Involvement in community gardens - sustaining the benefits

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Abstract

This study investigates the creation and management of community gardens. It explores the processes of community involvement associated with their development and the factors that influence personal involvement with a project. Relationships between place attachment and involvement are examined within this framework to investigate common assumptions that relate feelings of attachment to pro-active behaviour.

The research project was developed in collaboration with a community development organisation supporting neighbourhood regeneration in an area of Sheffield. This facilitated an in-depth field based approach encompassing participant observation, interviews and visual-ethnographic techniques.

Investigation of three case study gardens reveals a complex framework of factors influencing involvement; incorporating relationships with place, personal values, social relationship and practical issues. The role of attachment to place is found to be important in the initiation of involvement, although differing in character from traditional concepts of place attachment. The process of community involvement is found to encourage strong feelings of place attachment among both those taking part and those simply observing. The role of this attachment in the continuation of involvement is less evident however, moderated by a range of more practical factors.

The presence of a facilitating organisation in encouraging sustained involvement was a highly influential factor in the development and management of community gardens in this study. However, the consistency of support available from grant-reliant community organisations can vary and the research highlights the importance of securing long-term support mechanisms. Efficient facilitation, both at a group and neighbourhood level, is needed to ensure that the benefits community gardens provide to individuals and communities can be sustained.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

Community involvement in the design and management of green space is widely considered to be a necessary component in the achievement of quality urban environments (Dunnett *et al,* 2002). Such values reflect wider government strategies to encourage communities to engage with, and take responsibility for, the provision of services at a local level (Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP, 2003).

One form of involvement which exemplifies these aims is the creation of community gardens. These spaces constitute a distinctive model of green space provision, initiated and developed by local people (Holland, 2004) and have been widely encouraged through the promotion of grant funding schemes aimed at community groups.

Although the focus of considerable investment, community gardens remain a relatively poorly understood phenomenon, with limited research into the dynamics of involvement. The collective activity implicit in the creation and management of a community garden has been suggested to foster social links which can increase the capacity of communities to undertake further work (Glover 2004). However, explicit consideration of the ability of a community garden project, reliant on volunteer activity, to sustain involvement and ensure successful management in the long term remains largely unexplored.

The research proposal was developed at a time when community gardens were receiving a great deal of positive attention, not only within the field of landscape design but also more generally within popular media, including television programmes devoted to their creation with an

unquestioningly positive outlook. At the same time, a personal exploration of publicised gardens was revealing numerous cases where the maintenance of gardens had proved difficult to sustain and projects which had been highly praised in their early stages but had become run down or abandoned.

The experience of involvement in the creation and management of a space and the implications this can have on feelings towards a space relate closely to ideas of place and more specifically to ideas of place attachment. Community gardens provide an opportunity for the development of strong attachments to these neighbourhood spaces, both among those involved and those witnessing the process.

Studies considering environmental volunteering in natural spaces have explored the relationship between involvement and attachment and found that the experience of involvement can foster strong emotional ties with the landscape in which work takes place (Ryan, 1997; Schroeder, 2000). Community gardens provide a distinctive context for involvement however, where the connections between people and place have the potential to be far more complex due to their location within the neighbourhood environment. As well as providing a distinctive context to justify further research, this more intimate physical relationship also heightens the importance of achieving a better understanding of the role and implications of community gardens as a form of open space provision.

1.2 The research context

The research has been developed in a collaborative manner, working closely with a community development organisation established to support neighbourhood regeneration. The experience of this organisation in supporting and assisting community garden projects provided a

context in which exploratory research based on in-depth and longitudinal methods could be developed and supported.

This approach was enabled by a CASE studentship from the ESRC, intended to encourage collaborative partnerships between academic institutions and non-academic organisations to support the pursuit of research into areas of mutual interest.

This collaborative context also enabled a close relationship to be developed with the communities being studied, with would otherwise have proved difficult to achieve.

1.3 Research objectives

The intention of this study was to explore the nature of involvement in a community gardening project, and investigate relationships between the involvement achieved and emotional attachment to place.

The research applies an in-depth case study approach, using qualitative research techniques to achieve a contextual understanding of values, relationships and processes associated with three community gardens.

Informing the focus of this exploration were three key themes:

Longevity of involvement.
The primary (and overarching) theme of the research was the investigation of community-led open space projects and their ability to maintain involvement beyond the creation phase to ensure successful management.

The objective of this theme was to develop a better understanding of patterns of involvement and non-involvement, motivations for involvement, and changes in involvement over time.

Attachment to place

The second theme provided a formative theory around which the research was developed. It is a common assertion that positive emotional relationships with place can encourage responsible behaviour, but the practical ability of such bonds to encourage and sustain active involvement in a community garden context remains uncertain.

The objective within this theme was to explore the relationship between experiences of involvement with a community garden and feelings of place attachment. The nature of this relationship has direct implications for the longevity of involvement and also has wider implications for furthering understanding of the benefits of community-led projects to neighbourhood regeneration efforts. To explore this wider role, one of the aims of this work was to extend investigation beyond those who had been involved with a project and to explore feelings of attachment among non-involved residents.

Community support

The third theme relates to the physical context in which the research took place, and enabled consideration of the role of a community-development organisation in supporting and sustaining involvement.

It has been recognised that,

> *"...there are limits to what community-based initiatives can achieve unless they are working in a supportive policy environment."*
>
> Irvine *et al* (1999) p.35

Community-development organisations provide a potential model for such support and the collaborative nature of the research with a Development Trust provided an opportunity to consider the importance of organisational support.

The objective of this theme was to explore the role of a supporting organisation in the achievement of sustained involvement.

1.4 Thesis overview

Chapter 2 outlines the literature most relevant to the issues being addressed by this research, and aims to place the work in an academic and policy context. Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach applied, and details the techniques used to explore the themes of the study. Chapter 4 provides an introduction to the area in which the research was based, including an explanation of the organisational context with respect to collaboration with Heeley Development Trust. Chapter 5 introduces the three main community garden projects that formed the focus of the research. Chapter 6 explores the nature of involvement, describing the range of activities associated with a community garden, and highlighting the range of levels at which involvement with a project can take place. Chapter 7 explores the range of factors found to influence levels of involvement, highlighting the complexity of motivating feelings and the issues and circumstances which can mitigate them. Chapter 8 reflects on the theoretical implications of the research findings, with particular reference to theories of place attachment. Finally, Chapter 9 reflects on the practical implications of the findings, the limitations of the work and the scope for future research, and offers a concluding summary to the work.

Chapter 2

Literature review

This chapter places the research in an academic and policy context and explores the limitations to current understanding that prompted the research objectives.

First, community gardens are defined and the existing literature investigating these specific forms of green space is explored. This is followed by an overview of the policy context in which community gardens in the UK are placed and the relevance of the phenomenon for current political agendas. Next, the increasing role of community involvement in the provision of green space more generally is explored. A more detailed consideration of the processes of involvement follows this, focusing on environmental volunteering but referring to wider volunteering literature. This highlights the problems of sustaining volunteer activity and the implications of such problems in a community gardening context. Finally the concept of place attachment is introduced and the implications for a relationship between attachment to place and voluntary activity on a neighbourhood scale explored.

2.1 Community Gardens

2.1.1 An Introduction to Community Gardens

The precise nature of a "community garden" is difficult to define. The term is used frequently, and explained rarely. Projects regularly labelled as such are diverse in both size and form. One of the few universal characteristics however is an element of direct involvement by a part of the population local to the site - the 'community'. One of the few UK studies into the field defines community gardens as,

> *"…open spaces managed and operated by members of the local community for a variety of purposes."* (Holland, 2004, p.285)

This concept of public control goes some way to distinguishing community gardens from the many other elements of conventional public open space (Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, 2001). Such a definition remains broad, but a number of sub-groups can be identified, determined by the level of communal use (Stocker & Barnett, 1998). At one end of the scale lie those gardens split into plots, each one for the independent use of a participant, without any significant element of communal space. The English allotment system would fit such a group. Further up the scale lies those gardens communally tended for the exclusive use of those actively participating, a form of shared garden. Examples include therapy gardens within hospitals, and many school based gardens (Ferris *et al.*, 2001).

Yet further along the scale lies the type of garden considered within this study: a garden communally created and managed, not merely for the benefit of those involved, but for the wider community as well (being either freely accessible or open on a regular basis). It is this form of garden that is most commonly referred to by the phrase 'community garden'. The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, for

example, explicitly refers to public access when it distinguishes community gardens from private gardens as being,

> *"...in some sense a public garden in terms of ownership, access, and degree of democratic control."* (Ferris et al., 2001, p.3)

These gardens may therefore contain an element of individual plot gardening, but only as part of a larger communal space.

Despite a recent growth in awareness, community gardens are by no means a recent development. Early agricultural practice was based on the premise of communal land management, and it was only through societal development that land has gradually been distributed among an ever declining number of people (Hoskins, 1965). Allotments were among the first conscious projects to provide land for those communities deprived following nineteenth century enclosure policies (Crouch, 1988). It seems modern community gardens owe their existence more to the community action of the 1960s however, as communities reacted against a growing lack of control of public resources (Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, 2001). In contrast to the existing allotment movement, community gardens were perceived as offering wider benefits and opportunities to the local community (see section 2.1.3.)

Community gardens are widely recognised to differ substantially from traditional open spaces such as public parks and generally these differences are perceived in a very positive light. Frances *et al.* (1984) found that community gardens could be distinguished from public parks as small-scale spaces which are low-cost, intensively used, locally controlled and resulting from a bottom-up design approach which utilises appropriate technologies. While the significance of these characteristics varies among gardens this appears to provide a fair description of a typical community garden project, and they are frequently referred to as examples of good practice for the wider development of public open space (Greenhalgh & Warpole, 1995; DoE, 1996). This widespread positive perception, along with a close association with a number of wider

policy trends (outlined in section 2.2), has resulted in a raft of funding opportunities specifically targeted at the creation of new community gardens. Early schemes included Shell's Better Britain Campaign, established in 1995 and part of one of the UK's largest corporate community investment programmes. The campaign awarded grants of up to £2000 to groups wanting to improve life in their community, and included 'looking after wildlife and open spaces' as one of eight key areas supported (Shell Better Britain Campaign, 1999). While this fund has since closed, the range of grants available specifically for green spaces has increased, largely as a result of the National Lottery Act (1998) which established a distribution body for funds generated for good causes through the Lottery scheme (known as the New Opportunities Fund). A number of schemes within the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) were explicitly targeted at community groups wanting to improve a local green space, and offered considerably larger funds than previous schemes. 'People Places', a scheme run in association with BTCV, offered between £3000 and £10,000 for example (The Parks Agency, 2005). In addition to lottery funding, a range of corporate schemes similar to Shell's have been administered, along with an ODPM established fund (managed by Groundwork) which offers grants of up to £100,000 (The Parks Agency, 2005). In addition, on an area-based level, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has resulted in a raft of locally administered grant schemes for community groups in those areas of greatest deprivation across the country, while a range of companies have established small-scale grant schemes for groups in the vicinity of their stores.

The availability of such resources and support provides a context in which the development of community gardens have evolved from a product of community activism to an element of the urban environment actively encouraged and promoted by central government.

Despite such wide acclaim and financial investment, community gardens are often the form of urban open space most at risk from the threat of

development, commonly being situated on reclaimed land and secured only with a short term lease (GardeningWhich?, 1998). The loss of local green space became a major issue in the 1980s following the Local Government, Planning and Land Act of 1980 (Morphet, 1996). This removed much of the protection afforded to open space, and made them much more vulnerable to development. This situation still persists and modern urban sites are particularly vulnerable in light of the governments pledge to provide 60% of new housing development on brown-field sites (DETR, 1999). Such insecurity creates a contradictory situation where community gardens are actively encouraged and promoted, yet fail to receive the protection or support afforded to other more traditional forms of green space.

Reflecting the perceived threat to many existing community gardens, the majority of literature on the subject has tended to focus on the benefits that community gardens can provide, produced by organisations campaigning for greater protection. A number of organisations have championed the cause of Community gardens, most notably the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG). This registered charity was established in 1980 and aims to provide a mutual support system for members (at a minimal fee), as well as raising public awareness (FCFCG, 2001). As well as providing informative fact sheets and a newsletter, the Federation was instrumental in organising an international conference on community gardening in September 2001, one of the products of which was a publication which aimed to 'reflect the vigour and diversity of the community garden movement world-wide'.

Whilst an excellent showcase of community garden schemes world-wide, due no doubt to its promotional aim the articles do not address in any detail many of the issues related to the creation and management of the gardens, least of all their problems. Much of the more general literature from the FCFCG is focussed primarily on city farms rather than smaller community gardens The considerable differences between the two (most notably the scale, with city farms usually employing staff to manage the

site) means that consideration of the distinct characteristics and issues concerning community gardens have tended to be overlooked. Other organisations actively supporting the cause include Common Ground, The Co-operative Group and GardeningWhich?, who presented a winning garden at Hampton Court Flower Show in 2000 based on contributions from over 70 different community garden projects across the country (FCFCG website, 2001). The majority of the literature emerging from such campaigns is based on single case studies, which given the diversity of the subject is to be expected. The work is often very general in nature, giving an overview of the gardens in question, without exploring any one issue in any great depth, and failing to address any potential problematic areas.

Despite promotional interest, academic research into British community gardens remains limited. Literature appears largely limited to the benefits of community participation (e.g. Stamp, 1996) or the benefits of urban agriculture (e.g., Paxton, 1997 & Howe, 1999), with little, if any discussion of any challenges or problems. A more balanced approach is provided by Roe & Rowe (2000) in their work on the relationship between the community and the landscape professional, which makes substantial reference to community gardens but this remains an exception in the general field.

One source of research to emerge in recent years is that associated with the evaluation process of some of the many funding schemes supporting the creation of community-led spaces. The Countryside Agency have administered two such grant schemes (Millennium Greens and Doorstep Greens) and commissioned evaluation reports for each, which provide valuable insight within the context of the particular objectives of the schemes. Millennium Greens were found to provide valuable new spaces with social and environmental benefits (The Countryside Agency, 2001). Consultation among local residents was evidenced throughout the schemes but it was found that the spaces were created through the work of a "handful of volunteers" (Countryside Agency, 2001, p1). The scheme

was distinctive from the traditional community garden model in the respect that it offered funds for extensive natural sites as well as the smaller 'pocket' size spaces more commonly associated with the community gardening movement. It was also found that some groups identified a site *after* the decision to pursue a funding application as a result of funding stipulations that the space must be purchased. This contrasts with the site specific concerns which have been described as a catalyst for community gardens in other contexts (Stamp, 1987; GardeningWhich?, 1998). Despite the distinctive context, the experiences of involvement warn of the potential difficulties in sustaining community involvement, with wider participation characterised by "brief bursts" (The Countryside Agency, 2001, p3) and a burden of responsibility on organisers who may lack experience or time and in some cases left the area or resigned from the group, preventing the completion of the project. Meanwhile, a questionnaire survey of 200 groups for the evaluation of the Doorstep Greens scheme revealed a high demand for maintenance funding (60%) and support and guidance (89%), with particular emphasis on advice regarding community development (Harding, 2006). These findings support the notion that groups can find sustaining community involvement difficult, and that the reliance on voluntary effort can be insufficient to successfully manage and maintain a space.

2.1.2 American community gardening literature

The American experience of community gardens is far more advanced than in the UK, and accordingly, the literature on the subject is more abundant.

American literature is dominated by in-depth case studies, observing either a particular garden, or area of gardens. Schmelzkopf's (1995) study of Lower East Side Manhattan gardens, and Winterbottom's (1998)

study of Puerto Rican 'Casita gardens' (also in New York) are good examples. Articles appear far more willing to explore the difficulties gardens face, as well as their benefits. Schmelzkopf in particular explores the conflicts of community needs illustrated by the projects, most notably through the demand for housing on the land they occupy, and the exclusionary tendencies towards the wider communities which some gardens exhibit (Schmelzkopf, 1996). While similarities exist, the modern community garden movement in America (and New York in particular) seems to be based on a far more reactive response to government disregard than the British situation. The bulk of gardens are rooted in the economic decline of the 1960s and 1970s, as vacant lots increased and rapidly became dumping grounds and magnets for prostitution and drug related activity (Francis *et al,* 1984). Radical organisations such as the 'Green Guerrillas' seeded abandoned plots, and began to give advice to encourage others to do the same. New York gardens were officially recognised as early as 1978, illustrated by the establishment of Operation Green Thumb, a government sub-department to support and assist community garden groups (Ferguson, 1999).

In cities such as New York the character and role of community gardens are defined by the scale and density of the built environment and the lack of both public and private open space. In the UK meanwhile, 85% of households have gardens (Greenhalgh & Warpole, 1995) and the density of development, even in the most urbanised areas, is by no means as extreme. These and other factors combine to form a very different context for the community gardens in this country, generating a need for British based research.

2.1.3 The benefits and expectations of community gardens

Community gardens are seen as providing solutions to many of the problems and difficulties of modern urban life, and are considered to make an important contribution to the aims of urban regeneration (Iles, 2003). Environmentally, they offer an opportunity to reduce the ecological footprint of towns and cities, by providing a local food source, and opportunities for composting and material reuse (Ferris *et al.*, 2001). They also offer obvious benefits, if designed and managed suitably, of increasing biodiversity in the urban environment (Paxton, 1997). To individual participants they offer the personal well-being fostered by gardening (Dunnett & Qasim, 2000; Kaplan, 1973) as well as the health benefits of exercise and, where applicable, a supply of fresh vegetables to improve diet (GardeningWhich?, 1998).

Beyond these direct benefits, a range of wider socio-economic impacts have been claimed. The 'GardeningWhich?' campaign to promote community gardens claims that the gardens are,

> *"...helping fragmented communities bond through shared purpose and pride,"* (GardeningWhich, 1998, pg. 206)

The perception of community gardens as a tool for social renewal is a recurring theme. Howe (1999) claims that the process of urban agriculture in projects such as community gardens can bring communities together and combat discrimination by involving marginalised groups, while proposals for a community gardening scheme in Hulme claimed it would reinforce the "dynamic local culture" and even reduce crime (Squires, 1997).

The reasoning behind these claims appears to be the expectation that a community garden will become a focus for community interest, a catalyst for diverse social interaction, and consequently a facilitator for social

cohesion and further community action (Winterbottom, 1998; Glover, 2004; Glover *et al,* 2005). This community stimulation is provided initially through the very process of creating the park. Most community gardens (and some would say true community gardens) appear to be conceived in the first instance by individuals or small groups, who gradually build support locally, and work to attain the right to develop a site and a source of funding. This 'bottom-up' approach means that local participation is inherent to the scheme, and on a level of considerable control.

Achieving participation is seen as a key aim by many, but it is important to recognise that achieving such involvement does not guarantee success (Stamp, 1996). Indeed the problems concerning participation are numerous. One problem encountered by participation based projects is achieving a representative mix of the community. While volunteer hours rose between 1991 and 1997, the number of people providing these hours declined, suggesting a move towards an active minority (Roe, 2000). This image of a vociferous few determining the outcome of 'community' involvement is a common fear.

Twelvetrees (1996) describes community based organisations as susceptible to being led by groups of people with limited vision and a tendency to exclude individuals with whom they do not agree or relate to, often at the expense of the most deprived members of a neighbourhood or area. Similarly, Selman (1996) warns that the empowerment cultivated by community-led projects can be dangerous if channelled into the hands of 'unelected, self-appointed activists' or organisations reflecting a narrow interest. He also recognises that such a situation can be hard to avoid when, despite low levels of trust regarding government and business competence in environmental resource management, there is widespread apathy and disassociation of responsibility among the public. Some American community garden studies have recognised this problem, and it was recognised that 90% of community garden leaders in one survey of Manhattan were white, in stark contrast to the diverse demographics of the area in question (Schmelzkopf, 1995). British

literature meanwhile has been far less questioning of the levels of involvement associated with community gardens, the potential for exclusion and the implications for representation and accountability.

These issues are closely related to academic discourse surrounding the very concept of 'community'. While proponents of community gardens consistently speak of reinforcing the local community, others are questioning the relevance of 'community' in its traditional location-based definition. Both Gilchrist (2000) and Barton (2003) claim that communities are now based on interest and affinity rather than residential proximity, a situation facilitated by the rise in private transportation, and communication technologies such as the internet. These theories pose a fundamental challenge to the aims of community gardening. It suggests that gardens may bring people interested in gardening together, but not necessarily the wider social cohesion that is claimed. Even if the location-based concept of community is not dismissed completely, few would deny that its relevance has been eroded in recent decades. Social commentators such as Beck (1992) describes a gradual disintegration of traditional community ties, bound by common interests and closely associated to a particular place. In the context of community gardens and the claims made upon them, this presents a problem. In common with other community-based initiatives it is presupposed that an easily identifiable, physically-located community exists and that it will readily act in the common good (Selman, 1996). If the theories of individualisation and disaffiliation put forward by those such as Beck are correct then such a body will be hard to find. Some commentators argue that even the very notion of community can smother diversity by projecting a false sense of identity onto what is often an extremely diverse population (Stocker & Barnett, 1998). The process of treating the community as a single identity prevents the recognition that different cultural traditions and lifestyles will inevitably conflict and compete, and therefore prevents the development of solutions to these problems (Greenhalgh & Warpole, 1995). Stocker and Barnett (1998) do not dismiss the concept of community, but rather

recognise a variety of different community types that can be based on commonality of interests, geographical proximity and shared cultural and ethical values. They argue that the making of a community place should involve the articulation and recognition of each. While such theory is valuable, the actual process of achieving such an aim would seem far from easy.

The one thousand or more community gardens currently in existence in this country (Ferris *et al.*, 2001) have inevitably achieved a participation group of their own, who have created and manage the space, but their description as the 'community' cannot go unquestioned in light of these arguments.

2.2 THE POLICY CONTEXT

2.2.1 The role of open space in political agendas

Parks and open spaces have long been considered a vital element of the urban environment by landscape professionals and academics. The last decade has seen these beliefs extended into the wider political arena, with the value of urban green spaces now regularly asserted among policy makers and campaigners alike (Woolley, 2003; CABEspace, 2004).

In contrast to the widespread decline experienced by public parks from the 1960s onwards (Greenhalgh & Worpole, 1995), attention and resources are now returning to the green infrastructure of our towns and cities. Recent political developments include the government commissioned 'Urban Green Spaces Task Force' report *'Green Places, Better Places'* (DTLR, 2002), the subsequent government response *'Living Spaces'* (ODPM, 2002) and the creation of a national champion for public open space, CABE space. Consequently, the benefits of urban green space are being increasingly promoted and widely accepted, and mechanisms have been established to attempt to recognise these values, including the production of Green Space Strategies by local authorities (intended to encourage a more strategic approach to the provision of green space) and the promotion of the Green Flag campaign (an award scheme for parks and open spaces).

As well as a political movement towards the recognition of parks and opens spaces in their own right, a number of other policy areas have developed with a strong emphasis on the role of urban green space. An agenda of 'liveability' has emerged in recent years, originating in American efforts to fight urban sprawl and degradation. Although hard to define accurately, the 'liveability' agenda is concerned primarily with achieving clean, pleasant and safe urban environments, with a strong

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emphasis on 'quality of life' for residents. Policy priorities in the UK have been street cleansing and anti-social behaviour, supported by research that continues to place these issues at the top of residents concerns (Burningham & Thrush, 2001). While much of the emphasis is on the street environment, parks and open spaces figure prominently in ideas of 'liveability', as an essential factor in achieving quality of life for urban residents (ODPM, 2003).

In common with its American origins, 'liveability' has emerged in the UK as a response to wider issues of urban deprivation and decline, and as such falls within the wider agenda of Neighbourhood Renewal. The *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* published by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2001 recommended long-term support for severely deprived neighbourhoods, based on joined-up solutions that are led and owned by local residents (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). Although contemporary regeneration initiatives in the UK have tended to overlook environmental issues, the emergence of 'liveability' has provided an approach to neighbourhood renewal that combines the social and environmental agendas (Renewal.net, 2005).

At the heart of Neighbourhood Renewal rhetoric is the concept of community-led regeneration, and the assertion that any regeneration programme or project must involve the community (by encouraging resident to take an active role in decision-making and implementation) and where possible empower those communities that for any reason are unable to participate in this process (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001).

These principles were reinforced in 2003 with the publication of *Active Citizens, Strong Communities,* in which the Home Secretary outlined his vision for "civil renewal" based on increased responsibility and pro-active behaviour among residents in tacking local problems and improving quality of life. Within this vision, the traditional structure of the state as provider was questioned and in its place the devolution of responsibility to local authorities and communities promoted. To achieve this vision,

considerable emphasis is placed on the voluntary and community sectors.

> *"We want to boost the contribution these organisations can make and enable them to operate from more secure foundations."* (Rt Hon. David Blunkett, 2003, p.27)

Community gardens constitute a model of community involvement that aligns closely with these aims, providing apparent opportunities for involvement on a number of levels. Detailed consideration of the nature of these opportunities remains scarce however and constitutes a key element of this research.

2.2.2 Active citizenship and volunteering

The Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR) in the UK defines volunteering as,

> *"...any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individual or groups) other than or in addition to, close relatives, or to benefit the environment."* (Institute of Volunteering Research, 1997, web-based)

The central concept of benefit to someone other than the participant is echoed in academic studies on the subject, described for example by Penner (2004) as 'prosocial behaviour'.

Within the British social policy context, volunteering is further defined within the framework of 'Active Citizenship' (as discussed above). Alongside civic participation (taking part in civic affairs, such as contacting a local councillor or attending a public meeting), volunteering is split into two distinct categories: formal and informal.

Informal volunteering is defined as providing unpaid help towards individuals outside the family unit, while formal volunteering is distinguished as unpaid help undertaken through groups, clubs and

organisations (Munton & Zurawan, 2003). The key factor separating the two is the presence of an organising body through which the volunteer work is co-ordinated.

Within much of the associated literature and research 'formal volunteering' is associated with relatively large organisations or campaign groups. However, the term 'formal volunteering' also accurately describes the work of small community groups, despite the 'informal' character that action on such a scale can convey. Indeed, surveys have suggested that while the majority of volunteers are situated within the voluntary sector, over two-thirds of these work with local, independent groups (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997). This form of volunteering is largely overlooked among academic studies, which instead tend to focus on volunteering organisations (such as Smith, 2001; JRF, 2000 and Gaskin, 2003).

