would always come second in terms of member priorities. As such TORC was and would never really be secure in terms of human capital or HR commitments.

Leadership skills were identified as being important by key informants; although TORC, along with the rural sector generally, was seen as suffering a discontinuity in leadership due in part to a reduction in leadership development programming. As a result leadership was ad hoc rather than planned. Decision making as a key function of leadership and the means by which strategic plans were operationalized was also discussed. Finally, also related to leadership is an understanding of, and subsequent successful negotiation of the power dynamic which is an important part of successful partnering. While many members of TORC were aware of ‘power’ as being a factor in the partnership relationship, many were not. In TORC’s case ‘power’ was clearly an issue, particularly the power that comes with the control of resources. This power was generally in the hands of government funders and while efforts to balance this power were made by limiting voting rights to non-governmental members and using consensus decision making, power was still seen by many as a barrier.
Communication is an important part of any relationship and it appears that this may be particularly true in a partnership relationship. It seems obvious that the importance of communication is directly related to the number of partners i.e. the more partners there are, the more important communication. This research has convinced me however that the importance of formal communication and structure is not tied to size, rather that it is critically important regardless of size. As discussed there were some things such as organizational mandate that TORC was exceptionally good at communicating, and others at which it failed significantly, such as maintaining an early established leadership role in the use of information technology. Although the failure of this aspect was blamed on a lack of financial resources not a lack of communication skill, it is clear that communication was inconsistent in TORC. This case demonstrates how within the same organization communication can be both successful and unsuccessful; to illustrate, although communication within the board was excellent, communication between board and the rest of the organization was frequently interrupted, causing important information to fail to make the transition to the general membership and into common knowledge. This led to a situation where some were knowledgeable about the affairs of the organization, and some were not. Those who were not knowledgeable frequently raised questions about TORC’s relevancy.

As a result of this research some points of clarity were confirmed that refrain or augment the working theory on partnerships. First, a partnership is an organization in and of itself, and not just a mechanism. The implication of this belief i.e. the organizational nature of partnerships, is that they require the same care and developmental attention as
do ‘normal’ organizations. As suggested in Chapter One, it has been my experience that this assumption is not necessarily commonly held, a fact that may in part account for the plethora of partnerships that exist, given funders resistance to the creation of new organizations. I originally suggested that the normative view that partnerships are a good thing, and an cost effective way to facilitate (more) work; is a direct result of society’s misconception that partnerships are different from ordinary organizations, different because they need no inputs. According to this flawed assumption, the daily requirements of organizational existence such as financial and human resources are somehow not required. My original hypothesis was that the inevitable deficits that result from operating under this misconception are frequently absorbed by the least resilient organizational partner, NPOs. What I found was that they too are passing the proverbial burden and pushing it downward, from organizations through to staff and volunteers, until ultimately, inevitably, it is individuals who bear the weight of partnership development and practice. Although not a common interpretation of what Judith Maxwell calls “individualization of risk”, this lesser known impact of the stripping away of social supports and social programming has also exposed families and individuals to risk, and is clearly germane in this context. Not only are individuals that volunteer essentially laboring in an unregulated workplaces, and consequently unprotected personally, but through their work they also expose others (both staff and volunteers) to risk. Kinds of risk generated by volunteer workers in the not-for-profit sector include financial, physical and psychological risk. Some NPO’s have purchased insurance to protect volunteers and staff against claims that might arise as a result of activities, but these organizations are rare as this product is comparatively expensive.
NPO’s might be expected to discuss, raise questions about, or at least recognize this phenomenon and mitigate in some way given their values; the fact that they function for the communities benefit; and that they too are being exploited by society. By insisting that they adopt the standards and practices of the private sector however, society implies that their values and standards are not sufficient, even inferior. The message of inferiority is also frequently accompanied by more responsibility and more work as more social programs are dismantled. To add insult to injury we starve NPO’s of the resources with which to work. It could be confusing, and indeed they are confused. Having said that, it seems clear that NPO’s need to be held to a higher standard. They need to be leaders and leadership includes being clear about such things as whose obligation it is to pay for services, although the question about whose responsibility it is to make sure that those who are not paying, pay still remains.

While partnerships do require the same attention as do other organizations, they differ from typical organizations in two key ways, the first of these is that in the hierarchy of member priorities the partnership rarely achieves first place. As discussed this inevitability leads to many problems, largely related to a deficit of human resources which in TORC’s case led to instability, causing the organizational system to contract as a means to achieve equilibrium. The second key way partnerships differ from other organizations is rarely recognized and I dare say even more rarely broached, and that is the fundamentally temporary nature of the liaison. While some partnerships are developed for a sole purpose such as a particular project, others are created with a longer, perhaps an indefinite lifespan in mind. In fact, few organizational architects design and
build with the prospect of dissolution in mind regardless of what kind of organization they are building. This I believe is a mistake of significant proportions as partnership based organizations\textsuperscript{70} almost inevitably, frequently spend a period of time diverting scarce resources to the support of organizational structures that no longer serve a useful purpose.