In the UK, a number of surveys have attempted to quantify trends in national volunteer levels, with conflicting results. A series of postal surveys for the Institute of Volunteering Research estimated that formal volunteer numbers fell slightly between 1991 and 1997 to a level of 48% of UK adults (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997). Meanwhile, figure published by the Home Office quantified formal volunteering levels at 28% for the period 2001-2003, a considerably lower estimate (Munton & Zurawan, 2003). While both these figures suggest declining numbers of volunteers, there also appears to have been a considerable rise in the time contributed by those continuing to volunteer (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997). This trend implies a net rise in the number of volunteer hours contributed, but a greater reliance on a committed few. This finding reflects some of the more specific experiences of community gardens as managed and undertaken by a small number of individuals (The Countryside Agency, 2001) and has implications for the ability of gardens to sustain sufficient volunteers to undertaken the work required to manage a green space. It also has implications for the concerns about representation identified in section 2.1.3.

The Home Office Citizenship Survey of 2003 investigated the levels of volunteering in different contexts. While sports and hobbies (social clubs, recreation and arts) remained the most common fields (undertaken by about 40% of volunteers), successive surveys have shown an increase in the fields of 'environment and animals' (to 18%) and 'local neighbourhood groups' (to 21%) - the two groups most fitting to the community environmental work being explored in this study (Munton & Zurawan, 2003).

The motivations for volunteering and challenges faced by organisations relying on volunteers have received considerable research attention, explored in more detail in section 2.3.

2.2.3 Participation in the delivery of services

The role of 'third sector' organisations is proposed not only as a means of increasing volunteering activity, but also as potential service providers for a range of facilities traditionally provided by the state (Blunkett, 2003). Increasingly neighbourhoods are advocated as the spatial level at which decision-making and service delivery should be taking place (Meegan & Mitchell, 2001). They also offer a appropriate scale for studying and learning about the relationships between people and places in an everyday context (Healey, 1998; Meegan & Mitchell, 2001).

Neighbourhood management encapsulates these ideas, defined as:

> *"…the local organisation, delivery and co-ordination of core civic and community services within a small, recognisable, built-up area of under 5000 homes."* (Power, 2004, p.3)

This extends the responsibility placed with communities beyond the context of supporting volunteers, and into the realm of devolved service provision. Whilst Neighbourhood Management models tend to be focused on relatively large organisations (often housing companies) with

wide remits, it is important to note that the environmental projects explored in this study fit within this definition - shifting responsibility for the provision and management of local open spaces from the local authority to local community groups.

Consideration of volunteering within policy and academic study often implies an activity in which people take part, but do not necessarily organise or have a decision-making role in. The neighbourhood management model meanwhile, implies a far greater level of control among community members, with decision-making and the management of projects as tasks alongside the practical work of 'traditional' volunteers. While those involved in such a project still fit within the definition of 'volunteer', the increased level of engagement and responsibility entailed have more in common with concepts of participation than volunteering.

The distinction between volunteering and participation is reflected in the work of Roe and Rowe (2000), who define participation as:

> *"...unpaid voluntary activity undertaken by citizens that influences government, policy-making and democratic accountability"* (Roe & Rowe, 2000, pg. 234)

The emphasis on the influence on democratic accountability is particularly relevant in the context of community gardens, where decision making regarding the development and management of a public space is placed in the hands of 'the community'.

Participation is not a standardised process, and rather is widely considered to occur on a gradient, most famously modelled as a 'ladder of participation' by Arnstein (1969). This takes the form of a discrete scale, with 'manipulation and therapy' at its base (seen as low participation and the least desirable), climbing to 'citizen control' (full managerial control by the participants) at the top. Although now widely questioned for its hierarchical structure (Sharp & Connelly, 2002),

Arnstein's ladder is still commonly used to assess participation levels. Although it is increasingly recognised that levels must be appropriate to the context, the general theory that increased participation is a good thing remains common (Roe, 2000). Such beliefs have clearly influenced the encouragement of community involvement on a policy level and the promotion of community gardening as a tool for achieving it, but the forms of participation enabled and the implications for the success of a community managed space remain largely unaddressed.

2.3 Community involvement in open space provision

The implications of these recent government agendas for urban green space are considerable. Improvements to urban green spaces are now seen as a catalyst for the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods, tacking both environmental and social issues. Well managed parks and spaces contribute towards a pleasant living environment, offer opportunities for social interaction and, crucially, provide a tangible opportunity for community involvement and the ideals of 'active citizenship'.

The phenomenon of community involvement in urban open spaces has developed from roots in a number of movements. Rural conservation has a long history of voluntary action, characterised by organisations such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, and the focus of this activity has gradually migrated through urban fringe areas to the inner city (Bradley, 1986). Another influence has been a shift in the focus of environmental concerns from the global level during the 1990s to the local, signified by the introduction of Local Agenda 21 (Freeman *et al,* 1996) and the rise of the liveability agenda (Shaw, 2004). Local action can provide a tangible, and often immediate, positive impact in contrast to the efforts towards global environmental issues. These movements, together with the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda have placed unprecedented attention on community involvement when considering the creation and management of urban open space.

It is indeed the case that landscape schemes of all types which incorporate a strong framework of participation are commonly praised for the benefits the process can bring to the scheme. In a report for the Urban Green Spaces Task Force, Dunnett *et al* (2002) suggest that the engagement of local communities is,

> *"...widely considered as being one of the cornerstones of effective and sustainable management of urban green space."* (Dunnett et al, 2002, p. 128)

Such views are now echoed in most policy-orientated literature and guidance related to parks and open space. For example, two of the ten commitments outlined in the manifesto of CABE space (the main champion of urban open space in the UK) relate to increasing community involvement:

> *"2. We will encourage people of all ages – including children, young people and retired people – to play an active role in deciding what our parks and public spaces should be like and how they should be looked after." p.3*
>
> *"10. We will encourage people from all sectors of the community to give time to improving their local environment. If we work together we can transform our public spaces and help to improve everyone's quality of life." p.19*
>
> (CABE space, 2004)

Meanwhile, the Green Flag Award scheme - a campaign to recognise quality open space - demands evidence of community involvement in its criteria for award, and has reflected the rising prominence of community-managed space as a distinct element of the open space framework with the introduction of a distinct award for community projects, the 'Green Pennant' (The Civic Trust, 2005). Although voluntary at present, the increasing use of the award as an indicator of successful green space provision among local authorities is further securing the role of community involvement in green space provision.

Among landscape design literature the benefits of involvement are widely claimed, but less commonly explored in any detail. Stamp (1996) describes both benefits to the design process itself, and to the implementation and management of the project as well. He suggests that the involvement of local residents and associated bodies in the development of open spaces can provide a wealth of information regarding the site and its context, can help create an appropriate design,

and can help resolve conflicts between parties though discussion and compromise (Stamp, 1996). In a more physical sense, hands-on involvement of local residents can be an important source of labour for both the creation and management of schemes, with the potential to reduce both capital and revenue costs (Hitchmough, 1994). It also suggested that involvement can provide a source of 'creative management' due to the participants' familiarity with the site, allowing a more intelligent development of the site, rather than the more common rigid maintenance routines. In addition, active participants can often supply diverse skills and a healthy motivation, all contrasting with the common experiences of contracted maintenance in many public spaces (Hitchmough, 1994). Given the concerns voiced elsewhere regarding the difficulties of sustaining volunteers (see 2.4), such assertions appear to deserve further exploration. In addition to the usage of the site directly created through volunteering activities, it is also considered that community involvement can help raise awareness of a space through word-of-mouth, further increasing positive use of a space (Dunnett *et al*, 2002). Intensified use is recognised to aid the alleviation of common problems in public landscape such as misuse, insecurity and vandalism, and has been considered by many as the solution to the decline of public parks and open spaces for some time (Greenhalgh & Warpole, 1995; Barber, 1994; Hitchmough, 1994).

While comments on the role of community involvement in the development of successful spaces tend to treat the term as a single concept with universal benefits, Dunnett *et al* (2002) acknowledged several distinct forms that this involvement can take, each with its own characteristics, issues and potential for wider benefit.

A great deal of emphasis among the discussions on community involvement in green space has been placed on existing parks and open space, often taking the form of 'Friends Groups'. These groups are affiliated to a particular green space (often a local authority managed park) and contain a membership concerned with the management and

development of that space (Dunnet *et al,* 2002). In a study of community groups with an interest in open spaces undertaken by Green Space in 2003, Friends Groups accounted for over 40% of all responses, and showed a considerable growth since the late 1990s (Ockenden & Moore, 2003). Many groups were established or encouraged by local authorities following the shift to Best Value which demanded greater consultation with the community. It is therefore unsurprising that activities among such groups tend to concentrate on promotion and planning (Ockenden & Moore, 2003), acting in many cases as a forum for consultation rather than a pro-active group engaged in direct management or decision-making. Some groups move beyond a relationship of consultation and communication, to achieve a more active collaboration with the Local authority. Meaningful involvement in decision-making and planning, fund-raising and in some cases practical management suggests more of a partnership approach between service provider and community. This level of involvement has been claimed to develop ownership of a site and empowerment among those involved (Dunnett *et al,* 2002).

Volunteering provides the second model of involvement, common in the context of natural environments but also evident in some more traditional parks. In this instance, individuals take part in practical management or maintenance tasks, organised by the manager of that space or a voluntary organisation on their behalf (such as BTCV). Activity is often considered on a recreational level, but traditionally affords participants limited influence at a decision-making level. Literature by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management illustrates this common perception of volunteers as a source of labour and little else:

> *"Volunteers have to be managed. If not they will waste their time."*
> (Welch, 1995, pg. 19)

While environmental volunteering can be focused on communities defined by place (where involvement is encouraged specifically among local residents) it is more commonly described in relation to communities

of interest, attracted from geographical catchments beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Ecological management is a good example of this, whereby those with a shared interest in conservation or ecology travel to sites to undertake voluntary work which supports these values. A considerable body of research has been undertaken in this field (largely based in the USA), the findings of which are explored in more detail in section 2.4.

Many considerations of community involvement limit themselves to these two basic models, which between them offer limited opportunities for meaningful participation (in terms of decision-making power) in the process of green space provision.

An alternative model is that of community-led open space provision or "self management" (Dunnett *et al,* 2002, p.133). In this instance involvement takes a more 'grass-roots' approach, characterised by the initiation of activity originating among local residents. This places organisational and decision-making responsibility with those involved, as opposed to involvement initiated by the local authority (or other land manager) where the extent of community involvement can be controlled.

Community-led open space provision can occur on a range of scales, from the improvement of a street corner site by a small group of residents, to the management of large parks by sizable community groups, sometimes established in Trust form (Dunnett *et al,* 2002). It is within the latter that the 'community gardens' considered by this research are placed.

2.4 Considering involvement

2.4.1 Motivations for involvement

Among community gardening literature, there is scant consideration of the motivations of participants for involvement with these projects. Armstrong (2000) provides a rare example, revealing the most common reasons for participation in urban New York gardens to be the ability to access fresh fruit (many of the gardens were produce orientated), the opportunity to enjoy 'nature/open spaces' and mental health benefits. This particular study only surveyed the co-ordinators of such projects however, and did not address the motivations of the majority of participants. The emphasis of food production also places the gardens in a different light to many UK projects, where the emphasis is on aesthetic, ecological or recreational enhancement rather than the opportunity for crop production (which in many areas is provided for through allotment provision). In the absence of research in this area, it is worth considering other forms of environmental voluntary action, and the volunteering field more widely.

When defining volunteering, both the Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR, 1997) and the Home Office (Munton & Zurawan, 2003) specifically mention benefit to the environment as a possible focus for volunteering effort. In many cases this would be associated with campaign groups on environmental issues, often on a national or even global scale, or with organised practical volunteering, usually of an ecological or conservational nature. However, it also encompasses the phenomenon of community-based environmental improvement projects. While traditional forms of community gardening in the USA, which separate spaces into individual plots for personal cultivation, may not fit the definition of volunteering, the model of community gardening currently visible in the UK displays a more explicit communal benefit (as outlined above) satisfying the definition more explicitly.

Many other areas of volunteering have developed a body of literature allied to a specific field, such as volunteering within social services, sports or teaching, but environmental activity remains rarely studied (Donald, 1997). Most existing fields of research are concerned with a form of volunteering in which the focus of the effort is a person or persons and even among general volunteering literature this situation is often assumed. Penner (2004) for example, suggested that:

> *"...there are rarely any personal ties or associations between volunteers and recipients of their help. Indeed, in many instances, individual volunteers and the people who ultimately benefit from their actions never actually meet."* (Penner, 2004, p646)

This finding, while possibly relevant among socially orientated volunteering, is clearly inappropriate in the context of this study, where the 'recipient' of the volunteering effort is a space close to the volunteer's home. In this situation it is reasonable to expect that relationships are likely to be evident between volunteers and both the space itself, and at least some of the indirect beneficiaries (their neighbours). Such fundamental differences, and assumptions within the wider literature, make the generalisation of existing findings in other fields difficult.

One environmental area that has received academic attention is that of ecological restoration work in the USA. This body of research explores volunteering activity within environmental groups whose objectives are the reinstatement and protection of native landscape, such as prairies or marshes (Ryan *et al*, 2001). A number of empirical studies have been undertaken in recent years and although the subject of the volunteer attention is at a larger scale to that explored in this study, it is holds the greatest potential for relevance within the volunteering field.

Ryan *et al* (2000) recognise the important distinctions between this environmentally focussed (and applied) form of volunteering and the wider field, commenting,

> *"...they give volunteers the opportunity to see improvements to the environment that are a direct result of their work."* (Ryan et al, 2001, p.632)

This implied relationship between volunteer and environment has significant implications when the environment in question is part of the local neighbourhood that is experienced on an 'everyday' basis (explored in more detail in 2.5.3)

The majority of studies into volunteering activity concentrate on personal motivational factors and feelings of benefit or satisfaction. While some of these explore long-term involvement, most are concerned primarily with the initial decision to become a volunteer. The following sections outline some of the key findings on these themes, within both the ecological restoration field and the wider literature.

Although each study categorises and describes motivational factors slightly differently, a number of motivational themes can be identified: altruism, personal values, personal benefit and practical considerations.

One of the most common motivations found among all studies is a sense of altruism. Given the definition of voluntary activity (benefiting someone else or the environment) this is unsurprising. In some cases this is described in a general sense as 'doing something worthwhile' (IVR, 1997), but also includes more specific reference to meeting the needs of friends and family (IVR, 1997). Among ecological restoration projects the focus of altruistic feeling tends to be the environment rather than other people, whether in the field of urban forestry (Still & Gerhold, 1997), savannah restoration (Westphal, 1997) watershed restoration (Donald, 1997) or general environmental stewardship (Grese *at al*, 2000; Schroeder, 2000). While 'helping the environment' in an ecological sense is frequently described, mention of any indirect benefit to other individuals is rare.

Within the theme of altruism, it has been suggested that a specific personality type can be identified and applied as a predictor of volunteering activity. The 'prosocial personality' combines empathy and feelings of responsibility with a propensity to helpful action (Penner, 2004). Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) found however that this altruistic element of motivation can be far less rational than some of these studies might suggest. The report proposes that an individual's sense of altruism (and subsequent likelihood to volunteer) is deeply rooted in personal history and interpersonal relationships. The latter can produce a feeling of obligation, a factor rarely considered in other research, which it is suggested can actually make it difficult for individuals to leave a volunteering role. Pressure from others, it is claimed, can be experienced on a range of levels, from subtle encouragement through to extreme behaviour such as blackmail (JRF, 2000), taking advantage of altruistic feelings of duty among individuals. The National Survey of Volunteering in the UK (1997) suggests that only half of all volunteers did so under their own initiative, the remaining half getting involved 'because they were asked'.

The second theme is that of personal values. As opposed to the general traits of altruism, these values tend to be specific to a particular cause, either in the form of personal interests (IVR, 1997) or personal experience in a particular field, such as sport (Burgham and Downward, 2005). They suggest a value or interest, towards which altruistic tendencies are focussed. In environmental volunteering motivational categories include an 'appreciation of nature' (Westphal, 1997; Donald, 1997) and concern at threats to a particular ecosystem (Schroeder, 2000). Supporting this role of personal interest, Donald (1997) found that active volunteers were more likely to belong to other environmental groups.

Factors within the third theme, personal benefit, offer contradictory findings among researchers. While some suggest that individualistic motivations are low among most volunteers' (Donald, 1997; Westphal,

1997), other works rate various elements of personal benefit much higher. In the UK, although remaining relatively low it is suggested that the opportunity to gain skills is rising in importance among volunteers overall (IVR, 1997). These skills are often portrayed in the context of gaining useful experience to improve employment opportunities. Learning appears as a motivation in a number of environmentally-based studies (Grese *et al,* 2000; Ryan *et al,* 2001) but less emphasis is placed on formal skills and more on the desire to learn about something of personal interest. Another individualistic motivation is the social opportunity that volunteering can provide (IVR, 1997). While many forms of volunteering can be undertaken on an individual basis, environmental volunteering is usually organised in groups, providing ample opportunity for socialising with others who are likely to share personal values and interests (Grese *et al,* 2000). In an ecological restoration context, whereby activities are often some distance from the neighbourhood environment, this provides an example of action based on 'communities of interest'. A final individualistic motivation, more common in environmental volunteering than the wider field, is a personal benefit from the site itself. This can be in the form of a general enjoyment of nature, which the volunteering enables the individual to experience (Grese *et al,* 2000; Westphal, 1997), but can also be more specific to a particular site. Use of a site, or visual benefit received through residential proximity, has been found to be a motivation among some environmental stewardship volunteers (Donald, 1997). This area of motivation is not commonly identified in research, but has been developed by Professor Robert Ryan (*et al,* 2000; 2001) who has studied in more detail the relationships between experience and affinity to place and volunteering activity. This work is explored in more detail in section 2.5.3).

The final motivation theme considers personal socio-economic factors. While overlooked by much of the environmental volunteering literature, large scale quantitative studies on wider volunteering tend to suggest that certain types of people are more commonly found to take part in

formal volunteering activities than others. For example, higher socio-economic groups have been found to be more likely than lower-paid groups to be taking part in formal volunteering (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997; Burgham and Downward, 2005; Munton & Zurawan, 2003), while the unemployed have been shown to be less likely to volunteer than those in paid work (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997). Differences in informal volunteering patterns are less pronounced, leading to suggestions that by concentrating efforts on formal volunteering (often referred to as the 'third sector'), government policy is in fact privileging the activities of more affluent areas. Williams (2003) argues that a 'fourth sector' should be established to support informal volunteering, particularly in lower income populations.

2.4.2 Sustaining involvement

Whilst much of the research in this field has been focused on what makes individuals decide to become volunteers, a number of studies have recognised the need to research volunteering over a longer timescale and explore the factors influencing the decision to *continue* (or indeed cease) volunteering.

As Grese *et al* (2000) point out:

> *"...keeping their long-term volunteers satisfied is a continual challenge."* (p.275)

Ryan *et al* (2001) explored the commitment of volunteers in ecological restoration work, and found that different factors were related to the decision to become a volunteer and the decision to remain a volunteer. One conclusion of this work was that volunteer commitment was more related to the frequency of participation than the duration an individual had been involved. The validity of such a statement seems questionable

however, given that the quantitative measurements for 'commitment' included frequency of participation as an indicator, but not duration.

The Institute for Volunteering Research have undertaken research to investigate organisational factors that can contribute to a satisfaction and sustained involvement among volunteers (Gaskin, 2003). Based on a series of focus groups with 26 volunteers, this proposes a gradient of involvement from non-volunteer ('the doubter') to long-term volunteer ('the stayer'), and encourages organisations to take an active role in developing and supporting volunteers through the stages.

This model recognises that as well as there being potential barriers to becoming a volunteer, there are also barriers that can prevent a new volunteer from sustaining their involvement. The research suggests the way to achieve progression from 'doubter' to 'stayer' is through effective management of volunteers by their organisations. This positions the research in an organisational context, and frequently refers to the 'volunteering infrastructure', in contrast to the community-led style of volunteering that forms the basis of this study. The work does however raise a number of issues that volunteers can face at each 'transition' stage of the above model, which may hold relevance outside this organisational context. Early stages of volunteer recruitment focus on the need for effective promotion of opportunities, and for these opportunities to be easily accessible. Later transitions are orientated around the support provided to volunteers (including training and supervision) and the management of activities (including communication and flexibility). The work also suggests that:

> *"...it is vital that the volunteer feels part of the organisational culture and identifies with its philosophy. Organisations need to create the conditions in which volunteers can play an influential role and the capacity to respond effectively to what this brings forth."* (Gaskin, 2003, p.3)

This suggests the need for an active participation not only in the volunteering activity of choice, but also in the development of the

organisational body itself, a factor echoed in other research (Knocke, 1981). While this suggestion places a heavy burden on managing organisations, it is worth noting that an earlier study by the IVR found that only 2% of volunteers undertook their volunteering activity through contact with a volunteer bureaux (IVR, 1997). Indeed, Omoto & Snyder (1995) found that in a medical volunteer context, contrary to the IVR's recommendation, integration with the organising body was not associated with long-term volunteering.

While the IVR concentrates on organisational factors affecting volunteer retention, wider research suggests a number of other factors. Studies vary between explicit exploration of motivations for sustained involvement and more general investigation into perceived benefits and satisfaction gained through involvement (that can imply such motivations).

While there are similarities with studies into the reasons for choosing to volunteer, there are some notable differences. It is particularly evident that altruism features far less among the reasons for staying involved and individualistic factors feature much more prominently.

One of the most common reasons given for continuing a volunteering role is satisfaction in the results of the activity. This features highly in studies of perceived benefits (IVR, 1997) and is evident in environmental volunteering in the form of 'seeing tangible results' (Schroeder, 2000; Ryan *et al,* 2001; Donald, 1997; Miles *et al,* 1998). Other forms of satisfaction derived from environmental volunteering which may be influential in retaining involvement include a positive effect on physical health and well being (Miles *et al,* 1998) and the psychological benefits of being in a natural environment (Donald, 1997; Miles *et al,* 1998, Ryan *et al,* 2001).

Social interactions also feature prominently (Donald, 1997; Ryan *et al,* 2001), although it has been suggested that the strength of this motivation may be higher among infrequent volunteers and less important to long-term regular volunteers (Grese *et al,* 2000). A sense of responsibility among other volunteers, as proposed in more general literature (Penner, 2004), is recognised explicitly as a contributing factor among some long-term environmental volunteers (Ryan *et al,* 2001).

Personal interest in the subject remains a common factor (Donald, 1997; Ryan *et al,* 2001; Miles *et al,* 1998), while learning opportunities have been found to be negatively related to long-term involvement (Donald, 1997; Ryan *et al,* 2001).

Although at low levels, both Donald (1997) and Ryan *et al* (2001) found evidence of sustained involvement with the express interest of wanting to influence the project. The importance of involvement in the decision-making process has been stressed more vigorously in wider volunteering literature, including Knocke (1981) and the Institute of Volunteering Research (2003) who suggest that greater engagement with the organising body on an influential level can foster longer volunteer involvement.

While several studies have examined the positive motivational factors associated with environmental volunteering, only Donald (1997) explored the importance of negative factors which can discourage involvement. Most important among these were time commitments, either to work (mentioned by nearly two thirds of survey respondents), family or other volunteering commitments. The latter of these is interesting to note in the context of falling volunteer numbers in the UK (Munton & Zurawan, 2003) and suggestions of an increasingly active minority who may be willing to undertake volunteering opportunities but find themselves unable due to conflict with other volunteering responsibilities. Time was also found to be perceived as a negative factor among volunteers more widely, with many current volunteers highlighting the time taken up by activities as a

problem, and a number of past volunteers citing a lack of time as the reason for curtailing their involvement (IVR, 1997).

The National Survey of Volunteering in the UK (IVR, 1997) found that 71% of volunteers thought that their volunteering activities could be better organised, suggesting considerable dissatisfaction with the management of tasks and people. Although less strong in an environmental context, Donald (1997) found organisational dissatisfaction levels of around 40%.

A number of factors concerned social relationships within the group. Donald (1997) cites a lack of encouragement from other volunteer group members as a discouraging factor, along with a lack of acquaintances in the group (suggesting the potential for exclusion in volunteering work). Other areas of dissatisfaction with volunteering included getting bored with the activities undertaken (IVR, 1997), finding tasks too difficult (IVR, 1997) and a lack of information regarding how to participate (Donald, 1997). Among those no longer participating, reasons given (other than lack of time) included the somewhat vague 'no longer relevant', and that they had moved away from the area. Due to the quantitative nature of both these studies, further examination of the categories defined and their meaning to respondents is not possible, and is uncommon among the literature.

A further study by the Institute of Volunteering Research (2003.) examined the barriers that prevent people from becoming involved in volunteering in the first place. Psychological barriers were emphasised by individuals and included a lack of confidence, the perception that they could not offer the time required, a lack of awareness of the need for help, and feelings that a formal volunteering role was not appropriate to them. Practical barriers featured more prominently among interviews with volunteer organisations, who perceived barriers to include factors such as a lack of awareness, the complication of recruitment processes, inaccessible environments and the cost of expenses. The research

revealed an interesting disparity between the issues preventing individuals from getting involved, and the issues as perceived by those in a position to make organisational changes.

The findings above provide an insight into the issues and factors that volunteers in an environmental context find important but it must be recognised that the ecological restoration context of most of these studies has some important differences to participation in community garden projects, including the proximity of participants' homes to the site, the origin of the projects conception, and the level of influence held by participants. Although motivational factors are rarely explored in a community garden context, there is reference to the importance of sustaining community involvement in participative landscape projects.

The unique characteristic of proximity to the home environment has been recognised as an important factor in retaining participants in community landscape projects.

> *"[T]he level of involvement capable of being sustained depends on the value and accessibility of a site to the people."* (Stamp, 1996, p.35)

In this respect community gardens should be well placed in the urban landscape fabric to achieve this involvement, being characterised by their local catchment area. It would be misleading to infer from this that steady involvement is not an issue. There is increasing recognition among policy-makers and funding bodies that sustained involvement in community-led projects is not assured. A number of recent evaluation reports have highlighted this issue. Evaluation of a lottery funded grant scheme for community spaces highlighted that,

> *"Sustainability and maintaining community involvement are likely to become more prominent issues in future years."* (Browning, 2005, p.5)

The issue of sustaining involvement is rarely considered in any depth however and the need for further research to explore long-term implications of community involvement has become increasingly

acknowledged among such reports (Ockenden & Moore, 2003; Hodgkinson, 2004; The Countryside Agency, 2001).

All types of community-participation projects face difficulties in sustaining participation once the initial establishment phase is over (Royffe & Taylor, 1987). This capital phase is considered well suited to community involvement, providing maximum change, fun and excitement (Bradley, 1986). While the public is keen to see rapid improvements and 'quick-fix' action, it can rapidly become disillusioned when faced with the delays, difficulties and mundane chores of a real-life project (Roe & Rowe, 2000). Bradley (1986) stresses the importance of sustaining involvement through the first three years of a project, to coincide with the traditional establishment period, but this assumes a very traditional form of landscape project, where design, implementation and maintenance follow a linear course. This assumption does not allow for the gradual development and modification that these projects may experience due to the community-based organisation and implementation. With a community project it seems unlikely that the traditional landscape management cycle would apply, with establishment likely to take substantially longer, and the period of maturity and degeneration potentially intervened by further modification and development.

A particular threat to long-term management can be the close, and potentially exclusive, bond with a project among those involved in the initial creation of a scheme. This can creates problems when, through time, the responsibilities have to be passed on (Arai & Pedlar, 1997). Case-studies from abroad often report difficulties sustaining interest, such as the apathy for long-term maintenance encountered in a study of New York's Lower East Side Gardens (Schmelzkopf, 1995), but recognition in British literature is far more limited. The implications of unsustainable participation are severe. Because of its high position on Arnstein's ladder, participation is not simply desirable, it is essential for both the day-to-day running, and long term management of the gardens.

So, while the creation of the garden can provide short-term community affinity, long-term stimulation would appear necessary to ensure a garden's survival. Methods to achieve this have been suggested. While public parks are usually seen as a resource for passive service provision (self-directed by the user), some community gardens offer a model of pro-active provision, encouraging more intense use over a sustained period through the provision of facilities to better engage the user (Eggintin-Metters, 1999). The most obvious example of pro-active provision is urban agriculture. Howe (1999) and Paxton (1997) both describe the benefits and of such schemes, and examples are plentiful in the FCFCG's case book (Ferris *et al,* 2001).

As well as agricultural activity, other means of encouraging sustained interest include training opportunities and educational work, community arts programmes, child care and children's activities, and social meetings and events (Eggintin-Metters, 1999). For example, the Springfield Community Garden in Bradford provides kitchen facilities to train participants not only in food production but cookery as well, following the discovery that many local residents had a limited knowledge. The scheme also provided a workshop space for 'green woodworking' using pollarded wood from the site (Department of the Environment, 1996). Such examples are not common in the literature despite much theoretical discussion of the opportunities and benefits. It is not clear whether this is due to limited resources preventing establishment, attempted schemes failing, or simply a lack of awareness of the possibilities.

Aside from proactive use of the park, the other key issue to consider when trying to sustain participation is the motivation of the participants. Understanding the value participants hope to get out of the scheme is vital for organisers in order to maintain that interest and incentive to continue. Although promotional literature talks of benefits to the community as a whole, there will be personal incentives behind involvement for many, including skill development, meeting friends, and increasing self-worth (Hitchmough, 1994).

Long-term involvement by the community remains far from easy to achieve, and it has been suggested that projects can often rely on the personality and motivational skills of key members (Hitchmough, 1994). It is for this reason that many commentators have stressed the value of having an element, however small, of full-time staff. As well as the obvious benefits of cushioning participation fluctuations, Stamp (1996) describes more effective use of both participants, and the space itself, facilitated by the involvement of a permanent staff member.

All these issues could be seen as creating fundamental problems for the underlying theories of community gardens, and their perceived wider social roles. On the other hand, Community Gardens could be seen as a means of reversing some of these trends, and reasserting traditional community values. It remains unclear from present literature however, whether gardens are achieving this aim, or simply falling foul of the commonly experienced problems.

2.5 Place attachment

One of the main claims among those who advocate greater community involvement in the management of green spaces is that the process of involvement encourages 'a sense of ownership', which it is implied will encourage a greater degree of responsibility among 'the community'. Such assumptions can be found among both local authority officers (Dunnett *et al*, 2002) and national organisations:

> *"Involving people in project planning helps to build a sense of shared ownership"* (National Urban Forestry Unit, 2001, p.3)

These assumptions have also had considerable influence on government policy and form one of the central tenets of neighbourhood regeneration strategies. Although prevalent, the nature of these implied feelings of ownership and responsibility are rarely explained in any detail, and academic study of the relationship remains limited.

Research considering people's feelings towards spaces is a relatively recent development, emerging concurrently from (among others) the disciplines of environmental psychology, sociology and cultural geography (Ryan, 1997). These varied roots have led to a diverse range of often conflicting definitions and theoretical structures. One of the most common concepts central to the relationship between people and spaces is that of 'place'. This section aims to present some of the fundamental ideas relating to the study of place, introduce the concept of place attachment, and review some of the works most relevant to this study.

2.5.1 The study of Place

At its most fundamental, the study of place is concerned with relationships between people and their environment. While spaces can be considered solely in terms of their relationship to other spaces, the concept of place considers spaces in relation to the meanings that people ascribe to them.

> *"...what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value"* (Tuan, 1977, p6)

Relph (1976), a humanistic geographer like Tuan, inferred place to be a positive characteristic (often referred to as 'sense of place'), contrasted with his notion of 'placelessness'. In the field of psychology meanwhile, Canter (1977) argued that place should instead be considered a technical term, providing a framework in which to explore the relationship between people and the environment, and viewed the subjectivity of Relph's work 'romantic'.

Despite their differences, both proposed a similar three part framework to conceptualise place, agreeing that place results from the relationship between a physical setting, the actions or activities that take place, and the meanings and values that are ascribed to it (Relph, 1976; Canter; 1977). This basic three part model illustrates to relevance of place to this study, concerned as it is with particular spaces (community gardens) in which activities are undertaken and towards which strong feelings are thought to be developed.

This relationship between environment, activities and meanings was further explored by Gibson (1977) in his theory of environmental affordance. 'Affordances' describe the activities or meanings that are enabled by the characteristics of an environment (Gibson, 1977). In this context, relationships with place are considered in terms of what the place has to offer, with 'affordance' offering a conceptual relationship between spaces and the activities and meanings that become associated with them. Gibson's work is distanced from the ideals of environmental determinism, stressing the creation of opportunities rather than predicting

responses or outcomes, but the concept still tends to focus on the physical qualities of the environment that enable functional intentions rather than exploring the more affective meanings that can be ascribed to a place. Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) illustrate how the concept of affordance can be broadened to incorporate psychological as well as physical benefit in their exploration of the positive effects of gardening and other nature experiences.

In contrast to work exploring the qualities of a particular place (or type of place) which offer opportunities for activity or meaning, Gustafson (2001a) has instead explored the range of meanings that people can attribute to places. Developing again from the basic three part model (setting, actions and meanings), he proposes a further model in which meanings can be mapped around (and between) three poles: self, other and environment (see Figure 2.1).

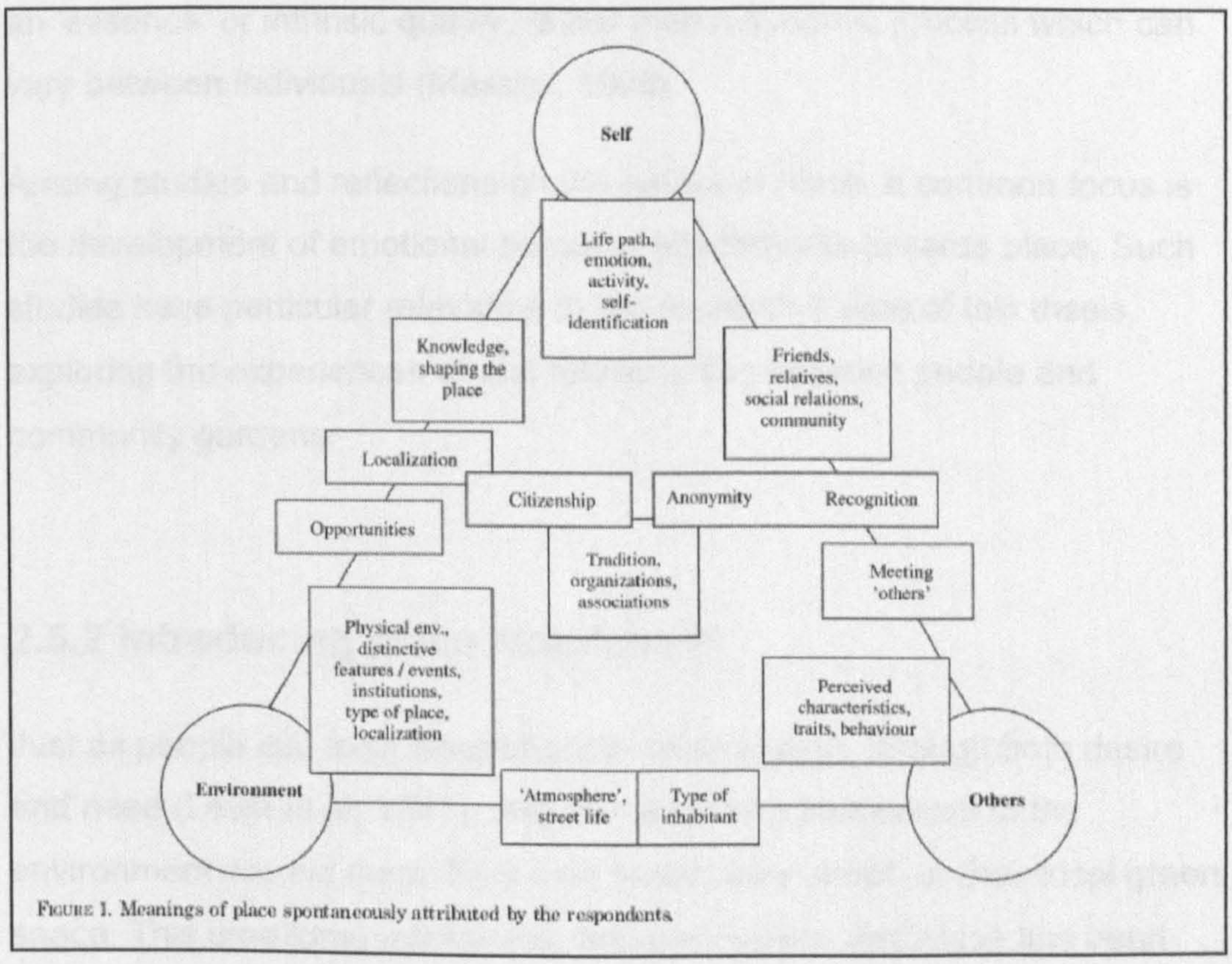


Figure 2.1: Meanings of place (from Gustafson, 2001a, p.10)

This model highlights the complexity of meanings that can be associated with place, based not only on the three main categories, but on relationships between them.

Gustafson (2001a) also proposed four underlying 'dimensions' of meaning which although not fitting into the three-pole model, highlight a number of important issues associated with the concept of place:

- A place must be identifiable, based on the establishment of differences, boundaries and categorisations (termed 'distinction')
- A place is often associated with positive or negative 'valuation'
- The creation of place is often related to experience over a period of time (termed 'continuity')
- Meanings attributed to place are subject to 'change' and are not necessarily constant.

These dimensions acknowledge some of the criticisms of earlier models of place, which have been considered limited by their emphasis on place as an 'essence' or intrinsic quality, rather than a dynamic process which can vary between individuals (Massey, 1995).

Among studies and reflections on the nature of place, a common focus is the development of emotional bonds or attachments towards place. Such studies have particular relevance to the research theme of this thesis, exploring the experiences of and relationships between people and community gardens.

2.5.2 Introducing place attachment

Just as people can form attachment to other people, through both desire and need (Levitt *et al*, 1991), they can also form attachment to the environment around them, be it their home, their street, or their local green space. This emotional relationship between person and place has been termed 'place attachment', commonly defined as a positive affective bond

that develops between an individual (or group) and their environment (Altman & Low, 1992).

Place attachment is a relationship with a space, landscape or environment that is more than simply cognitive or judgement based (Riley, 1992). In contrast with research exploring landscape preference (which tends to disregard emotional attachments that may be ascribed to a space) 'place attachment' is particularly concerned with the bonds that can be developed with a *specific* space (Kaltenborn & Bjerke, 2002).

Agreement on the precise definition of place attachment remains elusive, with researchers in different fields approaching and applying the concept in a range of different ways. To many, attachment is primarily an emotional bond, as defined by Altman & Low (1992). To others the concept encompasses cognitive and behavioural bonds as well (Gustafson, 2001b). Two further concepts are often discussed in relation to place attachment, sometimes considered to be elements within it (Williams *et al,* 1992) and sometimes positioned alongside it as three distinctive concepts (Moore & Scott, 2003), are place dependence and place identity.

'Place dependence' is defined by the ability of a space to meet certain needs and the extent to which alternative spaces exist which could meet the same needs (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989). It is suggested that the greater the reliance on a particular space to fulfil these needs, the greater the feeling of attachment towards it (Moore & Graefe, 1994). This concept has parallels with Gibson's theory of affordance, rooted as it is in the functional opportunities of place, and could be defined as the strength of affordance offered by a space in relation to the presence of alternative spaces offering a similar affordance.

'Place identity' is associated with the symbolic and emotional importance of a place and the development of self-identity (Proshansky *et al,* 1983; Williams & Vaske, 2002). It is suggested, for example, that place identity can be developed through an increase in the sense of belonging felt towards a neighbourhood or community (Relph, 1976).

While agreement on the interrelationships between these three constructs remains elusive, they provide a theoretical basis for the exploration of people-place relationships recognising the roles of use, experience and wider social identity in the development of emotional attachments to place.

2.5.3 Exploring place attachment

While it seems discussions regarding definition, theoretical frameworks and conceptual relationships continue to reveal as much disagreement as development, a number of issues can be identified among the literature which are particularly relevant to this study.

- Types of place

Place attachment has been studied on a range of scales, from cities (Hummon, 1992) to small objects (Belk, 1992), but the majority of work tends to focus on the home environment (Cooper-Marcus, 1992; Sixsmith, 1986) or the neighbourhood (Brown *et al,* 2003; Bonaiuto *et al,* 2003).

Although studies exploring relationships with open space have been relatively rare, more recent studies in the field of leisure science have developed work into attachments to natural spaces, including large natural areas (Ryan, 1997) and recreational trail systems (Moore & Graefe, 1994). There does however remain a lack of exploration into the role of place attachment with regards to smaller neighbourhood spaces, such as community gardens. A neighbourhood context provides particular potential for the development of attachment, based on the opportunities for informal and habitual activities that it offers (Rivlin, 1987), in contrast to the structured and geographically distant setting of most formal volunteering experiences described in the ecological restoration literature (see 2.5.4). Community gardens provide a particularly interesting circumstance in which there are opportunities for both the activities of volunteering and involvement and the routine experiences of neighbourhood life.

Francis (1987) provides a rare consideration of this more local relationship in a comparison between feelings towards a traditional public park and an American-style (focused on the production of crops) community garden. While this work does not place the findings in the theoretical framework of place attachment, the community gardens were found to be perceived both as friendlier and more beautiful than the traditional public park, revealing their distinctive potential for feelings of attachment and illustrating a need for further research.

- Role of social interaction

The concept of place attachment, while often confined to the direct relationship between an individual and a place, has in some cases been more widely considered to encompass social relationships. Altman & Low (1992) acknowledge a "collective shared attachment" (p.6) that can emerge from shared meanings ascribed to a space. This group attachment can result from the coalescence of similar individual relationships with place as qualities, experiences and problems are shared (Relph, 1976). This concept of shared feeling towards a space has clear associations with the idea of a 'community space' and the collective action that has been described in community garden literature. As well as collective attachment to a place, social relations have also been related to place attachment in their own right. Mesche and Manor (1998), in their study of local attachment in Israel, explicitly extended their construct of attachment to encompass the social relations that occur in a place, as well as positive feelings towards the physical environment. In this respect, the opportunities a space can provide for social relations provide a basis for the development of attachment to that space. By definition, community gardens have the potential to encompass both of these forms of place attachment, by associating a group of people with a particular space not only by use or experience, but with the process of creation and management.

In some instances feelings of attachment towards a particular place have been linked to wider feelings of 'community spirit' or a 'sense of

community' (Hummon, 1992). Indeed, Bow & Buys (2003) suggest that "feelings of attachment to the natural landscape proved equally, if not more important than social bonds between residents in the development of a sense of community" (p.2), although the study was undertaken in an area of a low density detached housing on the Gold Coast where it could be expected the surrounding natural landscape played a higher role in the decision to live there than might normally be the case.

There is a tendency among social theorists to negate the concept of place attachment in modern society, faced with trends towards greater mobility and the rise of social relations detached from the geographical context of home (Giddens, 1991). The image of the community garden movement, based on the collective efforts of a geographically-based community, could contest such a view, but remains largely unexplored.

- Positive nature of attachment

While a number of place theorists have acknowledged both positive and negative aspects of relationships with place (Relph, 1976; Proshansky et al, 1983) the exploration and acknowledgement of negative relationships in empirical work has been lacking. Much empirical research tends to be based on definitions that describe attachment as an exclusively positive bond, originating from Altman and Low's (1992) early definitions and the evolution of the field from studies of belongingness and rootedness in the home environment (Manzo, 2003). Brown & Perkins (1992) have explored the impact of disruptions to existing attachments to place, while Belk (1992) identified the potential threat to identity posed by the loss of a valued possession. The consideration of people-place relationships which may be negative to begin with does not appear to have been explored however, leading to calls for a broader understanding of emotional relationships to place, beyond the common consideration of positive attachments (Guiliani & Feldman, 1993; Manzo, 2003). In the context of community gardens, where spaces are typically considered to be transformed from 'wasted' spaces to cherished places, consideration of both negative and positive emotional bonds would appear necessary.

- The role of time

Another aspect identified by Altman & Low (1992) which is less commonly considered in empirical work is the temporal aspect to place attachment. A number of commentators have identified the role of past experiences on the development of attachment (Gustafson, 2001a), often explored in terms of memory or nostalgia for childhood places (Cooper Marcus, 1992). The potential for variation in attachment to place in the shorter-term appears less widely explored however. In the context of green spaces, where change is constant due to the living elements they contain, the feelings towards a place cannot be assumed to remain constant. Where the relationship is combined with social interactions, which again are rarely stable, the potential for changes in feelings would appear to be increased further.

It has also been suggested that feelings of place attachment increase over time, and are strongest among those who remain in one place over time (Hay, 1998). A great number of writers consider direct experience of a place to be a prerequisite for the development of an emotional attachment, requiring "exposure and repeated visits to a site" (Hailu *et al,* 2005, p.584). Community Gardens offer a context in which this is achieved not just by through the passive use implied by 'visits', but through the more fundamental relationship of being involved on a voluntary level in the creation and management of a space.

2.5.4 Place attachment and volunteering

The relationship between involvement and attachment has been suggested to be mutually reinforcing, in line with the implications in policy rhetoric that increased community involvement in the management of the local environment can encourage responsible behaviour. However, most studies considering the relationship have tended to focus on the effect of

volunteering on feelings of attachment, rather than exploring the role that attachment may have in the encouragement of such pro-active behaviour.

One area of research in which the effects of volunteering activity on attachment and feelings towards a place have been explicitly studied is in the context of ecological restoration. Based in the US, this body of work has explored the motivations and feelings among those involved as volunteers in projects to restore native species in large-scale natural spaces. Ryan (1997) and Schroder (2000) have suggested that the close relationship created by the process of such volunteering may lead to an emotional attachment to the space in which work takes place.

Ryan *et al* (2001) investigated whether involvement in ecological stewardship projects affected volunteers' environmental values using a Likert scale response to a selection of statements, and included items referring to attachment. While they found limited effect on site-specific attachment, they revealed a significant relationship between volunteer activity and more general attachment to "local natural areas", reflecting the feelings of altruism identified as a motivating factor in volunteering by the IVR (1997) (see 2.4.1). This result supported earlier findings of Ryan (1997) who found volunteers to show a greater level of what he termed "conceptual attachment" to natural areas in general, than to specific volunteer sites.

Site-specific attachment was not revealed when asking respondents about how their feelings had changed but a separate series of questions did reveal strong feelings of attachment to the volunteer site (Ryan *et al*, 2001), suggesting that these feelings are present, but have remained constant over the volunteering experience. In this instance attachment was measured using likely responses to a hypothetical change to the volunteering site: sense of personal loss, environmental advocacy and substitution. This found that volunteers felt they would feel a strong sense of personal loss, and would be more likely to take action to protest negative changes than relocate their activities to another space. Further analysis suggested that more committed volunteers were more likely to

consider the site one of their favourite places, and felt they would miss it should they move away (Ryan *et al,* 2001). It was also found that the duration of volunteering was a reliable predictor of advocacy action in the face of negative changes whereas, perhaps surprisingly, commitment and the frequency of volunteering were not (Ryan *et al,* 2001). These results were taken by the authors as an indication that:

> *"...participation in volunteer stewardship activities produces an increased appreciation of and attachment to local natural areas and builds a constituency for preserving and protecting these precious bits of nearby nature."* (Ryan et al., 2001, p.646)

Further evidence to support this conclusion appears limited however and the results presented within the research actually suggest limited change in feelings of attachment over time. This suggests that the implied causal relationship may in fact act in reverse, and that attachment could have been a predictor for involvement rather than an outcome.

Although strong correlations between motivations for involvement and feelings of attachment were not identified, among the range of motivations explored the strongest of the relationships was between social motivations and site-specific attachment. These findings indicate the important place that social interaction plays in volunteers' perception and feelings about both the activity of volunteering itself, and the site in which these activities take place (Ryan *et al,* 2001). This relationship was also hinted at in the earlier work of Donald (1997), citing 'friendships developed through participation' as an important reason for volunteers staying on, although this work did not explicitly consider the role of place attachment.

All of the environmental volunteering studies cited have explored stewardship or restoration roles in relatively large scale projects - supporting the efforts of a large environmental organisation to restore a particular form of ecosystem at large sites, often some distance from volunteers' homes. This contrasts significantly with the context of this study (small projects, within the residential environment). While volunteers of the larger restoration projects may feel the large park or valley is local to them, the connection is on a very different scale. For example, in Ryan *et*

al's study (2000) the comment that volunteers *"generally lived relatively close to their volunteer sites"* (p.634) was in reference to the finding that over half lived within five miles. This has several important implications. Firstly the proximity to home has implications for the type of activity and relationship that can develop between volunteers and the site. Subsequently, this also has implications for the benefits of the voluntary action, both to the volunteers, and to the neighbourhood more generally.

Among literature on urban open space, involvement is also extolled for its ability to foster an affinity to the landscape in question, although tends to be considered in the form of participation in the design process rather than volunteering roles. There are arguments that such a sense of 'connection' to a site is important to achieve wider benefits of community development. Cooper Marcus *et al* (1990) for example suggest that affiliation to a particular area could be a prerequisite for the development (and continuation) of group identities. The local scale of community gardens make them particularly suitable for the development of such affinity, in contrast with larger traditional parks whose size can be preventative in the fostering of ownership and affection (Greenhalgh & Warpole, 1995).

The flexible nature of community garden development can allow and encourage participants to incorporate their own touches of personal and cultural distinctiveness, which can be particularly valuable in the promotion of self-confidence for minority groups (Paxton, 1997). This is explicit in the Casita gardens of New York, where Puerto-Rican residents have created intensively used gardens, with distinct adaptations of vernacular architecture, landscape and art. These provide an important expression of their culture, without producing a museum-like statement (Winterbottom, 1998). The gardens fulfil important social functions, such as relaxation, celebration, play and political discussion, and such is the affinity that,

> *"Users feel connected to the place both as park and 'as home'"*
> (Winterbottom, 1998, pg. 92)

The most common form of such activity in Britain appears to be the cultivation of culturally relevant food crops by ethnic minorities. Ashram Acres in Birmingham is an example of such a scheme, where 0.3 hectares of back gardens have been pooled with the intention of cultivating Asian and Caribbean vegetables (Paxton, 1997). The development of local identity has also been attributed to community arts schemes, which it is suggested can add to both the physical and cultural presence of an open space (Losito, 2000), reflecting the opportunities for the development of place identity through community garden projects.

While a number of studies have therefore considered the effect of involvement on feelings towards a space, the influence of such attachment on patterns of involvement on the other hand remains largely unexplored. It is often claimed that feelings of attachment to a place can facilitate "involvement in local affairs" (Lewicka, 2005, p381). In the few examples where the influence of place attachment on personal behaviour is considered however, broad behavioural traits rather than specific actions are examined, such as 'sustainable behaviour' (Uzzell, Pol & Badenas, 2002) or 'ecological responsibility' (Vorkinn & Riese, 2001). Furthermore, most are based on the investigation of attitudes, rather than physical behaviour, using data collected from Likert-type scaling of specific statements, limiting the inferences on actual behaviour that can be drawn. Indeed, Uzzell *et al* (2002) found that while place attachment appeared to encourage a positive attitude towards sustainable behaviour, the data suggested that actions were influenced more strongly by other factors. Such findings highlight the importance of examining actual behaviour in furthering the understanding of attachment and behaviour links.

Vaske and Kobrin (2001) considered the relationship between place attachment and environmentally responsible behaviour, providing a rare example of specific behaviours being measured, but the findings focused on the effect of the specific behaviour (participating in a local natural resource work program) on more general environmentally responsible

behaviour, rather than considering the role of place attachment in encouraging or maintaining involvement in the program.

Meanwhile, Lewicka (2005) undertook an extensive quantitative survey in Poland which suggested that although a relationship between attachment and civic activity could be identified, the behaviour was in fact predicted by the extent of local neighbourhood ties, rather than the attachment itself. This work raises questions regarding the validity of wider claims that the development of attachment is an effective predictor of 'civic involvement'. Lewicka's study (2005) considered both attachment and activity in general terms of the area in which a person lived rather than with respect to a particular space, and in this respect the existing body of literature is greatly lacking.

2.6 Summary

This literature review has introduced the phenomenon of community gardens and highlighted the potential benefit that such spaces offer individuals and their 'community'. The increasing academic interest, and alignment within key UK policy direction (such as 'active citizenship'), illustrates their increasing importance as an element of urban green space.