Use of community capitals framework and GST have supplied lenses which provides insight into the practice of partnerships and partnering at TORC in Guelph, Ontario; both clarifying and at the same time generating questions for the next step or future research. There are many potential areas which would benefit from further research some of these are:

1. Expand the research that began with this research project, a process which would in the best of all possible worlds, provide a stable foundation for the eleven-twelve continua framework.

2. Expand the context specific research and analysis, and compare with others both nationally and internationally to develop promising partnership practices for use in rural and urban communities.

3. Answer the question; what kinds of capacities are necessary for the successful implementation of partnership development and develop the learning programs based on the findings.

\textsuperscript{70} As well as other organizations.
4. Finally, highlighted by others such as Miller and Ahmad (2000), Bradshaw (2000) and Gilcrest (2000) is the question about whether chaos theory, and complex systems can give some insight into thinking about, and working in partnerships.

6.9 Rural Partnerships Going Forward

So far this story has been about the barriers and facilitating factors that impact the practice of partnerships in rural communities, or “on the ground.” These I have suggested have been affected by the rural context and the larger neo-liberal, global economic systems. As implied by Butler Flora and Flora’s (2008) CCF, rurality and community are inextricably bound, and as a result useful frameworks must comfortably contain both. In this case rurality and community are operationalized by community capitals or assets, and complimented intellectually by conceptions of community and their component organizations as a system. Within this context the issue of partnerships in the rural environment can be comfortably situated. There is a place for complexity, for the depth of the social and political relationships that define community and underpin the practice of partnerships.

While this inquiry has identified the facilitating factors and barriers to effective practice, its ultimate goal has been the initiation of a working theory of partnerships, a practice that is changing the face of governance in rural communities. Analysis of the case has clarified that it is individuals who provide the resources, largely human, required to do the work of non-profit sector partnerships.
### 6.10 Final Words

At the end of such an exploration it is important to discuss the way forward. As partnerships are organizations and as government is the primary instigator and funder of partnerships within the rural context, I would like to see a change in government policy across both provincial and federal departments which not only recognizes the need for program support, but also establishes firm guidelines for core funding which must accompany any project funding that is awarded. By awarding core funding along with project funding, government will demonstrate that it is cognizant of the price tag associated with demands of transparency and accountability—generally fulfilled by NPOs on behalf of all or both partners. If this were to result, government will be able to reasonably demand the level of professionalism it requires of its partners. The old adage ‘you get what you pay for’ seems relevant here.

Core funding should be accompanied by program funding horizons of three to five years which will offer all partners and stakeholders (NPOs, government and community), the stability and consistency of longer-term programming and interventions which have been shown to be more effective over time. While my immediate preference is to focus all efforts on a renewal of program funding, I am not confident that such a focus would have any reasonable expectation of success without first de-fragmenting the NPO community. Government’s financial resources are limited; as a result NPOs as the primary operational vehicles of partnerships, must work together more co-operatively and coherently. Where partnerships with similar or compatible missions and visions exist, it will be important to amalgamate energy and resources to focus on the work at hand, not on the maintenance
of separate silos and administrative structures. Without a coherent and cohesive structure and voice, I believe that program support is light-years away and that NPOs and their partnerships will continue to be dependent on government in a way which continues the power imbalance, and which consequently circumscribes independence of voice and action.

I believe that knowledge contains the greatest promise for a solution. Moving forward I envision a change in inter-organizational culture, from the current state of a dearth of critical knowledge about partnerships, to the establishment of an inter-organizational culture of learning that values institutional memory, organizational learning and research. This culture, while incorporating individual organizations implicit in the terminology, would extend beyond the discrete into the wider community and its stakeholders. This vision may seem utopian and far-fetched, but there is a significant body of literature on the learning organization, a concept popularized by Peter Senge (1990) in the Fifth Discipline. Application of this concept is myriad up to and including conceptualizing rural communities as learning systems (Kilpatrick, 2000; Lauzon & Sumner, 2002). Utopian or not, the groundwork for cultural change may already be in process. As illustrated by the Voluntary Sector Initiative, Canada has been inspired by the European experience of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where Compacts have been developed between governments and the voluntary and community sectors. What seems evident is that while partnerships seem here to stay, the context within which they operate is in flux, change being the only constant. This is a reality that makes the concept of
equilibrium a temporary state at best, and in such a world the skills necessary to develop partnerships and the next generation of relationship(s) is the only fail-safe investment.
Chapter 7: References and Appendices

7.1 References


Toronto, ON, Canada: Canadian Society of Association Executives.