While still in its infancy, the body of literature exploring community gardens is found to be almost exclusively positive in bias. Such a portrait contrasts with wider research into volunteering (a key element of the community garden model) and participation, which highlights difficulties in both attracting and sustaining involvement, identifying a need for a more critical examination of community gardens. Literature acknowledging problems that can be associated with community gardens in the UK tends not to be based on empirical work (Bradley, 1986; Roe & Rowe, 2000). Detailed studies of American community gardens meanwhile, offer some of the most 'honest' accounts of community garden experiences (such as Schmelkopf, 1996) and provided an inspiration for the in-depth case-based approach taken in this research.

The study of place forms a valuable theoretical base for such a study, providing a framework within which to consider the three key elements of setting, activity and meaning (Canter, 1977). Within this field the concept of place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992) is identified as particularly relevant, exploring the emotional bonds created between person and place. The theoretical concept of place attachment appears to have much in common with the commonly used, but vaguely defined, idea of 'ownership'. It therefore provides a valuable opportunity to investigate the largely unexplored claims of a link between such feelings and patterns of involvement, as well as filling a gap in the empirical study of place attachment which has thus far failed to examine attachment to neighbourhood open spaces.

The field of volunteering research forms another important basis for the work, due to the critical importance of voluntary activity to the phenomenon of community gardening. Examination of involvement in such projects is lacking among the literature, which tends to overlook the potential role of emotional factors such as place attachment among motivations. The work of Ryan (1997, 2000) and the wider field of ecological restoration research have provided a valuable exception to this trend, but a gap remains for the examination of volunteering activity and the role of people-place bonds in a community garden context.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 The methodological approach

The aims and objectives of this research (as defined in Chapter 1) are explicitly concerned with social processes and behaviour, and human feelings and responses. This necessity to examine the values and meanings among individuals and groups lends itself to the exploratory and responsive methods of qualitative science, rather than the natural scientific model adopted by quantitative researchers (Bryman, 2001). This is re-enforced by the decision to focus on an in-depth investigation of issues in a limited geographical area, rather than the determination of a generalised 'truth' using a predetermined and specific hypothesis and wider-scale sampling in the positivist tradition. The emphasis placed on process within the qualitative tradition also made it appropriate to the research aims by virtue of their focus on the temporal element of change in involvement over time, and the available opportunity to explore the phenomenon over an extended period.

Further to the qualitative position, the methodology was informed strongly by the theories of ethnography. By focusing on the in-depth observation of a group or culture, ethnographers aim to reveal a 'rich' interpretation of the issue being studied (Fetterman, 1998). This research aimed to explore both discourses (what people say) and practices (what people do), using a range of ethnographic methods, to gain a detailed understanding of the relationships between meanings, values and actions.

The principles of immersion in a 'community', applied research, a responsive and adaptive approach to research and the role of the researcher as the primary tool for data collection were all highly relevant within the context and aims of the study (Schensul et al, 1999). In common with this technique, the work involved immersion in the social setting for a prolonged period of time, observations of behaviour and activity,

conversation and interviews with individuals and the study of documents related to the groups. Such an approach enabled a detailed understanding of the processes taking place to be developed while also allowing exploration of the relationships between people and place.

Much existing research into place attachment relies heavily on quantitative methods, often attempting to measure feelings towards a place using Likert-type scales against responses to a range of associated statements. (eg. Kaltenborn & Bjerke, 2002; Williams et al,1992; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001). While potentially valuable for comparing feelings among large numbers of people, this approach provides limited scope for developing an understanding of why or how attachment to place can develop and the effects it can have. By limiting study to the measurement of feeling and emotion by use of predetermined statements, the process of meaning construction (a fundamental element of place) is largely overlooked.

Similarly, studies into volunteering activity are often quantitative in nature, measuring numbers involved or surveying motivations across a large sample. While this can provide data to illustrate overall trends in volunteering activity, assumptions about the status of a volunteer are often made which overlook the potential complexity of involvement in voluntary activities (for example, classifying individuals as either 'involved' or 'not involved'). Detailed studies of volunteering activity over time were hard to find, suggesting this work provided a valuable opportunity to explore the processes and nuances of involvement through use of specific case-studies. Work such as that of Jones (2002), exploring park Friends groups by means of unstructured interviews at case study groups, highlights the potential for furthering understanding and challenging positive assumptions through qualitative study.

It was intended that applying an ethnographic approach to the study would enable a richer understanding of both the processes of involvement in community gardens and the development of feelings of attachment towards these spaces.

Although a series of specific research aims were set out early in the process, the work was always intended to be evolutionary in nature, and these aims were intended to be formative (rather than definite) in character. On a practical level, the social patterns under observation were fluid, and opportunities and situations changed throughout the course of the study, requiring a methodology that accommodated this. On a more theoretical level, it was considered that the focus of the study should, as far as possible, be determined by the context and experiences of the subject (Schensul et al, 1999). While rudimentary formative theories were proposed (identified from related literature and context-specific experience) these were not be treated as definitive statements to be proved or disproved, but rather as a basis from which to expand and develop ideas.

> *"Formative theory serves as a map that guides the research..."* (Schensul et al, 1999, p.2)

The aim was to explore relationships, discover associations and further the understanding of social processes in this context. A phenomenological viewpoint, common in many ethnographic works, accepts the existence of multiple realities and rejects the concept of a discoverable truth (Fetterman, 1998), and it is in this tradition that the research was developed.

> *"People act on their individual perceptions, and those actions have real consequences - thus the subjective reality each individual sees is no less real than an objectively defined and measured reality."* (Fetterman, 1998, p.5)

An ethnographic approach to the research aims enables the exploration of personal realities and values (the emic perspective), but also allows consideration of the outsiders view (the etic perspective) by providing an overview of the context in which the community spaces and their activities are to be found (Shensul *et al*, 1999).

Overall, an ethnographic approach was considered to lend itself to the subjects of involvement and place attachment due to its ability to explore

processes and meanings in a contextualised manner. The combination of methods used (see below) allowed observed actions and claimed intents to be confirmed and questioned, a process rarely possible through more traditional research approaches. Despite these advantages, adopting such a method also created certain limitations and difficulties.

From a practical point-of-view, the physical process of ethnographic data collection is exceptionally time consuming and produces a great deal of data to manage. The amount of time spent in the field and processing the information collected ultimately demanded the rationalisation of the research aims, with less time available to explore the final of the three research themes (the role of a community organisation). Ethnographic methods are also physically and emotionally demanding, due to the periods of time spent in the field and the personal relationships that can be developed over time (see 3.2.1).

Furthermore, an ethnographic approach largely precludes the generalisation of findings beyond the specific focus of study. While providing a rich and insightful study of particular cases or situations, the lack of rigorous quantitative data collection can make the findings hard to relate to other cases or a wider context. Critics of the approach highlight the non-replicable nature of the methods used and its inability to 'prove' anything in a traditional academic sense (Borman *et al,* 1986).

With these limitation in mind, generalisations were never the intention of the research, and instead "contextual understandings" (Bryman, 2001) were sought to contribute to the knowledge base in this field, and provide valuable information to inform future practise. In this respect, an ethnographic approach has great potential for raising valuable questions and issues to inform and focus the attention of further study. While the research does not aspire to generality, this does not undermine the potential value outside the context of Heeley, to Development Trusts and other 'community organisations' for example. The appropriateness of findings to other situations is simply left open for individual judgment, rather than being objectively claimed.

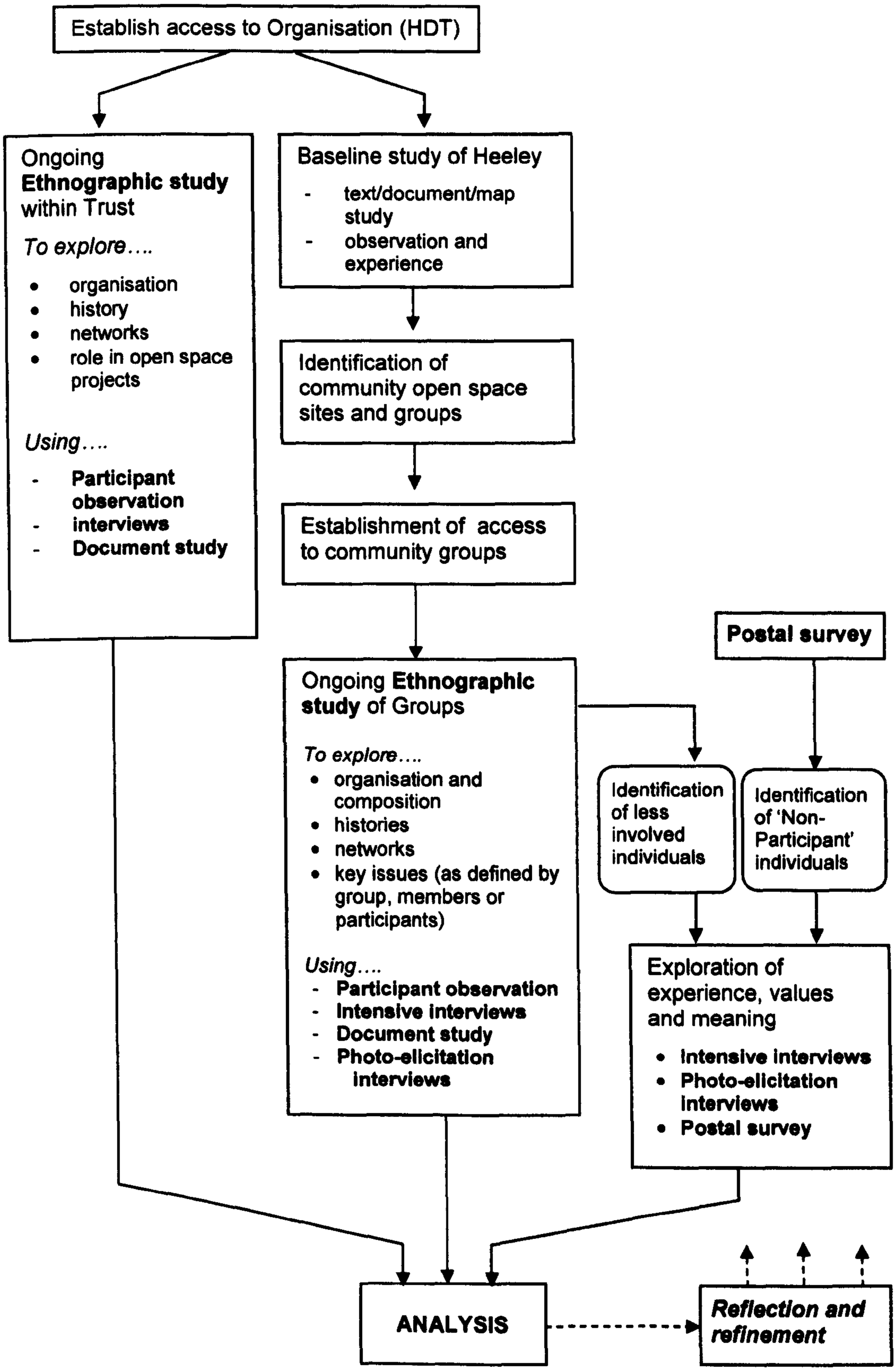
Applying an ethnographic approach to the work made it appropriate for a variety of data collection methods to be applied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Such a technique is common in ethnography as a method of reducing bias and increasing validity through 'triangulation', testing findings in a number of different ways. This also allows the methodology to be adapted and modified to suit the context in which it is being applied, and enables the problems and drawbacks of certain methods to be mitigated by combination with methods of contrasting value. One of the main examples of this is the problem of accessing different audiences with the same approach, and the wider 'coverage' that a range of different methods can provide. Not searching for quantitative measurements, or scientific facts, means that a lack of standardisation between these methods is not restrictive to their use, but rather the exploration of issues and accumulation of information actually stands to benefit from this varied approach. A number of successful multiple method studies have been undertaken in similar fields, most notably Mark Francis' work on American community gardens (Francis, 1987). Francis used a combination of archival research, behaviour mapping, photo and plan documentation, in-depth interviews and surveys to achieve a comprehensive exploration of garden use and perception.

A methodological framework was developed (illustrated in Figure 3.1), within which flexibility and responsiveness to changing or unforeseen situations was possible. For example, it was initially intended that examples of community garden projects in the area that were not supported by HDT would be identified and investigated by way of contrast. In practice this was not achieved, as no projects of similar enough character could be identified within the area and it was felt that studying a more distant project would be of limited value without the contextual information achievable in Heeley. In this instance a planned strand of research was removed. Conversely, accessing non-participants to discuss their feelings towards the project sites also proved difficult, and resulted in the development of an additional strand to the research - the postal survey. This achieved its main goal of identifying willing research

participant unconnected to the projects, but also provided a valuable insight into wider feelings among residents around community garden sites.

Within this framework there were two main foci for study. The first was the Development Trust, as a community organisation facilitating open space development throughout the area of Heeley. The second was the individual sites of activity in area – or more accurately, those individuals and communities connected to the sites, either through engagement with the project, or residential proximity. While the research in these two areas is closely connected and regularly overlapped (the relationship between the two forming a major theme of the research), the separation is useful in structuring the methodology.

Figure 3.1: The methodological framework



3.2 Methodological components

3.2.1 Ethnography and participant observation

Central to the methodology undertaken in this work is the relationship developed with the host organisation, Heeley Development Trust, and the position in the field this relationship enabled.

The early research proposal was developed in collaboration with HDT, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the recently introduced CASE studentship model. This encourages partnership research arrangements, linking academic institutions with businesses and organisations.

A number of factors influenced the development of this particular partnership. There were existing links between the Trust and the academic department in which I was based, which facilitated the partnership necessary for a CASE project to be established. Meanwhile, the area of Heeley offered a number of potential case studies, containing what appeared to be a particularly wide range of community-led open space projects (in terms of age, activity levels and physical context) in a relatively small area. This concentration enabled long-term observation and involvement in a number of projects that would not have been physically possible in a more dispersed situation. The Trust itself offered a model of community-based action that had achieved considerable success in its efforts to develop and support community-led open space projects. This provided an opportunity to explore not only the phenomenon of community-led projects, but also the influence and implications of a particular model of local support.

The partnership context to the research enabled a more participative form of enquiry to take place, centred on a long-term 'in-the-field' position within the Trust. This ethnographic approach allowed a variety of methodological

techniques to be used over a relatively long period of time, with two years of the study period based at least part of the time in Heeley.

Access into the field of study was facilitated by this early collaboration. The organisation had recently moved to larger offices, and consequently was able to provide me with a desk at which I could base myself. This proved of vital importance in the development of the research, as it provided a situation in which I could observe day-to-day events while undertaking desk-based study tasks. To observe in this environment without being able to engage in other tasks would have limited the amount of time I was able to spend there, as well as constituting a far more uncomfortable, inefficient and unfulfilling experience.

During the first year, time was split between HDT and University, undertaking compulsory academic courses while at the same time familiarising myself with the Trust and the area. This period allowed me to establish the structure and activities of the organisation, researching the history and socio-demographic character of the area, mapping the physical environment and identifying examples of community activity in local open spaces. This was achieved through a combination of ongoing participant observation, informal interviews with staff members, document study (utilising a sizable resource library including records of past meetings, newsletters and photographs) and a good deal of walking around the area, exploring its open spaces and other community facilities. Another resource available to me was a recently commissioned community audit, which provided valuable contextual information about the neighbourhood and the differences within it.

At the end of the first academic year this balance shifted, with most days being spent in the Trust environment (both office and external). It was during this period that the majority of site-based data collection took place (although a considerable amount of observational work had already taken place), and observations in the office were focused more specifically on relationships with local open space activities. At the end of the second year regular presence in the field was withdrawn, and activity focused on

analysis and writing. The withdrawal was not entire however, as communications with both the Trust and the community groups continued beyond this period via e-mail and occasional visits. This continued relationship was necessary in order that HDT could be consulted on the development of the work and the form of the output likely to be of value to them. It also allowed further questions that arose through the analysis to be raised in informal discussion at occasional workday attendance.

The majority of observation time, particularly in the early stages of my time in the field, was spent with the members of office-based staff that formed the environment section. These individuals became the main "gatekeepers" to the community garden projects that form the focus of the research. The value of such figures in ethnographic work is widely recognised (Bryman, 2001) and their support and assistance in this instance was no exception. My desk was located within the same part of the office, facing both colleagues, which facilitated casual conversation about issues as they arose, and ensured that I was easily informed and involved in events and activities as they occurred. I took part in team meetings, external meetings, site visits and at times assisted in day-to-day tasks, all of which developed a greater understanding of the organisation and the area. The small and open nature of the office, and the tendency for issues to be discussed between sections, meant that wider actions and activities could also be observed. This was valuable in developing a strong contextual basis to support, inform and enrich the analysis of more detailed observation (Corti et al, 1995).

Written records of activities and meetings, along with a diary of events and observations were used to build up a description of the organisation and its dynamics. By avoiding traditional 'fly-on-the-wall' observation methodology and instead accepting engagement and participation with the groups being studied, it was possible to explore meanings from the point-of-view of those observed, rather than purely the researcher's perceptions, increasing the validity of the work (Adler & Adler, 1998).

Early in the research process, community garden projects were identified in the area. While awareness of a number of projects had informed the research proposal, a more thorough exploration of the community gardens in the area was necessary to develop and refine the methodology. During the initial year, attention was divided between as many projects as possible, in order to gain an initial picture of their characteristics. Local activity was identified through both observation at the Trust, and wider observation across the neighbourhood (through attendance at other community-orientated meetings and visits to community venues), in order to avoid limiting awareness to those projects with which the Trust were involved. It soon became evident that continuing such a wide focus would limit the depth of study achievable. Aside from the prohibitive amounts of data that would be collated from so many cases, the logistics of attending weekend and evening activity sessions among a wider number of projects (for this was when activities most commonly took place) would have proved unmanageable, as a larger number of cases invariably leads to clashes of event timings. It was therefore decided that the detailed study of the second year would focus on three case study sites which became the focus for analysis. These were selected both for the scope for investigation they presented and variety in their age, characteristics and physical context. Despite this focus, the progress of other projects was still observed on a less intensive level. This allowed depth of research in a number of specific cases, while retaining a more holistic perspective of the Trust's wider geographical remit. It also provided 'reserve' cases to insure against unforeseen events and provided a means of piloting some of the methodological techniques applied. The methodological components applied to each case study are outlined in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Methodological tools used

Case-study projects	*Other projects*
Participant observation at workdays and meetings	*Participant observation at workdays and meetings where feasible.*
Interviews with group members, volunteers and non-participants	*Pilot interview techniques*
Comprehensive collation of project-related documents	
Area-based questionnaires	

In most cases introductions to the community groups were facilitated by the staff I was working with at HDT. In all areas of observation, my position was initially defined as that of "participant as observer" within Gold's (1958) much quoted hierarchy. The research was undertaken overtly for both practical and ethical reasons. Staff at the Trust already knew the aims of the research through their close involvement in its development, and such was the need for trust and rapport with group members that it would not have been easy or comfortable to leave my reasons for being there undisclosed. The very fact that I was helping in a community project in an area I did not live in would have prompted difficult to answer questions. Aside from practical factors, personal ethical values and an increasing rejection of covert methods within the field (de Laine, 2000) informed my decision to be open about the research. In practice an overt role proved to have its own difficulties. It became clear that the position on Gold's (1958) hierarchy varied depending on context. Because many of the volunteers or individuals encountered were not present on a regular basis (or even repeated), it was not always possible to ensure a full explanation of my

role was conveyed. Wherever possible however, even in casual encounters, my position as researcher would be stressed at some point. The long-term nature of work enabled a 'softening' of the overt research role, as in time my presence became routine and potentially less noticeable (indeed the regularity of attendance may actually have had the opposite effect alongside irregular participants!). While this is considered to assist in the development of a comfortable and effective participant-observation situation, it was felt important to ensure the role as researcher was reiterated (albeit gently) at intervals to avoid the danger of friendships becoming dominant over the researcher role and subsequent ethical issues of confidence and exploitation (de Laine, 2000).

Initial introductions usually took place at a workday, where I would go along, take part as a volunteer and meet members of the groups. This was usually followed, some weeks later, by attendance at a meeting of the group, where more formal introductions would be made and in some cases minuted. At this point I would explain to the group the general theme of my research (emphasising the general study of community gardens rather than the more specific issues of long-term involvement), describe briefly my relationship with the University and HDT, and explain how I hoped to undertake the work (that I would be attending events and asking members to take part in informal interviews). This would be followed by a request for approval from 'the group' for me to proceed with the research. The formality of the request depended largely on the formality and structure of the group. In all cases there were no objections to my proposals, and many individuals appeared pleased that someone was taking an interest in their efforts. The entry to the group via an already trusted and respected individual from HDT seemed to dispel any concerns or reservations that group members may have had and provided me with an immediate level of trust that I would otherwise not have expected. Where there were already concerns about the future of their project it was clear that some group members hoped that the work I was doing would provide advice and guidance to help them sustain their efforts, encouraging co-operation and support.

Participant observation in the core projects entailed involvement in the group as an active volunteer. By taking part in the physical activities organised (usually work sessions or events) and attending group meetings an understanding of the group dynamics, project history and characteristics, and relationships to the Development Trust and other local residents, was gradually developed, in a similar way to the study of the Development Trust itself. The level of involvement necessarily varied between situations. In an organised site workday context, involvement was very much as an active volunteer, in common with those being observed, with the main aim of the event to collectively achieve physical tasks. In meetings the level of involvement was lower as these tended to be events arranged with the primary intention of decision-making and it was considered that an active involvement in this process would have risked influencing events and processes to a degree detrimental to the research aims. Comments were inevitably made in meetings (to remain detached would have conflicted with the development of rapport with group members in other situations), but every effort was made to restrict these to issues that were not directly related to the theoretical themes of the research (such as commenting on plant choices), or to casual prompts for clarification or explanation (which strengthened the quality of data collected).

Notes were taken either during or following activities or events. It was usually found inappropriate to undertake comprehensive notes in the field, due to the physical nature of much of the work undertaken, and the potential effect on other participants of regularly scribbling notes on their behaviour. Instead, key notes would be made in the field at appropriate breaks in activity, to jog the memory, or detail the arrival and departure of individuals. More comprehensive notes would then be made following the event, expanding on the details of the event and any valuable observations or discussions that took place. A particularly effective way of recording events was found to be making oral notes with the use of a Dictaphone on the journey back from the event. This usually took about forty-five minutes and provided adequate time for more detailed reflection

immediately after the event. This also proved a less daunting task than writing pages of notes following what could often be quite a tiring morning or evening of work on site. Extensive photographs were taken to assist in the recollection of activities and events, some of which were later used during photo-elicitation interviews (see section 3.2.4).

Observation on the two levels (organisational and group) was closely intertwined, as observation at the Trust enabled me to keep track of activities planned by and with the groups. Activities planned independently from the Trust, it emerged, were rare but inclusion on group mailing lists and email groups and frequent casual visits to the sites to study notice boards or chat informally with passing group members helped to ensure coverage was as complete as possible.

This ethnographic approach enabled detailed accounts of the project histories and dynamics to be developed, providing a rich context in which more detailed individual discussions could be placed. Validity was supported by the triangulation of information sources to establish the quality of information (Fetterman, 1998). For example, the longitudinal observation of attendance and activity provided a clearer understanding of the involvement and role of individuals who were interviewed as well as facilitating the selection of interviewees. Regular interaction and conversation with group members also enabled a clearer understanding of personal values and feelings when triangulated with the narratives attained in an interview setting.

Observations and field notes were analysed for patterns as the research progressed, developing a picture of the activities and behaviours of those involved. Comparing the patterns of observation between projects enabled variations to be identified which were used to inform the selection of particular themes or issues to pursue in further investigations (including the development of interview guides).

As well as the direct data collection methods enabled by workdays, they also offered an important means of displaying commitment and

contribution to the efforts of the group, in lieu of contributions I would later be asking individuals to make to my own research efforts. Lofland and Lofland (1995) highlight the importance of such 'immediate reciprocities' in achieving acceptance and enabling the ethnographic work to proceed with consent, and the subsequent co-operation I encountered suggests that this approach was both justified and effective. This commitment and support continued throughout my time in the field, acting as willing volunteer on workdays and on occasions providing horticultural or design advice (my own background in landscape design often came up in conversation and subsequent requests for advice were hard to turn down without appearing rude or standoffish). At times advice was sought regarding, for example, the recruitment of volunteers, at which point I felt it necessary to draw the line in my co-operation for the sake of the integrity of the research. In such situations I found skirting the issue awkward, and preferred to either turn the question around, eliciting the opinion of those asking and thereby providing valuable data, or where necessary simply explaining how my position as researcher made it inappropriate to provide some advice. Where the latter approach was rarely used, it was met with understanding and co-operation, with no apparent loss of goodwill.

It became clear early in the fieldwork that all the groups displayed a degree of fluidity in their active membership, and therefore establishing contact was a process that continued throughout the fieldwork as new volunteers appeared or former participants re-emerged after periods of inactivity. In one case, an active group was no longer in existence, limiting observation opportunities to a small number of HDT organised events, and providing no clear group to build trust with. In this instance, early exploration was based on document study and discussions with Trust staff. This early information enabled the identification of past members, who could be approached to talk with, combined with techniques for accessing residents local to the site (see section 3.2.5). Approaching past participants posed a number of methodological dilemmas. Practical considerations included data protection and the physical restrictions posed by participants that had moved away or died. Further ethical dilemmas

positive relationship within the organisation while also offering opportunities to further understanding of the Trust.

3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews formed a key component of the data collection process, enabling key themes and issues identified in participant observation to be explored further and theories developed or adapted following more detailed discussion. Discussing the case projects, and open space in the neighbourhood more widely, in a more direct way enabled a greater understanding of individuals' views, experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon being studied (Mason, 2002).

In contrast to more quantitative forms of interviewing, participants were not identified through any form of formal sampling procedure. Instead, individuals were identified based on their known relationship with a case study site (from group member through to non-participant).