Cohen, A. (2003). *While Canada slept: How we lost our place in the world.* Toronto, ON, Canada: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.


*Memorandum of understanding between Bell Canada and the Ontario Rural Council in alliance with the Foundation for Rural Living.* Ontario, Canada: Author.


St. Catherines, ON, Canada: Taylor & Francis.


Foundation for Rural Living. (1999, October). Project grant agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Ontario as represented by the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology and Foundation for Rural Living. Ontario, Canada: Author.


*Local government declaration to the world summit on sustainable development*. (2002).


Ontario Rural Council. (2004, March). *Rural community capacity building program networking initiative contribution agreement between Her majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Rural Council (TORC)* (Project No. ON-NN-0001). Ontario, Canada: Author.
Ontario Rural Council. (2004, June). *Grant funding agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ontario Rural Council*. Ontario, Canada: Author.


Ontario Rural Council. (2006, March). *Amendment to grant funding agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ontario Rural Council*. Ontario, Canada: Author.


http://www.trp.dundee.ac.uk/research/geddes/monitor/indicat.htm


What are the ROC tools? Rural online communication has five main tools for its users.

(n.d.). Ontario, Canada: Author.

Weiner, Norbert. (1948). *Cybernetics: Control and communication in the animal and machine*. [No more information available].

http://homepages.phonecoop.coop/julian.pratt/partnership.htm


7.2 Appendix A. Torc Documentation


Foundation for Rural Living. (1999, October). *Project grant agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Ontario as represented by the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology and Foundation for Rural Living*. Ontario, Canada: Author.


Ontario Rural Council. (2004, March). *Rural community capacity building program networking initiative contribution agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Rural Council (TORC) (Project No. ON-NN-0001)*. Ontario, Canada: Author.

Ontario Rural Council. (2004, June). *Grant funding agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ontario Rural Council*. Ontario, Canada: Author.


Ontario Rural Council. (2006, March). *Amendment to grant funding agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ontario Rural Council.* Ontario, Canada: Author.


What are the ROC tools? Rural online communication has five main tools for its users. (n.d.). Ontario, Canada: Author.
7.3 Appendix B Interview Guide

The Promise of Partnerships

Interview Guide

Preamble: Speak from your own experience, from your own perspective, not on behalf of the organization you represent(ed).

Context
What is/was the (local, national) context in which you are/were operating? Why do you think this (context) is occurring?

How is/was this impacting practice/ aims objectives outcomes? Does/Did, and if so how does/did this context effect the origins and development of the partnership?

If context not identified as an issue, ask informant to describe the origins and development of the partnership.

Resources
What resources does/did your partnership have access to?

Why or why don’t you have this access?

How does this access or lack of access impact practice, aims/objectives, outcomes?

Composition
What organizations or individuals are/were involved in this partnership? Why are/were they involved i.e. how did they benefit? How does/did this impact practice, aims/objectives, outcomes?

Structure
Does/Did the partnership have a structure (how is/was it organized), what is/was the structure?

Why did you choose this structure? Did you access or benefit (or were you constrained) by other structural elements/requirements (i.e. external program requirements)? How does/did it work for you? i.e. how does/did it (structure of any sort) impact practice/aims objectives outcomes?

Participation
How do/did partners participate in the partnership i.e. did all members participate, (participate equitably)?
Why is/was this the case? How does/did this impact practice, aims/objectives, outcomes?

**Decision Making**
Describe in as much detail as you can remember how the partnership makes/made decisions. Do/Did all members participate equitably? Why is/was this the case? How does/did this impact practice, aims/objectives, outcomes?

**Action**
Describe in as much detail as you can remember how the partnership accomplished work. What is/was the work? Do/Did all members participate equitably? Why is/was this the case? How does/did this impact practice, aims/objectives, outcomes?

**Objectives**
Were the objectives/outcomes established by the partnership met?

**Outcomes**
How important is/was the partnership relationship to achieving these goals? Would you share your reflections on the costs and benefits of the relationship. On balance was it worth it?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

When you think of the term partnerships (in your experience) what does it mean to you?

What has been your experience (in terms of your work or the way you do your work) of partnerships generally?

What has been your experience (in terms of the way you do your work in committees as a staff person etc.) with TORC in terms of partnerships?

What can you say about the ____________TORC partnership in terms of how it impacted or affected how you did/do your work?

If you reflect on our conversation of the last hour what lessons can you draw regarding partnerships generally and with respect to TORC?