> *"Smaller samples tightly controlled for size, structural and other relevant dimensions are likely to have greater explanatory power than could be revealed by a large scale survey."* (Chell, 1998, p69)

Initially interviews focused on key group members within each of the project, as these were the easiest to contact, though participation at workdays or meetings. As the research developed, less involved individuals were identified, from occasional attendance at workdays for example. Identification of non-participants in the projects was the most challenging group, by their very nature. Initially it was intended that snowball sampling (May, 1997) would be used, by asking existing participants in the research to suggest friends or neighbours who were not involved in the community garden that may be willing to be interviewed. In practice this proved difficult to achieve, and issues of bias created by introduction by and affiliation to group members proved problematic.

Contacts were likely to have been told about the theme of the research, and would be explicitly aware of a link to the community project, compromising explorations into the way the project is perceived through possible feelings of loyalty and familiarity. Direct contact in the form of door-to-door knocking was also considered an ineffective way of finding interviewees, for both practical reasons (time consuming, potentially risky and intrusive to residents) and methodological reasons (proving difficult to identify suitable individuals). To overcome these difficulties it was decided that a short postal questionnaire would be used, focused on the areas around the three case-study sites. The survey itself, which proved a valuable source of information, is described in more detail in section 3.2.5. To achieve its initial purpose however, it included an appeal for residents willing to participate in further research, who could provide contact details. The information presented by the survey provided a way of identifying individuals with little or no involvement, and also gave an insight into awareness of the projects, feelings towards local open spaces, and the degree to which individuals might prove 'rich' interviewees.

In total, twenty-eight interviews were undertaken with group members and local residents associated with the three main case study sites. Twelve of these interviews utilised photo-elicitation techniques, including most of the nine interviews undertaken with individuals who were not part of the community garden group.

3.2.3 Intensive interviewing techniques

The method used throughout the interviews followed that termed 'intensive interviewing' by Lofland & Lofland (1995) in their guide to qualitative research. Also known as 'unstructured interviewing' (among many other descriptions), this method takes the form of a guided conversation, in contrast to a 'structured interview' of set questions and restricted answers. The goal of the interviews was:

> *"...to elicit from the interviewee (usually referred to as the "informant") rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis."* (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.18)

The observation and desk study already undertaken at this point provided the situational analysis from which an interview guide was drawn up. This took the initial major areas of enquiry, extracted questions and ideas, or 'puzzlements', and structured them to form a rough guide to the interview conversation (Ziesel, 1981). It was felt important to use a guide in order to help ensure that all areas of enquiry were covered in the conversation, and to provide a reference document during the interview (see Appendix 1). While a guide was used, the aim of the interviews was actually to follow the guide as little as possible. Interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and in their own terms as much as possible. In doing this, a greater understanding of the interviewees point of view could be achieved (May, 1997), and further leads and 'puzzlements' could emerge (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). In this way, the interview guide acts far more as a checklist than as a schedule of questions, whereby issues were ticked as they are covered. Interviewees varied in how easily narratives were forthcoming, and in the extent to which they would offer (and introduce new) narratives without prompting. In less forthcoming cases, the guide ended up being used in a more traditionally structural way, although probes intended to encourage elaboration, explanation or reflection ensured the technique remained qualitative in nature. With more talkative individuals, eliciting narrative was not a problem, but there tended to be a greater risk of discussions veering into unrelated areas. While this was accepted to a degree, prompts to return to more relevant subjects were often used. Talkative interviewees also presented a challenge to keeping track of the interview guide. Although intended to be a loose structure, the tendency of some interviewees to jump between subjects rapidly made adequate coverage of the key issues, particularly at depth, difficult to achieve in some cases.

The guide also provided space for notes and jottings to aid the interview process. New issues that emerged or certain aspects of a theme which remained uncovered were noted in order to prompt questioning later in the conversation. In practice it was often found difficult to make written notes as it was felt this interrupted the natural flow of the conversation and reinforced the traditional interviewer-interviewee roles, so key words were often used rather than notes of any length.

Flexibility was provided over the location of the interviews. Where interviewees were comfortable it was suggested that interviews take place in their own homes, to promote feeling at ease and prevent the distractions of an unfamiliar surrounding which could have an effect on the richness and openness of discussions. The familiarity that developed with group members through the participant observation (and the links to a trusted organisation with which they were familiar) appeared to encourage most individuals to feel comfortable with this situation. Where interviewees were not happy to entertain this (as was anticipated to be more likely among non-participants with whom a relationship of trust had not been developed), a room at the HDT offices was available, but in the event was only used on two occasions.

Timing for the interviews was not prescribed, but rather left for the interviewees to determine, depending on the time they had available. This was intended to show flexibility on my part, and prevent potential interviewees from declining due to time constraints. It was considered preferable to undertake short interviews if necessary rather than limiting to those with more time available. Interviews were undertaken during working hours, in evenings and at weekends to maximise flexibility.

When arriving at an interview, effort was made to develop a good initial relationship with the interviewee, particularly with individuals not met previously. Appearing relaxed, entering into casual conversation (unrelated to the research topic) and being 'a good guest' were considered helpful in putting the interviewee at ease and developing rapport (Legard et al, 2003).

The interviews began with a short introduction. This explained the broad aims of the project and the role of the interview within that. The project was described in a general nature to reduce the stimulation of particular issues prior to the conversation. Among participants the work was described as an investigation into community garden projects, and among those undertaking photo-elicitation work the description focussed more generally on neighbourhood spaces. While descriptions were vague prior to interview, more detail was given at the end of the interview to assure true informed consent. An assurance of confidentiality was also given, explaining that names would not be used in any resulting report, and permission for the interview to be recorded was established. In no instances did anyone object to this. In some instances, where individuals were familiar and had already been engaged in conversation in the field, it was explained that some questions may appear obvious or repetitive of discussions held, but that they should be answered as naturally as possible. Their inclusion in the recorded interview provided valuable triangulation and an opportunity to expand on some issues.

Following the introductions, interviewees were asked a series of short questions about their general circumstances (for example details of the family unit and how long they had lived in the area) as recommended by Legard *et al* (2003). This provided a simple opening to the interview, with questions the interviewee would find easy to answer, and also provided valuable contextual information to guide later question formulation and prompting.

Most interviews (with the exception of photo-elicitation interviews, described below) then continued with a 'guided tour' question (May, 1997), designed to encourage the interviewee to speak freely about their experiences with the project.

> *I. Okay, a good way to start would be for you to describe the Carfield Farm project as you see it.*
>
> *R. It was erm, as far as I was aware there was a threat from the council to hand it over by a back-door route….*

extract from interview transcriptions

This question tended to prompt descriptive information about the project or its history, and as the example above illustrates, could often be valuable in highlighting aspects of the project that were of particular meaning to the interviewee. This initial narrative was sustained as long as possible with the use of non-specific prompts such as encouraging nods or the repetition of final statements in a questioning manner.

From this initial narrative, a series of probes were used to encourage elaboration and reflection or to clarify comments, directed as far as possible by the issues raised by the interviewee. At times it was necessary to direct an interview back into the research theme, where narratives meandered into less relevant areas, using 'transition probes' (Ziesel, 1981) which either returned to a previous comment for further exploration, or began a new area of discussion based on the interview guide. Using probes in this way, rather than following a rigid interview guide, allowed a greater understanding of the interviewee's values and how the meanings conveyed related to broader values.

One of the more problematic areas to discuss was the issue of non-involvement. Whether this was reasons for not attending all workdays among group members, or reasons for not becoming more involved in a project among casual volunteers and non-participants, the issue proved difficult to explore. While motivations for doing something were relatively easy to identify, reasons for not were much harder to establish, not always being the product of a conscious decision. The issue was also difficult to broach in a non-judgemental way. There was some concern at the outset of the research that questioning non-activity could lead to defensive responses, and every effort was made to raise the subject as tactfully as possible, strengthening the importance of rapport with interviewees.

Where time constraints were not specified by the interviewee, it was intended that interviews would continue until all areas on the interview guide had been covered. In practice, due to the broad scope of the topic this could continue indefinitely, returning to issues for further elaboration, and it was found that after a period of about an hour interviewees tended

to become restless or more limited in their responses. For this reason, most interviews were limited to this length, and very rarely lasted more than ninety minutes. Any issues not covered could often be raised in informal discussion during participant observation work. In more clearly restricted situations, as much as possible was covered, relying on personal judgement to focus on areas emerging as significant to the interviewee. In some cases, interviews were cut short abruptly (for example, when prior appointments were suddenly realised), and in these cases a follow-up interview was arranged to enable the interview to be concluded more satisfactorily. The interview process could at times prove frustrating, with last minute cancellations or forgotten appointments common (as recognised by Chell, 1998), but patience and persistence proved the most effective approach.

3.2.4 Photo-elicitation

Traditional unstructured interviews were complemented by the use of interview-based visual ethnographic techniques (Harper, 1987). Such techniques apply in-depth interview aims, but utilise visual stimulations to enhance the responses – commonly photographs. While traditional interviews were effective at eliciting historical narratives and exploring practical involvement, it was felt that visual methods would be more appropriate to explore feelings towards the places themselves (in addition to discussions held in the field during participant observation).

This approach was confirmed to be justified during early interviews, where the elicitation of detailed responses about open spaces beyond the project site had proved difficult. In casual discussions during participant observation it also was becoming clear that generic positive feelings towards green space were hard to develop into more considered site-specific values and meanings through conversation alone.

Harper classified this visual approach as the 'reflexive method', using photographs as a cue to explore personal feelings which may be hard to reveal in traditional interview situations.

> *"If the subject comments upon and interprets the image, we have a way to understand how the cultural activity is viewed from within the cultural setting."* (Harper, 1987, p.3)

This form of photo-interviewing first emerged in early anthropological research, but has since become more widespread, and is now commonly referred to as 'photo elicitation' (Hurworth, 2003). Although there is limited work written about the technique, there are many examples of its successful use in a variety of cultural study orientated disciplines (including anthropology, consumer research, and health studies).

Photo-elicitation as an interview technique provides a number of advantages over traditional interviewing. Whereas exclusively verbal interviews often suffer from communication difficulties, stunted flow, and memory blocks, it has been shown that photo-based interviews elicited a far easier, and more fruitful, flow of information.

> *"...the exclusively verbal interviews became unproductive far more quickly.....picture interviews were flooded with encyclopaedic community information"* (Collier, 1979, p.281)

Responses have also been found to be more immediate, with the situation more reminiscent of a trawl through the family photo album, than an interview (Schwartz, 1989). It can also reduce the risks of interference and inaccuracy caused by memory deterioration (Tucker & Dempsey, 1991)

A further development in the field of visual research methods has been the concept of 'autodriving'. In this scenario informants take the photos themselves, which are then used in an interview to elicit responses and discussion (Hurworth, 2003). This puts the control of what is considered important in the hands of the informant.

Within the scope of this research, this method of autodriving was felt to offer particular value for the exploration of feelings towards community garden projects, and how they fitted within perceptions of the wider neighbourhood environment. To this end, the method was used as the basis for a series of six interviews. The first two were undertaken as pilots with group members of a project that was not a main case-study. Four interviews were then undertaken with individuals associated with the case-study projects (two from each of the two active case-study projects). In three cases the photo-based activity was a follow-up to a standard interview, providing a greater depth of insight into feelings about the project in relation to the wider neighbourhood. In the remaining three instances they formed the sole interview contact with the participants. In these cases, the photo-based interview was supplemented with some of the prompt themes from the standard interview, usually towards the end of the interview.

Once agreement had been established verbally, participants were formally introduced to the work through a guiding letter, providing an outline of their role in the project. Focus was carefully placed on 'neighbourhood', rather than green or open spaces, in order to restrict bias towards open spaces. It was felt that targeting open spaces specifically would have limited the images taken and provided less of an insight into the levels of value or attachment placed on local spaces (and case sites in particular) in relation to the wider neighbourhood. While some concern was initially felt regarding the success of this 'widening', particularly given that many of the initial participants were already familiar with me in the context of their open space project, in practice this did not appear to influence the images chosen.

Informants were supplied with a disposable camera (24 exposures), given an explanation of how it works, and asked to take photos over the following two weeks of their 'neighbourhood' – things that they consider important (positive and negative), or have a particular 'attachment' to. The cameras were retrieved, developed (retaining a copy), and returned to the

informant. This set of images then formed the basis for an interview, encouraging the informant to take the lead in presenting the photos and their reasons for taking them and probing areas of significance as appropriate. These image explanations proved extremely valuable, providing a great deal of insight that could not be achieved through images or conversation alone. To assist in the interview process, a note sheet was prepared in advance, consisting of thumbnail images of each photograph alongside space for notes (see Appendix 2). This enabled noting of key points or issues to return to in later probing.

Once general explanations of all the photographs were complete, participants were encouraged to highlight those images that represented open spaces and separate them out. Where the images provided by the participant did not include notable spaces close to their home, further images were taken to the interview and introduced at this point. This allowed a more detailed discussion on the feelings towards open space, and in particular how the community projects were perceived in relation to other open spaces. A number of key prompts were used to develop discussion, based on key themes of the research. As well as establishing exactly why each space was valued, these included finding out how each space was used, any involvement that had taken place, and feelings towards responsibility. In some instances, time was limited (the explanation stage could take more than an hour itself) and in these cases participants were encouraged to reflect more succinctly on these issues (for example picking out those spaces towards which a strongest sense of responsibility was felt and briefly explaining why).

The time intensive nature of the autodriving technique, both through the process of organising the picture-taking and the length of the interviews themselves prompted a re-evaluation of the interviewing process. While the technique was providing some extremely valuable contextual information (and received positive comments from those who undertook it), the length of narrative on less related neighbourhood elements was limiting the amount of time spent discussing the open spaces in more

detail. Although efforts were made to limit these initial descriptions, this proved difficult as participants naturally wanted to explain each photo they had taken the effort to take, and to cut them short could come across as rude.

For these reasons, the final eight interviews applied a standard photo-elicitation method, including most of the interviews undertaken with non-involved (or less involved) local residents. Desk (and foot) study had identified all green spaces across the neighbourhood, and a series of photographs were collated. Where possible, spaces were photographed in there entirety and from common viewpoints (such as a neighbouring pavement). Where scale prevented this, views were selected to include landmark features to aid recognition. In some cases a selection of photos were prepared for individual sites (mainly the case sites), to encourage further comment on particular features, aspects or activities of the site. Due to the number of small open spaces in the neighbourhood, images were selected based partly on geographical proximity to the individual to be interviewed, and partly to provide a range of different characteristics among the spaces. Interviews always included community projects in the area, as well as spaces of comparative size that were maintained by the local authority for comparison. Also included were larger open spaces such as parks and woodlands.

The images were spread out in front of the interviewee and the discussion would commence by establishing which spaces were recognised, and clarifying or discounting any that were not. As the aim of the photographs was to elicit narratives about real places, not simply a response to the image itself (Scott and Canter, 1997), this stage proved important in later analysis. The recognition process would often lead naturally into interviewee-led narratives about the spaces, how they were used and feeling held towards them and these narratives were probed based on the key themes of the research (as above). A similar note sheet to that of the 'autodriven' interviews was used to support the interview process. Where narratives were less forthcoming immediately, from the initial identification

stage interviewees would be prompted on each space in turn to establish whether they were valued and why. In some cases specific activity or involvement was described and this would often lead into a more detailed exploration into the event or experience. Interviewees were also encouraged to suggest any other open spaces they considered particularly meaningful to them which may not have been included in the selection of images.

Transcription

All interviews were recorded with the participant's permission, which allowed verbatim transcriptions to be made. This was considered important as it allowed the detail and nuances of feelings towards the spaces to be explored more accurately than notes taken during the interview. It also enabled a more relaxed and engaging rapport to be developed without the intrusion of frantic writing. Exceptions to verbatim transcription were made where the issues being discussed were explicitly unrelated to the key research issues (as tended to be the case with some photograph explanation during the autodriving interviews). In these cases, comments were reduced to notes, highlighting the main points made.

A transcription style was developed as it was undertaken, with standard symbols developed for non verbal elements of the conversations (see Figure 3.3).

Throughout the transcriptions, names were replaced with codes (later given pseudonyms) to support anonymity, although the case-based nature of the work and the potential for indirect identification was made explicit during the interview and when consent forms were signed.

Each interview was headed with basic information, including the type of interview (standard, autodriven or photo-elicitation), the project involved in (or nearest to home among project non-participants), the interviewee (coded), the status of the interviewee (eg. "group member"), the date, time,

location and duration of the interview and the Dictaphone tape number. This was automatically detected by the software, enabling easy retrieval and organisation of transcription documents.

Figure 3.3: Transcription standards

I. How did	*interviewer speaking*
R. I someti	*interviewee/respondent speaking*
R1. Well, I d	*interviewee speaking (where more than one interviewee)*
and th.../well	*break in flow of dialogue/sentence finished prematurely*
Erm...I do so	*short pause*
[pause]	*longer (more noticeable) pause*
and....	*sentence tailed off*
R. /They we	*interruption over previous speaker*
I REALLY did	*emphasised speech*
Yes^, erm, I t	*raised inflection (where adds to meaning of statement)*
[laughing]	*non verbal signals (including actions or movements)*
[P3a]	*references to photos during photo-elicitation work*
[unclear]	*where speech inaudible (phonetic suggestions sometimes included)*

The quality of the recordings varied significantly among interviews. Because I was keen to remain flexible to interviewees and encourage a relaxed atmosphere, interviews were sometimes undertaken in less than ideal situations. Children provided a common distraction, either by interrupting the interview (which could restrict unprompted responses), or through noisy play in the background (which could make transcription difficult). Sound 'cleaning' software was used, with varied success, where potentially important comments were inaudible. Difficulties could also be presented when more than one person was being interviewed and both were talking at the same time. Where this was recognised during the interview, notable comments were prompted to be repeated.

On two occasions the Dictaphone failed (one for part of the interview, the second for the full interview), but fortunately this was realised promptly. In these instances, verbal notes were made immediately following the

interview, recounting as much of the structure and detail of the interview as was possible.

Analysis methods

Analysis was facilitated by use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Fielding and Lee, 1991). QSR N6 (a current version of NUD*IST) was used as a tool for storing, structuring and coding narratives from interviews and at times field notes from observations. Interviews were initially coded on basic themes, corresponding to some of the main themes of the research. Gradually as the work developed, themes were explored in greater detail and more detailed categories developed, progressing the analysis from management of the data to descriptive, and eventually explanatory, accounts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). This structuring and coding of the data enabled ease of access to information on a particular theme and also enabled clear comparisons between individuals and projects. Matrices based on some of the main categorisations of themes (such as motivations for involvement for example) were utilised to aid the analysis process, providing a effective means of exploring the data, particularly between cases (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The method of analysis undertaken was informed by the techniques of 'template analysis' (Crabtree and Miller, 1992), who propose a middle ground between grounded theory and content analysis. Initial themes were determined by the key research issues, providing a basic structure to the coding process, but interviews were kept as open as possible to allow this structure to guide, but not restrict, the refinement of more detailed coding.

3.2.5 Postal Survey

As explained previously, a postal survey was developed as a means of approaching non-participants of the community projects with a view to exploring feelings among the less involved. It was initially used at

Alexandra Road as a way of accessing local resident in the absence of a group for the site. As this approach was developed it became clear that the survey itself could provide important contextual information about attitudes and values more widely in all case project areas.

While it was never the intention to treat the information gathered statistically, a much higher response rate than anticipated provided valuable information for the areas in which it was distributed.

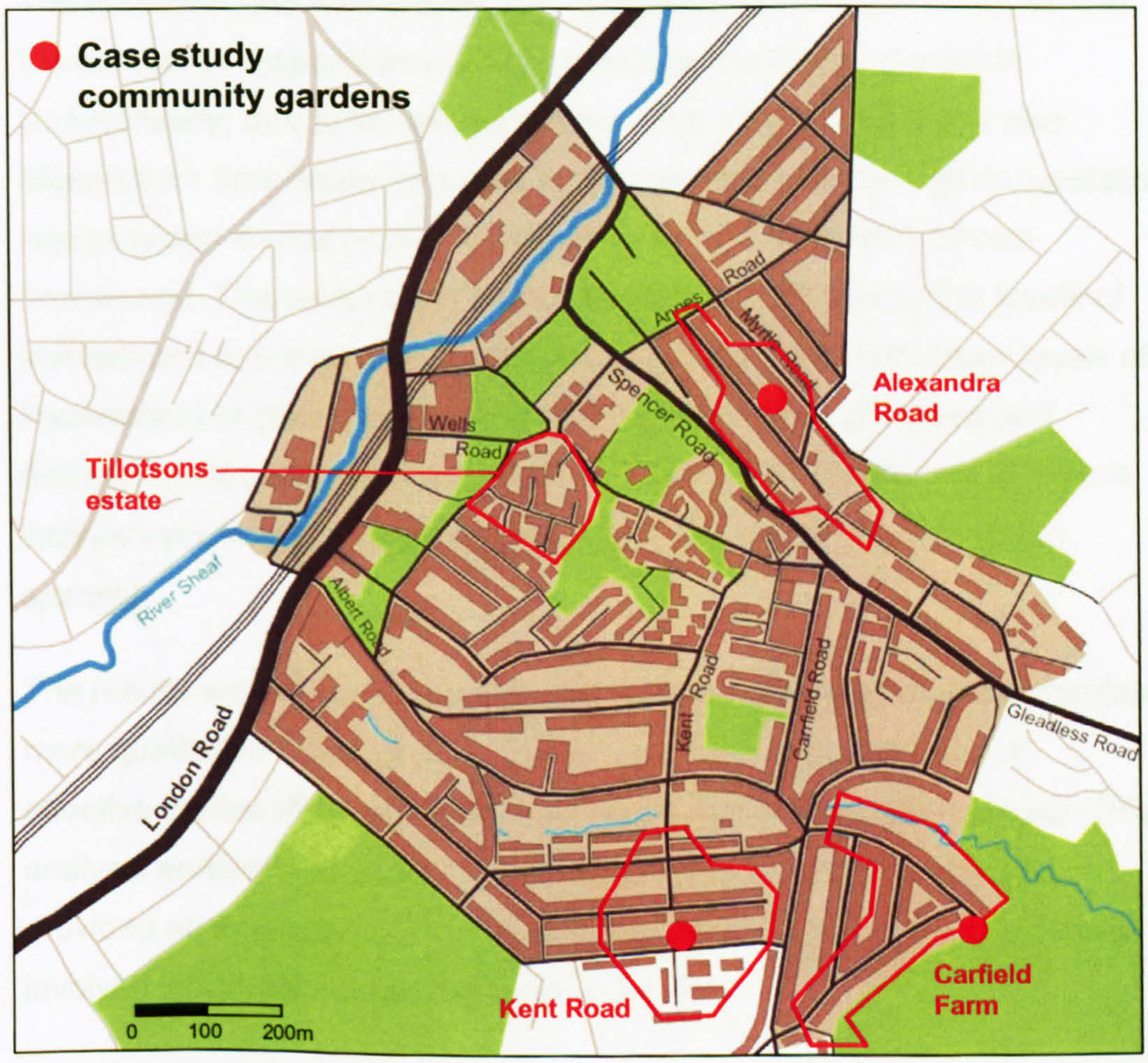
Four areas were targeted (see figure 3.4), covering the three main case sites and a central area of the neighbourhood (Tillotsons estate), undertaken in case it was decided to explore individuals living further away from the case sites. The distribution areas were determined by establishing 'catchment zones' around each site, based upon proximity to the site (a radius of approximately 100-200m was used), the location of entrance points and public routes passing the site. The Alexandra Road catchment was extended slightly to the southeast as another local project (not a case site) was in close proximity and this provided the opportunity for insight into feelings towards both spaces.

Each household received a letter of introduction explaining the research and a short questionnaire (see Appendix 3). When first used on Alexandra Road, the questionnaires were collected by hand to increase the opportunity to find willing participants for interview. Households were approached twice for collection before a freepost envelope was left. Later, as the technique was extended more widely, freepost envelopes were included with the questionnaire and replaced collection by hand.

The questionnaire consisted of four main questions. The first page was designed to identify local spaces that were considered particularly valuable or particularly negative, along with reasons. Space for up to four spaces was provided, although to keep the form simple, reasons were collected generically. This created some problems during analysis as comments could not always be attributed to specific spaces, but it was felt that keeping the form simple was likely to increase the response rate. The

second side assessed awareness of a range of local community garden projects, and any personal involvement (including a brief description of the type of involvement). The questionnaire was ordered in this way to prevent the multiple choice sites influencing the value-based questions. Finally, respondents were asked for basic demographic information (age and gender), and their address. It was stressed that house number could be omitted if desired, in order to encourage some form of geographical identification among those unwilling to provide full details. As a form of back-up, the questionnaires were printed on a range of different coloured papers, which were used in different areas. This enabled the basic area or response to be identified where no information was provided.

Fig 3.4: Areas targeted with postal survey



At the bottom of the questionnaire was an appeal for residents willing to take part in interviews about feelings towards local open spaces. A tick box and space for contact details was provided.

Figure 3.5: Postal survey responses

Area	No. posted	No. returned	Response rate
Carfield Farm	127	42	33%
Kent Road	278	52	19%
Alexandra Road/Heeley Green	220	43	20%
Tillotsons estate	89	6	7%

The response rate was greater than anticipated (see Figure 3.5), as was the number of respondents willing to take part in further research. Unfortunately, due to limitations of time, only a fraction of those who offered their time finally took part in the research, but the high co-operation rate provided a wide pool of individuals from which to select those interviewed. The selection of interviewees was informed by the levels of involvement expressed on the survey (targeting those with lower levels of involvement or past involvement) and the description of valued and disliked spaces (targeting those who provided 'rich' responses to ensure interviewees willing and able to discuss their feelings towards green spaces).

The results were input into a software package designed to accommodate more qualitative forms of data (SNAP surveys), which provided an effective means of categorising responses and analysing the results. This analysis enabled the projects to be placed in a broader context and provided an impression of wider perceptions of the spaces beyond those involved which was otherwise hard to achieve.

3.2.6 Definitions of community and neighbourhood

Due to the subject and context of this work, references to both 'community' and 'neighbourhood' are frequent, both among responses or narratives from research participants, and also within the discussion and analysis that follows. The two were often used interchangeably in everyday language, and clear definitions are hard to establish. For this reason a flexible approach to their use has been adopted, accepting the subjectivity of personal definitions, but a broad distinction has been applied based on academic discussions.

Communities are widely considered a social concept, constituting a network of social relationships orientated around a common characteristic or interest. This commonality may take the form of residential proximity, suggesting a 'community of place', but may also be a 'community of interest', defined not by residential location, but by a shared interest, for example sport or recreation (Altman & Wandersman, 1987). Communities of place are often considered synonymous with the term neighbourhood. Davies and Herbert (1993), for example, consider neighbourhood from the perspective of the urban resident, as an area around the home in which informal "neighbouring" interactions take place. In this respect, neighbourhood is a subjective concept, varying among individuals, with close resemblance to the place-based notions of community. Policy-based definitions of neighbourhood meanwhile usually have the express intent of defining neighbourhoods more objectively for organisational aims and are often viewed, particularly in planning terms, as a geographical area providing the essential facilities and services for its residents, such as local shops, open spaces and health services (Barton, 2003).

Throughout this work, the term 'neighbourhood' has been used to describe the local physical environment in which an individual lives, accepting that the scale and boundaries of this area will vary among individuals. The term 'community' has been used broadly (in line with common usage) to refer to

the collection of individuals associated with an area, incorporating both 'communities of interest' and 'communities of geography'.

3.2.7 Demographic character

The case-study approach adopted in this research, focussing on specific community gardens and their relationship with people living in close proximity to them, has influenced the decision to limit reference to the demographic characteristics of individuals involved. While there may be demographic factors that influence behaviour and feelings with respect to the spaces studied, it was felt that the small sample size and specific location of interest precluded the generalisation of findings to demographic characteristics. Furthermore, on a practical level, because the specific areas being studied were relatively small (usually within a radius of between 100m and 200m) and the overall character of Heeley was a patchwork of different housing types, acquiring existing demographic information that could be relied on as an accurate representation of the population being studied was difficult.

It was also felt that the inclusion of demographic information alongside quotes within this work was inappropriate in order to maintain confidentiality as far as possible in this context.

As a consequence, reflection on the influence of demographic characteristics such as housing type, age, sex and family situation has been limited within this study. The character of interviewees is summarised in Figure 3.6 to provide a general overview. Issues have been discussed where they were raised through interviews or discussions, but inferences based on observed (and sometimes assumed) demographic characteristics have been avoided. It was felt more appropriate to consider issues at the individual or community level (whether geographical or interest based) than in terms of gender, age or other demographic factors.

As well as the questionable validity of making such generalisations from the chosen methodological approach, it was also felt that the exploration of some of these potential demographic relationships, such as the role of women in projects or the involvement of ethnic minority groups, was deserved of focused study rather than the constrained consideration that was possible within this broader enquiry. Due to the dearth of research on the subject of involvement in community gardens, this project represents a preliminary exploration of the phenomenon, highlighting the complexity of the relationships involved, and it is hoped providing a stepping stone for future research in the area.

Figure 3.6 Demographic character of interviewees

Characteristic	**Number of interviewees**
Gender	Male: 11 Female: 17 [note: two interview undertaken with couples]
Age	Under 30: 1 30-40: 7 40-50: 10 50-60: 7 Over 60: 3
Ethnicity	Although ethnicity was not questioned during interviews, it was evident that the majority of interviewees were White British. Non-White British interviewees accounted for approximately 5 of the 28 interviewees.
Family status (within home)	Living alone: 4 Couple: 7 [of which 3 retired] With children: 17
Length of residence in current home	Length of residence ranged from 4 years to 39 years with an approximate average of 13 years.

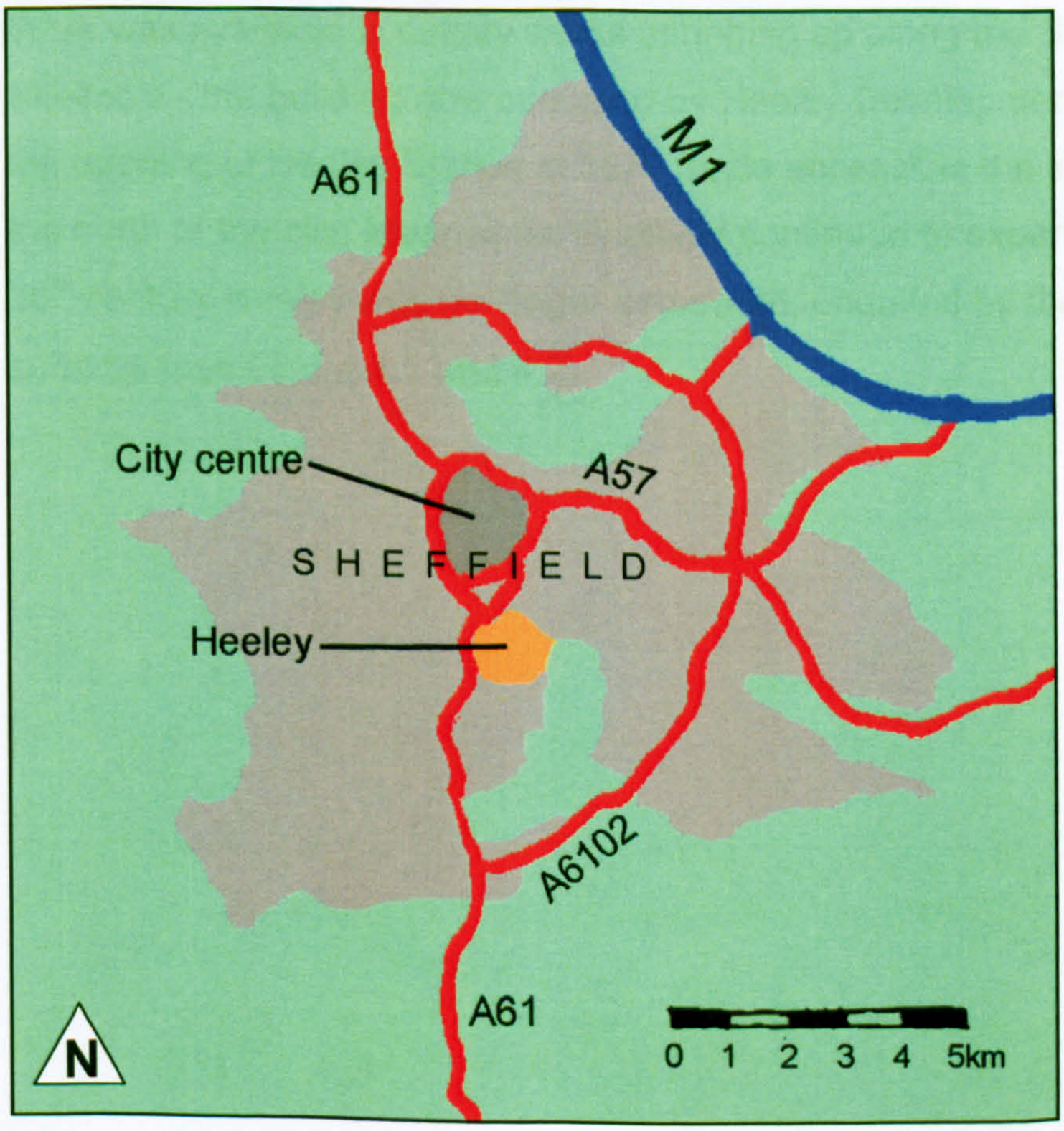
Chapter 4

Setting the Scene

This study is rooted in a specific geographical context, determined during the development of the research proposal. Collaboration with Heeley Development Trust enabled a research position within a community that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve.

This chapter aims to provide an introduction to the physical, social and organisational context in which the research took place. First the geographical location is described, offering an introduction to Heeley, in Sheffield (see Figure 4.1). Secondly the community development organisation with which the research was developed (Heeley Development Trust) is introduced.

Figure 4.1 Location of Heeley



4.1 An introduction to Heeley

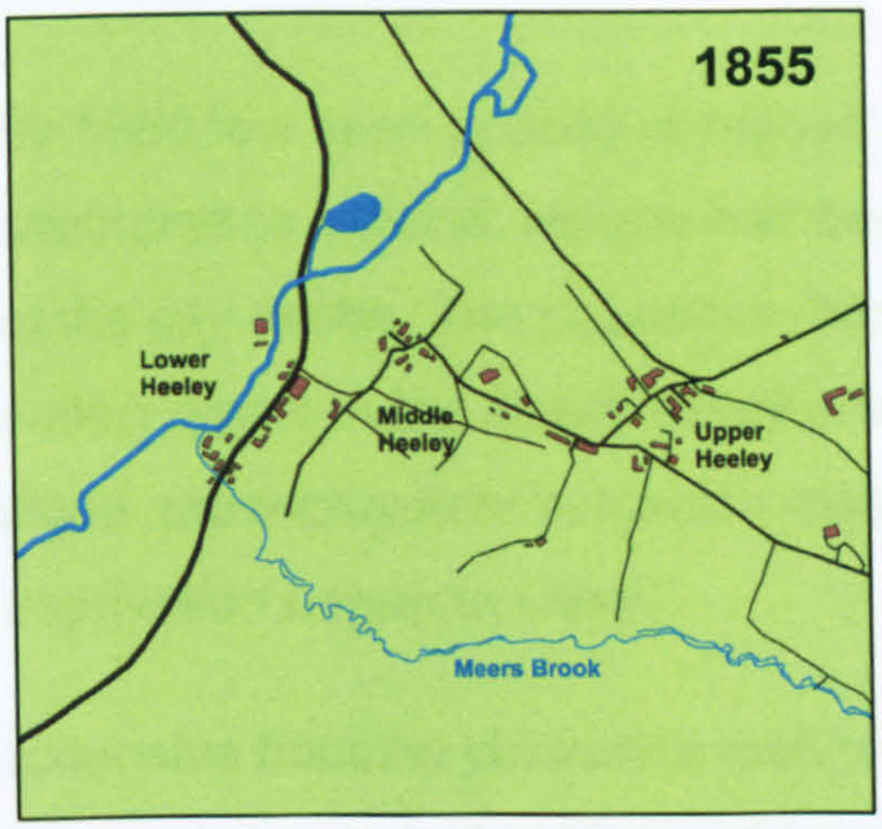
4.1.1 Historical Context

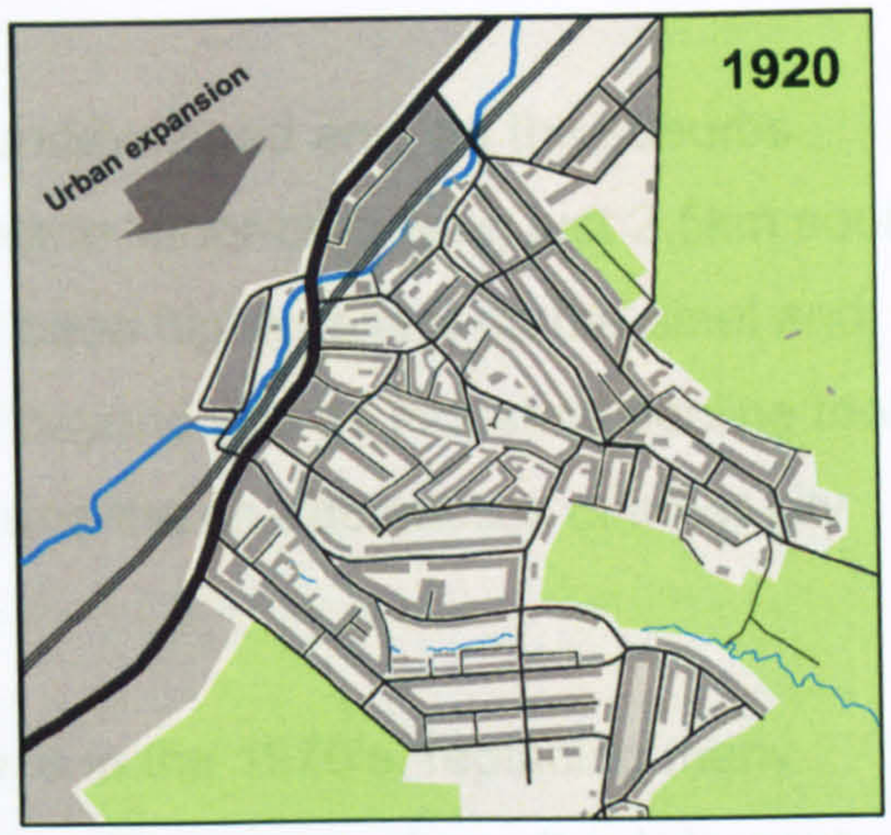
Known originally as Heahlegh (meaning high wooded clearing), Heeley began its development as an area for settlement in the 13th century when the site was chosen for its gently sloping land with good drainage in close proximity to a bridging point of the neighbouring River Sheaf (Heeley History Workshop, 2000). In mediaeval times the settlement developed in three agriculturally-based settlements, stretching down the valley side: Upper, Middle and Lower Heeley.

In 1846 a parish was formed, merging the three villages, and as industries spread from the nearby city of Sheffield the population of the village began to rise and agricultural land was converted to housing and industry (see Figure 4.2). A population of less than 1000 in 1831 had increased to 10,000 by 1900, as terraced houses crept up the slopes of the river valleys.

Work was available in cutlery works springing up along the Sheaf (including Skelton's - the building now occupied by Heeley Development Trust), and the opening of Heeley Station in 1870 made accessible the steel trade in the north of the city. Meanwhile, Sheffield continued to expand and by the 20th century Heeley was no longer separated, engulfed by the growing suburbs (see Figure 4.1 and 4.2).

Figure 4.2 The growth of Heeley





Buildings within Heeley area

Areas of green space

Watercourse

Roads

Railway

4.1.2 Recent History

By 1960 few open spaces remained undeveloped and, as the suburbs continued to expand, Heeley had become 'inner-city', lying just 2.5km south of the city centre. The population had been highly reliant on the steel and cutlery works in the Sheaf Valley and beyond and as industrial decline took place, unemployment in Heeley rose and the characteristics of inner city deprivation began to show.

Extensive housing clearance took place in the 1970's, replacing many terraced streets in the centre of Heeley with a maze of small cul-de-sacs. To the west houses were razed in preparation for a major bypass road planned to relieve congestion from the busy A61, a project that would later be abandoned. Meanwhile, to the east high-rise flats replaced extensive allotment land on the higher slopes of Heeley and the valley reaching out to Newfield Green. This was coupled with major alterations to the main road through the area (Gleadless Road) which was upgraded and re-routed to the north, by-passing the central area of Heeley, and creating a considerable barrier to those living either side of it.

These numerous and extensive developments and re-developments have created in Heeley a patchwork of diverse built forms and opens spaces in a relatively small area, each with their own social, physical and visual characteristics. The south is characterised by surviving Victorian terraces sloping down towards the Meers Brook and up the other side towards the more spacious Victorian terraces and semi-detached properties of Meersbrook. The north meanwhile is characterised by high-density post-war council housing interspersed with remnants of the Victorian terraces. To the east lies an expanse of 1930s semis, set back from the main routes through the area, while to the west are the remnants of an industrial past along the River Sheaf, and more recent industrial units and businesses set up along the busy A61 route into Sheffield from the south.

4.1.3 Neighbourhood demographics

At the time of the research Heeley continued to suffer the long-term effects of the industrial decline of the 20th century, and was considered by many definitions to be a deprived area. Unemployment was high, owner occupancy was low, and car ownership was low. Illustrating the level of deprivation through statistics was difficult as the administrative areas forming the basis of analysis encompassed wealthier areas to the south, masking the deprivation levels within Heeley. Even with these wealthier areas, 2001 census figures placed the ward among the 25% most deprived in the country, ranked 1909th out of a total of 8414 wards (National Statistics, 2002).

Ward figures suggest a demographic profile similar to the national averages on the characteristics of sex, age and ethnicity (perhaps unusually for the latter in an inner-city area). While employment rates for the ward are in line with the rest of the country (and actually higher than the Sheffield average), unemployment rates are considerably higher (at 4.6%), offset by a lower proportion of retired residents and homemakers. Almost half of those unemployed (42%) are classified as long term unemployed. At the household level, the ward contains a notably high proportion of council rented properties at nearly double the national average (24.4%), while multiple car ownership rates are at half the national figure (National Statistics, 2002).

Figures from a community-based audit specific to Heeley provide a more detailed exploration of characteristics across Heeley (Heeley Development Trust, 2003). They reveal contrasts across Heeley itself, with a broad trend suggesting higher levels of unemployment (and other deprivation indicators) in the north of the area.

Despite the disturbance of late twentieth century redevelopment, the area has retained and developed some strong community networks and Heeley is home to a range of community groups and organisations. Responses to

local surveys suggest that residents are generally interested in local issues, with a Traffic survey in 1996 (unpublished) receiving a response rate of 46% and a large scale community audit receiving 25% (Heeley Development Trust, 2003), both respectable figures for such work. The area also has a history of community based pro-activism, the thrust of which can be traced to the demolition work of the 1970's. Following clearance of the lower western slopes of terraced housing for a road development that was never to be, a number of local people began looking for ways to use this now derelict land. The result was Heeley City Farm, one of the first inner city farms in the county, established in the mid 1980's on a northern section of the abandoned strip. The farm continued to grow through the 1980s and 1990s, developing training courses, volunteering opportunities on the farm, a community café and small garden centre. While the farm became a popular attraction for visitors from across the city, it continued to provide a valuable community focus for those living around it and continued to be well used.

In the mid 1990's, with the farm well established, attention turned to the remaining derelict land from the failed bypass. A group of local people (including the driving force behind Heeley City Farm along with other local residents and business figures) worked together to develop a bid to create a new park, targeting the Millennium Funding emerging from the National Lottery at this time. The bid proved unsuccessful and it appeared that without an accountable body to manage the project, funds would not be attracted.

4.2 Heeley Development Trust

It was through a shared desire to realise the plans for a community park despite initial funding disappointment that Heeley Development Trust was established in 1996. The Trust was originally set up as a Steering Committee charged with the task of developing support for the new park and attracting funders. This committee became a company limited by guarantee in December 1996, and a registered charity in 1997.

Following establishment of the Trust, funding was successfully secured from a variety of sources (including the Single Regeneration Budget, the European Regional Development Fund, and English Partnerships), and by 1998 construction of Heeley Millennium Park was well underway (see Figure 4.2 for location). The land was leased to HDT from the council at a peppercorn rent for 120 years, who subsequently took over responsibility for its development and management.

Photo 4.1 - Heeley Millennium Park

While the Trust was set up with the express aims of financing ideas for a new local park, once established it became a focus for further community development initiatives, able to attract funding from a wide variety of sources. Activities developed and undertaken by the Trust during its first ten years of work in the area included:

- completion and ongoing management of the Millennium Park
- development of a Youth Participation Projects supported by outreach youth workers
- renovation of a number of local buildings for community use
- creation and distribution of the New Heeley Voice newsletter
- local management of the Community Chest funding stream
- support for local open space improvement projects
- organisation of local events, including the annual Heeley Festival
- establishment of a local IT resource centre

The Trust also provides help and advice for other local groups and organisations. It was able to assist groups in their initial development, providing and arranging meeting space, providing publicity, and helping with issues such as constitution writing. It also acted as a source of information for existing groups regarding matters such as fundraising, accounting and insurance. The role of Heeley Development Trust with respect to the community gardens explored in this work is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

The number of staff at the Trust rose considerably in its first few years, developing from a small organisation with a handful of staff to an organisation of around twenty covering a variety of local issues and schemes. The majority of staff members were local, living either in Heeley itself or surrounding neighbourhoods. These employees formed the public front to HDT, running the offices on a day-to-day basis, managing projects and working with local groups. Behind the scenes, and playing a more strategic role, was a board of directors. This was an elected board of five, made up of local community representatives (including the head teacher of the local primary school and the owner of a large local business). This board held responsibility for major financial decisions and the overall strategic direction of Trust work. In addition to the board, there was a 'membership' of around 30 local groups (or representatives of groups) who form a wider accountable base, able to take part in strategic discussions.

The aims of Heeley Development Trust have evolved over time, but in 2002 when this research commenced, were summarised by the Trust as:

- Involving local people
- Working to improve the environment of Heeley
- Working with local people who are unemployed
- Supporting the development of the Trust

The last of these aims raises an important issue for the Trust, shared by many other Development Trusts in the UK. Initial funding acquired from bodies such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) included an element of revenue funding, to pay for staff salaries and events. Subsequent funding received by the Trust has supported this and financed further staff salaries and the running costs of a growing organisation (including the leasing of office space). All these funds were finite in duration though, usually being limited to two or three years of revenue costs. Such a situation demands continuous application for alternative funding sources, with availability depending very much on the funding environment of the time. Consequently, achieving an alternative approach to funding that can assure financial sustainability for the Trust is a prime concern.

This concern is shared by the Development Trust Association (DTA), a national movement representing and supporting community development organisations across the country. The DTA was established in 1993, as dissatisfaction grew among the voluntary and community sector that reliance on external funding was not proving a long-term solution to many of the issues such organisations were trying to tackle (Development Trust Association, 2003). Development Trusts were conceived as a means of generating income for social ends, without the reliance on statutory authorities and handouts. The key means for achieving this has been considered to be via asset transfer, providing community organisations with a long-term investment and potential income. Assets most commonly take

the form of buildings, but can also take the form of land, equipment, investments or endowments.

Acquiring such assets and successfully developing them into a profitable venture (to fund community development) is far from simple however. Heeley Development Trust, along with most similar organisations, is at the early stages of building its self-sufficiency and securing its future.

Being focused on the development of a large open space, rather than any built asset places Heeley Development Trust in a difficult position, with income generation from such an asset particularly difficult. As core funding from grant agencies reduced over the period of the research, the scale of the Trusts activities were rationalised considerably. The staff number was more than halved during my time with the organisation. Through this time although other remits of the organisations work had to be withdrawn, the park team that had been established continued to manage the Millennium Park and support local projects (as described in Chapter 6). However the team were increasingly required to undertake work to support the financial security of the Trust, resulting eventually in the formation of an environmental management social enterprise, managed by the Trust. Unfortunately, the effect of this diversification on the community gardens which were supported by the Trust was not possible within the scope of this research due to it's occurrence following withdrawal from the field. It does however illustrate the changing capacity and uncertain future of the Trust in the context of community garden support and highlight the relevance of this study's research aims.

Chapter 5

The community gardens

Three community gardens were identified to form the focus of in-depth study. These projects were selected from a wider number in the area by virtue of the scope they offered for exploration of the key themes and the diversity they offered in terms of character and progress.

Each section describes the site's history, its key characteristics and broad patterns of involvement. A series of photos follow each description, to evoke a clearer impression of the sites.

Figure 5.1 - Location of case study community gardens

5.1 Kent Road Ground Force

Kent Road Ground Force was a project initiated by local residents with the support of Heeley Development Trust that transformed a poorly maintained green space into a heavily planted garden with community art features.

5.1.1 The site

The space was nestled within an area of terraced housing in the south of Heeley and formed a narrow, steep strip of land (see Figures 5.1 & 5.2).

Figure 5.2: The location of Kent Road Ground Force

The site was formerly a cobbled road; a small section of the longer Kent Road, that ran from the base of the site through to Heeley Green, a local commercial centre. A space was originally created when the road was closed to traffic, largely due to safety concerns arising from its gradient. The cobbled surface between the pavements was grassed, and a block-paved path installed across the site edged with metal railings. No planting was undertaken on the site and it was reported by residents that maintenance had been limited to annual herbicide spraying to remove weeds and brambles that would colonise the site (see photo 5.1). The site was the property of Sheffield City Council's highways department.

Due to the open nature of the site, running between two parallel streets, it was within reach of a particularly high number of households (more than 160 households within 100m walking distance). The road network around the site was such that the site was also highly visible, with sight lines along much of the remaining length of Kent Road (see photo 5.7) and a dead end forcing residents on Upper Valley Road to regularly pass the bottom of the site.

Across the road from the top of the site was located a primary school, which made the site a key route to school for many parents and children living north of the school (see Figure 5.2). The top of the site had long been a congregation point for parents and carers waiting for children at the end of the school day, strengthening the prominent nature of the space within the neighbourhood.

During the research period, the site was in the process of being transformed into a community garden, characterised by dense planting, colourful mosaic features and a winding woodchip path, all of which contrasted with the hard lines and bleakness of the original site. The steep nature of the site precluded many activities on the site and allowed the extent of planting that was being implemented, broken only by two small areas of grass on the lower section of the space (see photo 5.6).

5.1.2 Project conception

The project was initiated in January 2001 when a local resident (Kate) responded to an article in the newsletter of Heeley Development Trust requesting ideas for the improvement of the area. Advice from the Trust initiated an investigation into the ownership of the land and the organisation of a public meeting in the local primary school to establish the level of local support.

The initial meeting attracted around twenty people, the majority of whom lived within 100m of the site but also including a number from slightly further away (including a number of parents from the school). The initial proposal of a community garden for the site was presented and discussed, with small groups developing ideas for improvements they would like to see incorporated. It was evident from documentary evidence that although the level of intervention that should be undertaken was not resolved there was widespread support among those present for improvement to the site.

An important step at this first meeting was the identification of individuals who were willing to contribute to the development of the proposed project and formation of an informal committee. Seven individuals offered their support, forming the early core of the Kent Road Ground Force group.

5.1.3 Project aims

Although the group did not establish a formal constitution and aims of the group were never laid down in a formal manner, document analysis and meeting observation reveals a number of priorities which the proposed project aimed to address.

1. To improve the appearance of the site.

This was the initial motivation that prompted the initiation of a project; a response to the perceived neglect that the site had suffered. Minimal maintenance levels had created a space that although managed, was perceived by many to be derelict or abandoned and which was felt to be a negative feature within the neighbourhood. The main focus of suggestions for improvement were the incorporation of planting and artistic features into a design for the site.

2. To improve accessibility through the site

Once discussion had been stimulated, many comments appeared to concern the steepness of the hill when using it as a pedestrian route. Although these were often made in jest - *"could you flatten the hill please!"* (early consultation response) - there were more serious concerns regarding slippery paving surfaces and the lack of resting spaces. These concerns led to serious consideration about the scope for improvements that could be undertaken by the group, and a number of potential solutions were explored.

The solutions proposed each faced considerable barriers as they were developed in more detail, either through cost and the bureaucratic complications of dealings with the council (in the case of proposed alterations to the path) or local resistance from neighbouring residents (in the case of proposed resting seats).

3. To involve local children

The final aim was notable in its emphasis on the process of improving the space and the importance of involving local people. While much of the discussions and communications concerned the physical alterations that could be made there was also a notable emphasis within notes from the

meetings on the importance of involving local children. The physical immediacy of the local school and the presence of a number of parents on the committee appeared to have influenced the prominence of children among wider aspirations to encourage community involvement.

Connections through parents helped to ensure that through the course of the project a number of attempts were made to involve schoolchildren in the activities of the group and development of the site.

5.1.4 Project organisation

Following the establishment of a group of individuals willing to support the organisation of the project, individuals with particular skills were identified to undertake specific tasks. These roles were not formally appointed, but enabled a distribution of necessary tasks among the initial group. Tasks appointed included the completion of funding applications, the analysis of suggestions collated at the public meeting and the delivery of leaflets and posters. In time, as particular tasks specific to a stage of the project were completed, these roles became less distinct and organisational tasks were either shared among those willing to take them on or undertaken by staff from the Trust.

Early meetings were advertised locally and encouraged attendance from any interested local residents, but once a committee had been established and the initial consultation regarding ideas for the site had been undertaken, meetings became more contained. Invites would be restricted to those who were members of the committee (sometimes extending to those who had shown an interest at workdays) and the locations became less public, relocating from a room at the school, to the private homes of members.

The occurrence of meetings was not consistent over the course of the project, and tended to be concentrated around key events or issues. Four meetings followed the initial public meeting in 2001, each around five weeks

apart, which concentrated on defining the aims of the group and the scope of what could be done. This was followed by a break of four months before a second period of high activity that coincided with the first art project to take place and the organisation of a street party. This pattern of defined periods of regular meetings continued for several years, coinciding with various stages of the practical improvements on site. By 2004, meetings had become noticeable less frequent, limited to a small number of poorly attended meetings to arrange an official opening event for the garden. Following this celebratory event, no further meetings took place for the remaining duration of the research.

The meetings tended to be informal in nature and were usually led by a member of staff from Heeley Development Trust (Peter). Agendas would occasionally be drawn up by Peter and either sent with the meeting invitation or simply distributed at the meeting. Issues would be discussed by whoever was present and responsibilities for necessary action established. Meetings also served as an opportunity for sharing ideas for the site, particularly in relation to potential art projects and other additions to the site. The progression of these ideas to action would depend on the support received from other members and the amount of effort that keen members were willing to put into pursuing them.

In addition to group meetings, further meetings took place between one of the main funding bodies (a BTCV scheme), Peter and a representative of the group, as a necessary part of the funding process. This individual had been nominated as Treasurer for the group in response to stipulations of the funding application.

The preparation of funding applications was co-ordinated by one particular group member in co-operation with Peter, and had been undertaken during the first year of the project, successfully attracting £15,500 to support the activities of the group from a range of funding sources.

The other notable activity to be undertaken by the group in an organisational context was consultation. In addition to the initial public

meeting, two further consultation events were held, both taking the form of a stall at the annual Carfield Fayre at the neighbouring primary school. The primary aim of these events was to elicit views and ideas from local residents regarding the satisfaction with work undertaken, and proposals for further work. Much of the preparation for these events was co-ordinated by Trust staff, but members of the group were present at the event to staff the stall and talk to members of the public. Questionnaires were used as the main method of eliciting views, which were processed by group members with the assistance of Trust staff using the facilities available at Trust offices.

5.1.5 Project activity

The focus of most effort among those involved was practical volunteering on site. Although meetings and organisational tasks required additional effort from a number of members, these tended to be greatest at the conception of the project (focussed on funding applications, consultation and promotion) and declined in prominence over the course of the project.

The nature of activity on site would vary depending on the stage of the project. Work activities would vary between weekday evenings (usually 6pm until around 8pm) and Saturday mornings (usually 10am until around 12pm). Early workdays focussed on clearance of the site, and attracted a large number of volunteers who collected litter and cleared overgrown weeds and shrubs. Once funding had been established further works were possible and a series of activities focused on achieving the main elements of the garden design. Workdays during the first year focused on the top section and under the direction of Peter (and with support from park staff from HDT) the volunteers completed a section of bark mulch path and planted this smaller section of the space. Following a break in activity over the winter of the first year, activity commenced again the following spring with attention focussed on the larger lower section of the site. Bulb planting

was undertaken with the local school, wildflower seeds sown, and the path continued to the bottom of the site. A considerable amount of further planting was also undertaken, partly to replace plants lost from the upper section (due to theft) and partly to complete the gardens lower section.

The sessions themselves were usually arranged in advance, often at one of the group meetings, and sometimes in blocks in order that group members could plan ahead. Over time the organisation became less structured however, and as meetings became less frequent, workdays would tend to be arranged by the Trust and group members informed by either letter or through the use of posters on the site and in windows. The notice provided could sometimes be limited to less than a week and it was evident towards the end of the research period that notice of events was not always reaching all the members, with an increased reliance on the site notice-board.

Work activities were reasonably regular (with activity tending to decline over the winter months), and increased in frequency prior to an opening event in an effort to complete the site. Attendance levels generally declined however and in comparison with workdays during the first few years which at times attracted more than twenty volunteers (see photo 5.2), events observed through 2004 and 2005 tended to attract between five and ten.

A number of additional activities were undertaken by the group which successfully attracted a larger number of attendees despite the overall fall in volunteers. The creation of mosaic features for the site provided the focus for two periods of specific activity attended by a large number of people who had limited or no involvement with the project previously (see photo 5.4). These events were held away from the site in a nearby community building and were widely promoted with posters and leaflets in the local area. These specific projects also prompted specific periods of meeting activity specifically focused on the organisation and preparation of the activity. Another activity successful in attracting unusually high numbers of volunteers during the later stages of the project was the painting of the

railing through the site, which appeared to attract volunteers that had not been as active during standard workdays that by this time were largely focused on maintenance tasks such as litter picking and weeding.

Photo 5.1: **Kent Road Ground Force** - the site prior to the project starting (approx 2000)

Photo 5.2: **Kent Road Ground Force** - an early clearance workday (July 2001)

Photo 5.3: **Kent Road Ground Force** - Bulb planting with local children (November 2002)

Photo 5.4: **Kent Road Ground Force** - Mosaic sessions attracting non-members (August 2002)

Photo 5.5: **Kent Road Ground Force** - opportunities for informal socialising (May 2004)

Photo 5.6: **Kent Road Ground Force** - the completed garden (May 2006)

Photo 5.7: **Kent Road Ground Force** - visibility of the site within the local neighbourhood (Feb 2003)

Photo 5.8: **Kent Road Ground Force** - management support from HDT

5.2 Carfield Farm Community Garden

Carfield Farm was a project initiated in response to a threat of development that transformed a derelict area on the edge of a large allotment site into an area intended for informal community use and events while protecting a section of the site for the benefit of wildlife.

5.2.1 The site

Carfield Farm Community garden was to be found at the end of a long, hedge-lined alleyway within the sprawling Heeley and Meersbrook Allotment site. Situated on the periphery of the allotment site, neighbouring traditional tended plots on one side and the rear gardens of adjoining houses on the other (see Figure 5.3), the space was inconspicuous from its neighbouring street, appearing as a small area of woodland (see photo 5.17).

In the mid nineteenth century the site was part of a sizable farm, which gradually yielded to housing and the development of the neighbouring allotment site as the city expanded. The farmhouse remained on the current project site and was let to a tenant as late as 1960, but during the 1960s the building was demolished and the site passed over to the City Council's Recreation Department.

Although the space bounded the end of a residential road, the original entrance had become overgrown, and formal access was instead limited to an approach through the grid of allotment alleyways. This physical separation from the residential environment (reinforced by a band of trees and dense undergrowth), and the open views across the wooded valley to the east, created a strong feeling of seclusion. The maze-like approach through the main allotment site also created a sense of disorientation which reinforced this. Indeed, it was only after a number of site visits that I began

to get my bearings and it took the careful study of an aerial photograph to understand fully the relationship between the space and its surroundings.

The housing area the site neighboured was characterised by large, detached Victorian properties on tree-lined streets. Most of the homes were owner-occupied, and the neighbourhood was considered locally to be on the more affluent side of the study area

Figure 5.3: The location of Carfield Farm Community Garden

5.2.2 Project history

The evolution of the site from a derelict plot to the Carfield Farm Community Garden can be traced back to a planning meeting of 2001. Sheffield City Council was at this time consulting on their Local Plan, a document outlining development land allocations across the city. Alerted by the presence of "men in suits" around the site, a number of local residents investigated the draft document and discovered that the farm site had been excluded from the protective allocation afforded to the surrounding allotments. As this news spread among allotment holders and residents, sparking fears of housing development on the site, a number of public meetings (initially held in the allotment 'HQ' sheds) were arranged, revealing a strong opposition to any such proposals. A number of individuals spearheaded a campaign to protect the site, organising a petition (signed by more than 300 people) and establishing an informal group in September 2001 known as "The Friends of Heeley and Meersbrook Allotments", reflecting the primary aim at this point of preventing development on what was considered a section of allotment land. In the course of discussions with councillors, council officers and the local allotment federation, the group established that along with lobbying local councillors and representing their objection at planning committee, the site would have to be shown to have a positive use to support a long-term campaign to protect it. To achieve this, the group committed itself to developing and managing the site as a community space. The group, which until this time had focussed on campaigning activity to protect the site from development, shifted its focus from petitioning and lobbying to working on the site itself. Plans of the existing site were drawn up, with a basic ecological survey to establish (and communicate to others) the value of the site for wildlife. The group was formalised with a constitution early in 2002 in order that it could apply for funds to support its work. This formalisation was also an effort to ensure the group would be considered a competent body to take on the management of the space in the eyes of the council.

Early in the project's development the group were faced with pressure from neighbouring residents who were opposed to community access to the site,

along with wider fears among the allotment community that increased access could lead to increased vandalism. While public access from the bounding residential road does not appear to have been a proposal of the group at any point, a spate of vandalism to the first attempts at establishing an orchard appears to have convinced the group that this boundary would have to be actively secured to prevent informal use. This produced a single entrance site contained entirely within the allotment boundaries, preventing a direct link between it and the residential environment and consequently adding between 300m and 600m to the journey distance for nearby residents. As the allotment gates were locked at night, it also restricted access to daytime hours. However, the measure removed the need for additional pathways through the site and enabled limited disturbance of a considerable area of regenerated vegetation in line with the aims of the group.

Group members recalled that the site was heavily overgrown when it was first explored, and a number of clearance days in 2002 began the process of taming selected areas of the site in order that they may be accessed and used, despite no form of ownership or tenancy agreement at this point. Soon after sufficient space was cleared, two community events were organised. These invited local residents not involved with the main committee to visit the site for a specific event, in order to encourage the wider community value that the group hoped would support the protection campaign. The events were focused on aspects of the group's proposals for the site, such as tree planting and dressing, or the pressing of fresh apple juice (related to plans for an apple orchard), and were to become a regular element of the groups activities.

In October 2002 formal tenancy was officially achieved, in the form of five separate allotment tenancies held with the City Council by individual group members on behalf of the group. Although not the outcome the group were hoping for (the authority was reluctant to grant a group tenancy), this agreement provided a degree of security for the site and provided the legitimacy to proceed with plans for the site.

5.2.3 Project aims

The aims of the group were outlined in the constitution as follows:

> *a) To save the old Carfield Farm site from housing development*
> *b) To maintain wildlife on site*
> *c) To allow only sufficient limited community access to site as is necessary to establish an alternative usage to housing*
> *d) To promote the best interest of the residents of the area and allotment holders, working together regardless of age, ethnic origin, ability, sex, belief or political affiliation recognising the value of our many differences*

Friends of Heeley and Meersbrook Allotments Constitution, 2002

It is notable in these aims that the threat of development and loss of the site were considered a higher priority than community use of the site or the potential future role of the site as a public green space. Community access was referred to only in so far as it being necessary to achieve the primary aim of preventing development.

5.2.4 Project activity

Since commencing work on the site in 2001, the group gradually cleared two main areas, one intended as an apple orchard and the other containing an existing stand of unusual golden raspberries. These two areas would form the focus for the project's main annual event days - Raspberry Day and Apple Day. Repeated vandalism to newly planted trees made the establishment of an orchard difficult but the group persisted, replacing the damaged trees with new ones in less exposed positions. Crushed stone pathways were gradually laid to improve access through the site and a timber gate installed at the main entrance. A number of benches and a notice board were installed, a lookout area constructed (providing level ground for events), and original dry stone walling uncovered and repaired. By spring 2005 a willow hide had been constructed, facing the largely

undisturbed area of the site, while a series of raised beds containing a variety of herbs were complete at the more public end of the site.

While the constitution defined the group as its complete membership, to be "administered by" the management committee, in practice active support on site from the wider membership was extremely uncommon. Any further involvement on work mornings tended to be family members (one partner was a regular volunteer), or visiting friends who had been brought along as part of their visit to the area. Therefore, workdays tended to attract a similar attendance level to meetings.

Initial work on the site appears to have been sporadic in nature, consisting of occasional 'expeditions' into the undergrowth and a number of irregular clearance efforts, but by 2003 (shortly after tenancy had been achieved) a regular routine of work mornings had been established. These would take place on the first Sunday of every month and generally ran from 10:30am until lunchtime. Tools and materials the group had acquired were generally stored in the garage of one of the members, and transported through the allotment alleyways to the site by car. Members would usually arrive within the first half an hour of the session, but the length of time spent would vary, often depending on other commitments (including personal allotment plots). Tasks would normally have been established at the previous meeting, and any further arrangements necessary organised via group e-mails or telephone calls. Where the proposed work was felt to be beyond the capabilities of the group, external help was at times appointed. This included the services of the City Council (for clearing rubbish), a local environmental training organisation (used for a number of construction projects), a professional waller and a company specialising in the creation of willow-structures.

The work of the group was characterised by the protection of a large area of the site as a habitat for wildlife alongside the restoration and introduction of traditional farm crops such as fruit trees and herbs. In practice, most of the physical effort was directed at the latter, with very limited management of

the 'wild area'. However, the deliberate confinement of activity and change to a limited area of the site enabled the group to fulfil its dual aims of protecting the site while encouraging community use.

5.2.5 Project organisation

The constitution adopted in 2001 established an organisational structure for the group, based on advice from a local volunteer support organisation. The structure proposed described "group members" overseen by a "management committee". Membership was to be open to "anyone who is interested in helping the group to achieve its aims", while the management group was intended to be a smaller group of between 5 and 15 people, elected at an Annual General Meeting.

In June 2003 (when research in the field commenced) the committee consisted of ten individuals, five of whom had been involved when the group was first established. Two original members were no longer involved in the group, the first being the original instigator of the campaign and group, having moved to another city. The second was unable to continue an active involvement due to other commitments, but remained on paperwork and mailing lists as a 'non-active' member. In the three year period of the research only two members left the group (again due to moving out of the area) and two new members joined. Within the committee, a number of formal positions were elected, including the standard roles of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer along with a number of additional roles such as Group Advisor/Technical advisor (this was a member of Heeley Development Trust) and Funding Co-ordinator (established in August 2003 to manage an increasingly complex range of funding criteria). While the management committee has remained reasonably stable, most appointed roles have experienced at least one handover in the first five years of the project.

Ten of the fourteen people who had been committee members at some point during the project lived within 200m of the site. Of the remaining four, three were allotment holders and one was the supporting member from Heeley Development Trust.

Committee meetings were held monthly on a weekday evening, and were usually attended by between five and seven members. For most of the study period they were held in community rooms in Heeley, and a number of members would often walk the journey in a group or share lifts. Following the meetings, a small group would often continue discussions more socially in a popular pub down the road. In 2005, the group stopped booking the room and started meeting in members' houses, rotating the responsibility of hosting among willing members. Meetings tended to be highly organised, with agendas prepared by the group secretary and minutes distributed via email soon after the event. Regular agenda items would include an update on funding, an outline of current spending areas, a treasurer's report and tasks for forthcoming work mornings or events.

In addition to the management committee, a network of 'members' had been established, developed from the initial petition-based lobbying of the early campaign. Local residents who wished to support the project were asked to donate a £1 subscription annually (contributing to tenancy costs) in return for which they would receive approximately four newsletters each year, providing progress updates and promoting any forthcoming events. Annual subscription levels were between sixty and eighty individuals or households over the research period. However, this membership was far from constant, and only thirty five were long-standing members throughout the projects history. Another thirty four joined in the early stages of the project and had since ceased their subscriptions, while fifty members had joined the group since its establishment. Among these new members, about half were individuals who provided contact details at events but subsequently failed to respond to subscription requests and were removed from the membership list.

Photo 5.9: **Carfield Farm Community Garden** - the site prior to the project starting (2001)

Photo 5.10: **Carfield Farm Community Garden -** the orchard clearing, a regular weeding task (Sept 2003)

Photo 5.11: **Carfield Farm Community Garden** - Preparation for a workday (August 2004)

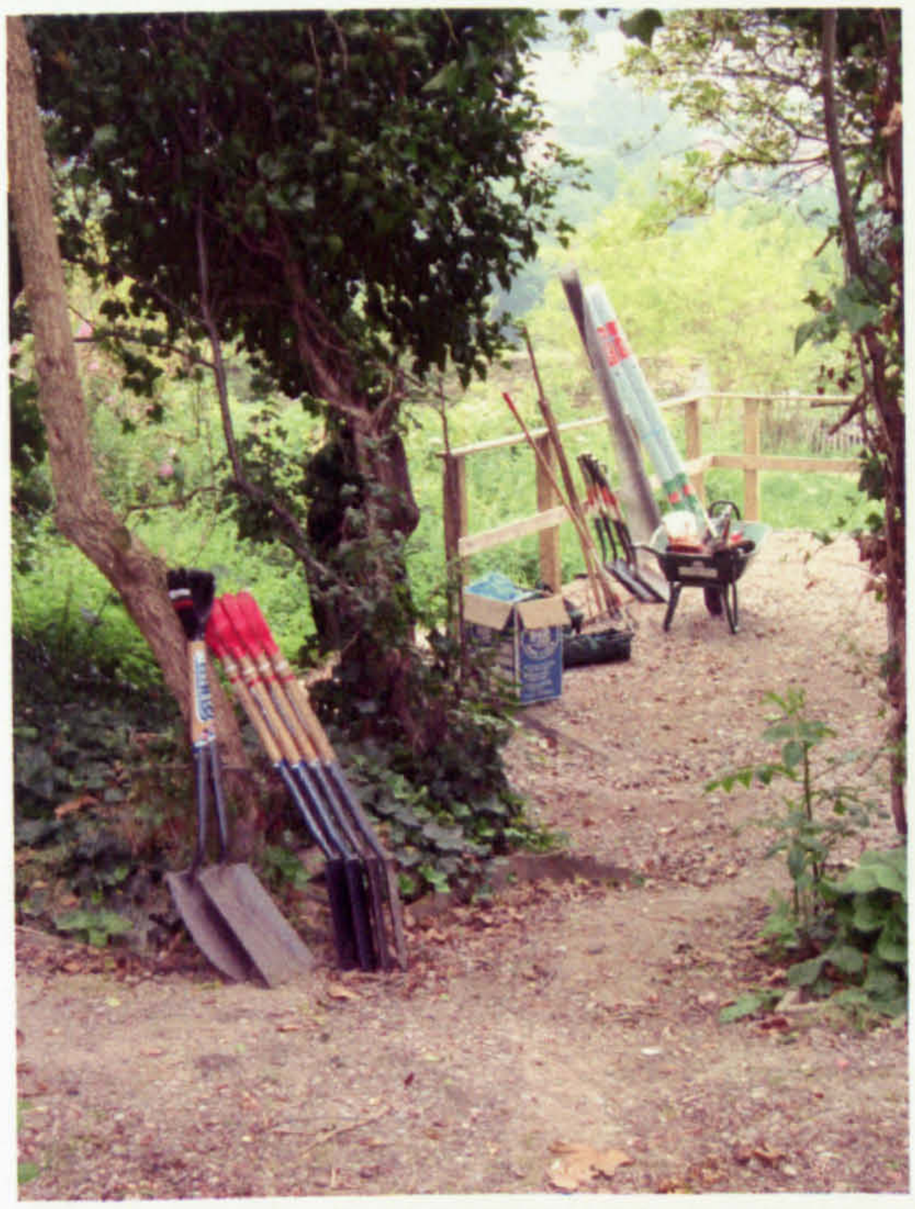


Photo 5.12: **Carfield Farm Community Garden** - Satisfaction with the results (August 2004)

Photo 5.13: **Carfield Farm Community Garden** - creation of herb beds (August 2004)

Photo 5.14: **Carfield Farm Community Garden -** Apple Day celebrations (October 2004)

Photo 5.15: **Carfield Farm Community Garden -** annual general meeting (November 2004)

Photo 5.16: **Carfield Farm Community Garden** - non-members picking raspberries and socialising at Raspberry Day (July 2006)

Photo 5.17: **Carfield Farm Community Garden** - view of the site from the adjacent street (December 2005)

5.3 Alexandra Road Community Garden

Alexandra Road community garden was the oldest of the projects studied. The initial project was undertaken in the early 1990s, and since then had declined into a long period of inactivity. Attempts were made to revive the project during the research period but proved unsuccessful.

5.3.1 The Site

Information regarding the history of the site was limited but it appears the space had remained open since the surrounding houses were originally built. Owned by Sheffield City Council, the site had been used as an informal grazing space by the nearby Heeley City Farm since the mid 1980's.

Alexandra Road was situated on the north side of Heeley, amongst an area of predominantly terraced housing (see Figures 5.1 & 5.4). The road had been subject to considerable alteration, first through the closure of one end during a period of significant local road modifications, and secondly through several phases of demolition and infill building which affected small sections of the original terraces. The site was located midway up a moderately steep street, notable for the particularly high densities of on-street parking. The road alterations meant that Alexandra Road was no longer a through route for vehicles, but remained a pedestrian route between Heeley City Farm to the bottom of the hill, and the houses and shops of Heeley Green.

The site covered a flat area of 520m^2, bounded on three sides by housing. The space had been transformed during the original project from an area of grass into a small simple garden space providing seating, ornamental planting and a crushed stone pathway (see photo 5.22). A picket fence separated the space from the street with access through a single gate. An

area of grass at the front of the site was used as kick-about area against the brick wall of the neighbouring house. At the front of the site another small area had been fenced, accessible only from the pavement and intended as a dog toilet. This had since grown over with grass, weeds and brambles and did not appear to be used any longer. Two upright wooden posts showed evidence of former notice boards, which had since been removed. The shrub planting on the site had become well established, but due to the low levels of maintenance received much of the original ornamental planting had become overgrown or died.

Figure 5.4: The location of Alexandra Road Community Garden

5.3.2 Project Conception

Due to the project having been established ten years prior to the research, finding original members of the group and establishing the course of events proved difficult. A number of significant events in the development of the project were identified through interviews and documents provided by a former volunteer.

In 1993 the owners of the site (Sheffield City Council) took the decision to sell the space for housing, along with another larger space further down the hill. At the time, the space was being used by Heeley City Farm for grazing, and was reported to have provided informal play space for children.

Under the name 'Alexandra Road Gardens United Enterprise' (or ARGUE), a campaign was fought to protect both spaces from development, organised by a resident of the street who had connections with the City Farm. Petitions, publicity in the local media and meetings with the council were used to try and prevent the loss of the space and as a consequence a compromise was reached whereby the lower site would be sold but the 'top field' would be retained for community use.

Once secured, a group of local residents set about transforming the space from an empty gap in the housing to a community garden for local residents. Work commenced in May 1994, with considerable support from Heeley City Farm (the project predated the formation of Heeley Development Trust).

5.3.3 Project aims

Document analysis suggests there were a number of key aims behind the ARGUE campaign and subsequent works. The primary aim was to retain the space and avoid its loss to housing. It was this threat that prompted the creation of an active group, necessary to fight against the decision of the landowners. This threat also seems to have been part of the incentive for

creating a community garden (as opposed to leaving the space as it was). A garden suggested active use and community benefit, and would therefore make it harder for the council to build on in the future.

Beyond the reactive incentive for the gardens creation, further aims can be identified, relating to the role the space should play. Improving the appearance of the space appears to have been a key aim, with ornamental planting forming one of the main aspects of the project. The provision of a space for community use also seems to have been an aspiration, illustrated by the inclusion of benches, and unrealised plans for a barbeque, a "trike track" and a picnic table. There were also productive aims, with a small orchard area set behind a high trellis at the back of the site, and a compost area used by the nearby city farm.

5.3.4 Project decline

The process of decline is far harder to trace in retrospect than the creation of the space. Certainly by 2002, when the research commenced, activity on the site had ceased, and it had fallen into some disrepair.

It appears that activity declined on the site much earlier than this however. Applications and publicity in 1995 described the progress that had been made, and outlined plans for the future. Of these plans, very few had been realised, suggesting a decline in activity soon after the initial work had been undertaken.

One of the key volunteers who undertook a lot of the physical work of the initial project had died, and had since been commemorated with a bench in his honour. Three more group members, including the original campaign leader, had moved from the area, and a further member had become unable to undertake physical work due to age. The responsibility for the site was temporarily taken on by the co-ordinator of Heeley City Farm.

The group, by this time existing in name alone, received a small amount of funding in 2002 to support necessary maintenance work to the site and encourage a revival of community involvement. The funds were applied for by the co-ordinator of Heeley City Farm who had been involved in the initial project and lived close to the site. The environment team at Heeley Development Trust was employed to undertake the necessary work and basic maintenance by the Trust continued from this point, undertaken on an ad hoc basis.

5.3.5 Efforts to revive activity

Apparently unrelated to the funding bid made in 2002, in 2003 Heeley Development Trust was approached with two separate requests for support to re-establish community activity on the site. The first was received from a resident who lived opposite the space, and the second from a small group of children, a number of whom lived next to the space, who were keen to undertake work on the site as part of a school holiday project and had contacted the Trust via one of its youth workers.

Following an on-site meeting between a number of Trust staff and the group of children to discuss opportunities, a public meeting was proposed to establish local support for activity, and discuss ideas for the space. The children were encouraged to create flyers to advertise the meeting, supported by a Trust youth worker, which were delivered to nearby residents on the street.

The meeting was held in the garden (on a weekday evening) attracting ten local residents in addition to the children and staff from the Trust. While the children were keen to implement new features to the site, other residents were concerned with the maintenance of the site and problems encountered with vandalism, antisocial behaviour and dog-fouling. Although residents were keen for activity there was considerable expectation placed on the Trust to organise and facilitate this, which conflicted with concerns among

staff about the amount of time available to support such a project. Despite these concerns a workday was arranged to begin tidying the space with the intention that should interest be sufficient, a group could be established to organise more substantial changes to the space.

The work event was held the following month on a Saturday morning, publicised in a similar way to the meeting. Turnout among those who had attended the meeting was poor, limited to those who had originally contacted the Trust for support, while additional support was received from a woman and her son and a couple of local children. Although two further workdays were planned for the following months, other commitments among Trust staff necessitated the cancellation of the first, while poor weather prevented the second. Despite further discussion of the project within the Trust, limitations on the time available to organise further activity and support the re-establishment of the group resulted in a lack of further community action on the garden.

Photo 5.18: **Alexandra Road Community Garden** - image of the original project (approx 1994)

Photo 5.19: **Alexandra Road Community Garden** - the garden in decline (February 2003)

Photo 5.20: **Alexandra Road Community Garden** - on-site meeting to discuss the revival of the project (August 2003)

Photo 5.21: **Alexandra Road Community Garden** - the single workday (September 2003)

Photo 5.22: **Alexandra Road Community Garden** - the space in 2004

Photo 5.23: **Alexandra Road Community Garden** - maintenance undertaken by Heeley Development Trust (May 2004)

Chapter 6

Exploring Involvement

The preceding introductions have highlighted the considerable diversity possible among the popular definition of 'community gardens'. Projects varied in terms of their context, form and activities undertaken. These differences produced different demands and opportunities for involvement, both between projects and within projects over time.

Literature discussing or exploring community involvement in green spaces rarely explores the actual tasks undertaken, or describes in any detail the form of involvement being described. 'Community involvement' is regularly described without any further explanation or description, implying a homogeneous phenomenon, usually associated with positive outcomes. In these instances, an individual would be considered either 'involved' or 'not involved'. In some instances the consideration is even cruder, suggesting 'community involvement' as a process which inherently involves the whole "community". Where involvement is explored in more depth, the categorisations or levels defined within it vary considerably. Some community garden literature recognises a hierarchy among those involved. In some instances the distinction is between a decision-making role and a volunteering role (Glover, 2004). In others the distinction is between inactive and active membership of a group (Green Space, 2003). Ryan (1997) widens the scope to consider broader levels of engagement with a site, grouping individuals into volunteers, users and those within visual proximity.

As my time in the field progressed, it became clear that the very concept of "involvement" with a community garden project was a great deal more complex than most of these studies implied. Early drafts of the research proposal, informed by such work, spoke of 'participants' and 'non-participants' focussing on the tendency of existing research to overlook the

latter. Early conceptual models of the projects consisted of group members (the 'involved') and non-participant local residents or past-participants (the 'not involved'). Within a short space of time in the field it was clear this was a gross simplification and obscured the complexity of relationships with the projects that were being observed.

This chapter aims to explore the diversity encountered within the notion of 'involvement', by establishing the nature of tasks undertaken and the types of involvement an individual could have with a project.

Firstly, involvement is explored on a practical level, describing the tasks and activities that were required in the process of creating and managing a community garden. This provides an indication of the amount of work necessary to achieve and sustain a community garden. These task and practical activities have been termed 'types' of involvement.

Secondly, involvement is explored from the perspective of the individual, identifying a range of 'levels' at which people could be involved in a project. This categorisation provides a structure on which to base further examination of the phenomenon.

6.1 Types of involvement

Regular participation in the activities of each group enabled the identification of a number of types of involvement. While some of these activities and tasks were specific to a particular project, made necessary or possible by a specific element of the project, the majority were encountered across more than one project, and in many cases were undertaken at all.

The nature of the tasks undertaken would evolve as the projects developed, with some tasks distinctive of certain stages in the projects history while others represented a more permanent requirement. They also differed in the amount of effort required, both physically and psychologically.

The actions and tasks associated with the projects can be organised into three main categories:

- physical tasks,
- organisational tasks and
- contributory actions.

6.1.1 Physical tasks

While each project had its own aims and objectives, a fundamental characteristic shared by them all was a perceived need for physical change. The creation of a "community garden" from an existing piece of land, whether it be the overgrown dereliction of Carfield Farm, or the leftover grass plot at Alexandra Road, would require considerable work in order to achieve some form of shared vision. It would also require the undertaking of a range of physical management tasks in order to maintain its appearance, in common with any landscape project.

The nature of the physical tasks undertaken in the creation of the space would differ depending on the proposed design, but a number of commonly encountered tasks can be identified.

Clearance of the site was often the first task to be undertaken, usually incorporating the removal of any litter or fly-tipping, and the clearance of weeds and unwanted shrubs. At the more public sites (Kent Road and Alexandra Road) this task was comprehensive, clearing the entire site in preparation for comprehensive improvement. At Carfield Farm, the focus was on clearing spaces within the wider site, with a large part of the site left untouched, and was undertaken in stages as the project progressed. These clearance tasks required limited skill, but considerable effort, and tended to be the focus of initial volunteer-based event days.

Hard works to the site would also often be necessary, including earth works to create level ground, the installation of paths, the erection of fencing and trellising, the installation of furniture such as benches and the creation of raised beds. Many of these tasks would require the use of machinery, a degree of skill and a considerable amount of physical effort. While in some cases suitably skilled members of a group would undertake such tasks, it was more common for groups to rely on outside support to achieve them, either in the form of landscape staff from the Development Trust, volunteers from a local environment training organisation or external contractors.

There were also a number of specialist tasks required in some cases, such as the repairing of traditional stone walling and the creation of a willow hide at Carfield Farm. Again these tasks relied on the recruitment of external contractors, but tended to incorporate wider involvement based on the opportunity for learning about the particular skill or craft involved, inspiring a greater interest than the more general hard works.

Planting and cultivation tasks provided more manageable tasks that did not necessitate external support, and tended to provide the majority of physical work undertaken by participants in the early stages following clearance. The import of topsoil was sometimes used, requiring a considerable amount of physical effort to move and spread the material, while the later import of woodchip or mulch would create a similar task. In most cases, plants would be supplied from a nursery (sometimes the local City Farm) in pots and would require laying out and then planting. In some instances, the instant effect from this type of cultivation was supplemented with less immediate methods such as bulb planting (often undertaken with groups of children) or wildflower seeding. Any planting would usually be combined with the task of watering in order to establish the plants.

Other physical tasks encountered during the 'creation' stages of a project included painting work and the treatment of wooden fencing and furniture.

Further to the tasks involved with the physical creation of a community garden, were a series of maintenance tasks. The need for these to be undertaken would continue following the completion of any physical changes to the site, in order to sustain the desired appearance and function of the space. The frequency with which these tasks would have to be undertaken would vary but regular tasks included the mowing of grassed areas, the weeding or strimming of planted or cleared areas, and the clearance of litter from the site. Depending on the style of planting included in the space, a further series of management tasks would be necessary (or at least desirable) such as pruning, thinning and watering, along with the

replacement planting of any lost plants. Less regular tasks focussed on the repair and upkeep of hard element of the space, including the repair of damaged fencing or seating, repainting faded or damaged features, the relaying of loose surface material (such as crushed stone paths), and the removal of graffiti.

A further physical task encountered throughout the project and associated with on-site work, was the movement of tools and equipment between their place of storage and the space when activities were taking place. Equipment would vary depending on the tasks being undertaken, but would often include spades, gloves, plastic bags, litter pickers, wheelbarrows, strimmers and lawn mowers.

Some of the projects undertook public events on the site aside from the sessions for undertaking necessary works. These celebratory events (such as the opening celebration at Kent Road or the regular Apple and Raspberry Days at Carfield Farm) generated a series of distinct physical tasks. As well as prompting an urgency for some of the maintenance tasks outlined above (particularly litter picking and weeding), the events would usually entail the preparation (and later removal) of temporary elements on site, such as tables, chairs, gazebos and other equipment specific to the event (such as the apple press at Carfield Farm's Apple Day). They would also require attendance of some of the main group members to manage the event; welcoming visitors to the site and manning any stalls or activities that had been arranged.

A further discreet collection of physical tasks surrounded the creation of artistic or creative features for the site. These would often be undertaken away from the space and installed at a later date, but would provide an opportunity for involvement quite separate from the physical work on-site. Examples included the creation of mosaic tiles and bollards at a number of projects.

6.1.2 Organisational tasks

The second group of tasks and actions are characterised by a focus on the organisation of the project, incorporating tasks necessary to plan and prepare for physical work on site. These activities tend to be undertaken remotely from the site itself, and are more likely to be undertaken on an individual basis, in contrast to many of the physical activities described above.

The core group would in most cases hold meetings to discuss the progress of the project and plan future tasks and activities. These would usually be arranged in an evening and take place wither in one of the participants homes, or in a pre-booked community building. As well as attendance at the meeting, further related tasks were sometimes undertaken, most notably the preparation of agendas, the taking of minutes and the distribution of both these items.

Further administrative tasks were created by the need to communicate the progress and planned activities of the group to a wider audience. Methods of communication were diverse, but commonly included the need to write, design, print and distribute a range of paper-based promotional material such as flyers, newsletter and posters. Distribution would incorporate door-to-door delivery to local households, as well as the erection of posters in display cases (where present). In addition, some projects utilised the local media, preparing press releases for distribution to local newspapers or radio stations. In some cases, promotional material was also prepared for use at events, in the form of display boards illustrating themes such as the history of the site or project, future plans, or related subjects (such as illustrated apple species at Apple Day). These displays would require preparation by group members, and in some cases a degree of research on a particular topic.

At Carfield Farm, the establishment of a wider membership of subscribers created further organisational tasks. A database of members had to be maintained and updated each year, and annual subscriptions were requested, collected and recorded.

Each project relied to some degree on grant funding from a range of sources, creating a series of specific tasks. Making grant applications would often demand a considerable amount of effort. Research was usually required to identify grant schemes available, and which elements of the project each grant scheme might be able to fund. Quotes for any materials or services being incorporated would have to be sought, and practical information on the characteristics of the space (such as size) and the neighbourhood were often required and could necessitate further investigation. An individual would usually take responsibility for actually completing the application form, calling on the knowledge of efforts of others to gather any necessary information. Larger grant funding would sometimes involve arranged meetings with a representative from the organisation to discuss progress of the work and balance the accounts. Smaller grants would sometimes require an evaluation report to be provided, summarising the outcomes of the spend, which again would require preparation by an individual.

The financial aspect of each project that was inevitably necessary at some point, most notable during the 'creation' phase, would require accounting skills and a degree of financial management. The subsequent use of these funds through the procurement of goods and services, whether by phone, internet or in person, presented another task to be undertaken.

During the early stages of a project, a range of tasks based on the planning and design of the space were necessary. These included surveys of the space to establish the scope for the project, the development and presentation of ideas, and the detailing of specific features. A form of consultation with local residents was usually incorporated in the design process, and although a variety of techniques were used, this would usually entail the production, distribution and analysis of questionnaires, and sometimes the preparation and management of a display stall at a local event. Public meetings were also common early in the establishment of a project, requiring groups that otherwise met in each other homes to arrange the booking of a local community room and usually prepare refreshments (in

addition to the associated promotional tasks outlined above). In the process of developing ideas for a community space, a considerable amount of negotiation with the local authority (the landowner in all the cases studied) would inevitably be necessary. This would vary considerably depending on the context of the site, (examples include the negotiation of leases and the acquisition of a licence to allow planting in a former highway), but would often result in the need for repeated written correspondence, telephone conversations, and in some cases meetings with officials. In some projects, the initial permission to allow the project to go ahead required a degree of campaigning, with activities undertaken including the collection of petitions, organised marches and attendance at council planning meetings.

6.1.3 Contributory actions

These tasks are characterised not by physical effort or organisational activity, but by the provision of support through other means.

The most obvious example is the donation of funds towards a project, either in the form of a regular subscription organised by the group, or a one off donation at an event. In one case, the contribution of items for sale was also encouraged to support fund-raising efforts, attracting both unwanted objects and a selection of cakes and home-grown fruits. Contributions could also take the form of more practical items, such as hay for mulching, or an unwanted water butt.

The provision of space for storage was an important act for most groups, with the storage opportunities on site tending to be limited and insecure. In some cases individuals would agree to allow their back garden to be used to store materials prior to them being used on site, while others would store tools and equipment on a more regular basis. Another contribution of space was the offer among group members to host meetings in homes, although this would inevitably be associated with attendance at the meeting.

A final example of contributory actions was the provision of refreshments on a workday. While in some cases group members or volunteers would provide their own, there were occasions when local residents close to the site would emerge with pots of tea and biscuits as a contribution to the efforts that were being made.

6.2 Levels of involvement

Through both the observation of behaviour and accounts of past activity, a number of levels of involvement could be identified that have been broadly grouped into the following eight categories (including non-involvement).

- Leading figures
- Core group members
- Peripheral group members
- Volunteers
- Participants
- Supporters
- Event attendees
- Non-involvement

While the categories are not strictly hierarchical, they do follow a broad gradient from the most intensely involved to the least, and in light of this are henceforth known as 'levels' of involvement. The higher levels of involvement tended to be informed by characteristics of observed involvement, while some of the lower levels were incorporated as a greater understanding of the projects and their relationships with those experiencing them was developed. Some of the levels were familiar across all the cases, while others were specific to a particular project, determined by the activities undertaken or forms of organisation implemented.

This section outlines the characteristics of each identified level of involvement, exploring the typical characteristics of involvement at each level, and their role within the wider project. It also explores feelings among who did not express any level of involvement.

6.2.1 Leading figures

Each project contained at least one leading figure; individuals who showed particular enthusiasm and commitment to the project and who could be seen to lead the establishment or progress of a project. This person (or persons) would typically undertake a great deal of organisational work to enable meetings or site activities to go ahead, and would often be identifiable to other local residents as a figurehead of the project. In the context of Heeley, due to the presence of Heeley Development Trust, two distinct types of leading figures could be identified; volunteers and supporting staff.

Volunteer leading figures

Volunteer leading figures were local residents or other community members who played a central role in a project on a voluntary basis, motivated by personal feelings rather than through association with a support organisation. In most cases these would be individuals who had been instrumental in establishing the project in the first place and who had remained a key organisational figure within the group. At Kent Road for example, Kate described how her actions prompted the development of an active group.

> *…well I've always been keen on gardening and it's become like a real passion and so I started to…/well having only a small garden myself, wanting to expand, and you know I had my eye on this plot for quite a while [smiling] and started to think well actually this could be a really nice community garden. And I'd sort of talked about it to my husband and he'd said 'yeah, that's a good idea' but I didn't really know how to take it forward. But then we, erm, we get the Heeley Voice delivered, sort of every quarter, and it was one issue of the Heeley Voice a couple of years a go, you know, and it caught my eye, it said you know, if you've got any ideas sort of for your local area, erm, you know, give us a ring, so I did, I rang Heeley Development Trust and described sort of what my idea was and the person put me in touch with Peter, and the rest is history really [laughing].*
>
> Kate, Leading figure, Kent Road Ground Force

By envisioning the project personally, approaching an external organisation for support, then consulting with other residents through a public meeting to attract support and group members, a status as 'leader' within the group was defined right from the projects conception. Many other group members, and some less involved individuals, specifically associated Kate with the establishment of the project, and explicitly identified her as the "strongest" or most influential member.

I think the strongest kind of, participant really is Kate

Julia, group member, Kent Road Ground Force

Yeah, well erm... Kate who is our neighbour kind of on this side has always been, you know, very instrumental in pushing the project and was the driving force behind it.

Amanda, former volunteer, Kent Road Ground Force

A similar figure was described regarding the original creation of Alexandra Road Community Garden.

I. So what did the group itself do? What roles did the group take?

R. Well, for the group read Brenda. The bulk of it. Yeah? You get that in most groups where you have one lead player, who tends to...and it was Brenda's forte, yeah. She liked filling forms in and hassling people for bloody money and this, that and the other.

I. So she did a lot of the fundraising?

R. She did all the fundraising. She did all the fundraising. It's...you can't get away from it, it pinned from there.

Alan, former group member, Alexandra Road

R. ...I was a LITTLE bit involved in right at the beginning when Brenda was, Brenda who had the sort of concept, or people had the concept.

I. So could you tell me a bit about your involvement in the first place?

R. Oh only really talking to Brenda and her saying will you spend this time doing it? And I did a tiny bit and didn't do anymore.

Mary, former volunteer, Alexandra Road

The recollection of being asked to participate by Brenda highlights one of the fundamental characteristics of a leading figure; a commitment to developing and sustaining the project by enlisting the support and effort of other people.

While most leading figures that were encountered had adopted such a role at the conception of the project, there was one example of a leading figure emerging in the course of a project. At Carfield Farm an early leading figure, described as instrumental in the formation of the group, moved away from the area soon after the group was formally established. Although other leading figures appear to have been present, a newer member of the group began to undertake the administrative and organisational tasks and in time became a central leading figure for the project.

> *...I did circulate a petition and things, and became involved, in a minor way then, but there seemed to be a core group then of Joy and Owen, a woman called Gail who lived on Carfield Avenue, who seemed to be doing the organising of the thing, and I turned up at work mornings and I attended events as a sort of onlooker rather than a part of the core organising group. And then Gail left and Joy sort of – I knew Joy from before, we had a chat and she said 'would I like to become more involved?' and I thought at that point I had sort of space that I could do that. So I wasn't involved in the core organising of it from the start, but maybe, I suppose, Spring 2002 I became more involved. So, about nine months into the project I would say. And then I took on the role that I do now.*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

> *R. ....yeah in the meetings I do more now than I did.*
>
> *I. Was that a kind of gradual..?*
>
> *R. Yeah, I don't feel it was forced on me or anything, it was probably me just doing things. But no, it was gradual yeah. I mean I did the notes once or twice and then ended up doing the notes all the time.*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

The extent of tasks and responsibilities taken on by leading figures varied between groups, partly influenced by the nature of the project and its organisation, but also relating to the personal interests and skills of the individual and the extent to which paid leading figure (see below) supported the project.

At Carfield Farm, the responsibilities of Frances were extensive. During an interview she described some of the tasks undertaken.

> *Well, from an organisational point of view I tend to draw up – for the meetings and things – I draw up the agendas, and I take the notes....and, things like setting up the e-mail distribution list, which makes life easier*

> *doesn't it, if you can communicate with people like that, and I look after the subscription database, I do that, and I do the newsletters now as well. And I have done a funding application. And I'm also sort of custodian of the tools!*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

This description illustrates the strongly administrative focus of Frances's efforts, relating to experiences and skills developed in her working environment. The level of administrative tasks necessary was particularly high in this project due to its highly organised nature. While this was in part a product of the way it had evolved prior to Frances's involvement, it also appeared to be partly a result of the skills that she brought to the group. The value of these organisational skills to the running of the project was recognised by several other group members, reinforcing a status within the group as a leading figure.

> *R. You know it's all nice and straightforward what we're doing, so I like that.*
>
> *I. Who do you think…/it must take some organising somewhere to make it that straightforward?*
>
> *R. Yeah, well I think Frances' the mainstay [laughing] […] I think that does make it very easy for other people to slot in, because Frances obviously… you know she seems incredibly efficient and writes up the notes, emails them the next day [smiling] and you think, oh my goodness [laughing] that's really efficient!*
>
> Holly, group member, Carfield Farm

In addition to the administrative tasks described, Frances was also the most consistent attendee at meetings and one of the most consistent at work mornings. At meetings, although not officially chair Frances would usually assume this role, having written the agenda. She would also sent reminder emails to the group in advance of any workdays or meetings.

Another leading figure could be identified at Carfield Farm, who had been involved since the beginning of the project. Joy demonstrated characteristics of leading figures with respect to a sense of ownership for the project (in a caring sense rather than possessively), regular attendance at activities, a prominence in discussions at meetings and a conspicuous role in the stimulation of wider enthusiasm and involvement. However, involvement in

the administrative organisation was less evident. It emerged that a greater role in these tasks had been taken earlier in the project, and particularly after the departure of Gail, but during the course of the research such role was less obvious. While her status as a leading figure for the project was still evident among descriptions from other group members, and observations on site, it appeared that the surrender of practical organisational tasks had a significant impact on how she perceived her relationship with the project.

Joy. He's got five loads [of topsoil] ../was it five loads or four. He's got five loads like that to do, and if we're planting up all the things supposedly in October, we can't just rely on one more workday to do it.

I. I think that was mentioned at the time, but I can't remember what the outcome was.

Joy. Well August is nearly over. We're away form the 19th, that's over weekend.

I. Have you spoken to anyone about it?

Joy. No.

Owen. I mentioned it last workday. It occurred to me.

Joy. Well. I don't want.../I don't want to../Frances is the organiser. I've backed down. I stepped down. I don't want to push back in again.....I did used to have the role of secretary and then I handed that over to Frances 'cos, she was doing it anyway! You know, she came in and sort of...kind of started doing it, and I though well you know, 'you're enjoying it and you're good at doing it, get on with it' you know what I mean.

Joy (leading figure) and Owen (group member), Carfield Farm

At this point in time, Joy and Owen (a married couple) had officially resigned from their positions on the committee (joint secretary and chair respectively), as they were planning to move away from the area in the near future. The transference of secretarial and administrative tasks from Joy to Frances had been evident for some time however, and appeared to have predated the plans for moving. The description of Frances as "the organiser" illustrates the status and position created by the undertaking of administrative tasks, and their role in defining 'leading figures'.

It was notable in this instance that although holding the position of Chair, Owen did not demonstrate the qualities of a leading figure and did not play

an active role as chair during meetings. The role appeared to have been established to ensure eligibility for funding grants and was not pursued in any formal way other than an annual 'chairmans report' at the annual general meeting, where the progress of the group would be summarised.

While an organising role also contributed to the definition of Kate as a leading figure at Kent Road, the activities undertaken were less administrative in nature that those of Frances. Tasks such as the creation of publicity material, the production of minutes from the groups meetings and correspondence with the local council when required would tend to be undertaken by facilitating members from HDT. When undertaking such tasks for the group however, Kate would usually be involved by way of telephone conversations, to arrange details and discuss issues that may have arisen. This direct contact with HDT and an involvement in certain aspects of decision-making that were not shared with the wider group acted to strengthen her position as a leading figure among the group. By maintaining a position both with HDT and other members of the group, she acted as a primary route for the dissemination of information on the organisational progress of the group and the arrangement of site activity. This position contributed to the sustained association of Kate with the project among other group members and local residents.

As well as being more reliant on the administrative support of HDT, the way in which the Kent Road group was run was much less formal than that of Carfield Farm. Meetings and workdays did not follow a regular pattern of arrangement and in this context Kate played an important role in initiating activity at certain stages of the project. This appeared particularly important during periods of relative inactivity, at which point it would often be Kate who suggested the arrangement of a work morning or a meeting to revive the activity of the group.

Following the establishment of the group Kate, like Frances, was one of the most consistent attendees at meetings, being present at twenty-one of the

twenty-seven meetings for which attendance details were established (five of those not attended were finance specific meetings at which only the treasurer from the group was present). This high attendance level was achieved by virtue of the fact that Kate tended to be responsible for initiating and arranging meetings, meaning dates and times were organised to which she was able to attend. Even in cases where meetings were proposed and arranged by HDT staff, the details would still be arranged with Kate and then notified to other group members. During meetings, Kate would tend to play a central role, initiating discussions and making many of the suggestions of ideas for the site and activities. It also became clear that she gave the project a considerable amount of thought between meetings and activities, a characteristic far less evident among other group members.

In conversation, Kate played down the amount of effort contributed on site, but observations showed she was also one of the most consistent attendees at workdays. The level of practical activity undertaken on the site was however restricted in many instances by the need to supervise young children. This resulted in regular attendance (enabled by the proximity of the site to home) but in a less active capacity, often appearing intermittently during a work activity to observe and discuss progress and socialise with other group members present.

At Alexandra Road, although there were few people remaining who had been involved in the original project, it was clear from talking with those who had that Brenda, the instigator of the project, undertook the majority of the organisational work, arranging workdays, organising meetings, creating publicity and completing funding bids. Her ability to undertake such tasks was supported by an apparent familiarity with the community and voluntary sector (having close links with the nearby City Farm). In contrast to the projects which were supported by HDT, the burden of responsibility was far greater in this case, and this appears to have strengthened the degree to which Brenda was seen as the leading figure for the project among those involved.

Each leading figure clearly contributed a great deal of effort and thought into their respective projects, and showed a high level of commitment to the aims of developing a community garden. They also shared a strong personal connection to either the site or the aims of the project that could be considered a vested interest in the space. These interests varied between project, depending on the context of the projects conception, but each demonstrated a form of attachment to place that existed prior to their involvement. To explore in more detail the motivations and relationships with each space that resulted in such levels of commitment, there follows an examination of the leading figures within each project.

At Kent Road, the motivations for initiating the project were rooted in proximity and supported by personal circumstances and interests. Kate had lived one house away from the space for nearly nine years, and recalled it being "a real eyesore" prior to the project. This negative perception was directly linked to a view that the maintenance levels provided by the local authority were inappropriate and counterproductive.

> *...the council used to come once a year and they just used to strim it and then puff it with erm weedkillers and it ended up looking probably even worse.*
>
> Kate, leading figure, Kent Road, initial description of project

The proximity of the space, although not directly visible from her home, resulted in strong negative feelings created by the experience of having to regularly pass (or pass through) a space that was blighted by litter and poor maintenance. Descriptions of her perception and use of the space suggested a view of the space very much as a central feature within the local neighbourhood, and in some respects as an extension of her home space.

I. *So do you practically use the site?*

R. *Yeah, yeah I mean me personally I mean I do for taking the little one down to the child minders, erm and sometimes as a route for going to the local shops, erm and yeah, but you know, when the kids are playing there then I'm quite often out keeping an eye on the little ones so yeah...I end up...*

I. *I know, every time I come past you seem to be there!*

R. I know [laughing] I spend my life out on Kent Road railings!

Kate, leading figure, Kent Road

These quotes illustrate a strong personal connection with the space that was evident throughout my time in the field. When visiting the site incidentally for example, Kate became the person most likely to be present, usually nipping between her house and the railings at the top of the site to keep an eye on her children. Although such use was not described prior to the project taking place, it was evident that an association between home and the space preceded active involvement and gave rise to the strong negative feelings demonstrated (in contrast to feelings towards spaces of a similar condition more removed from the home environment).

This negative perception was coupled with a feeling that the space had the potential to fulfil a number of personal aspirations or needs. The space was described as a potential outlet for a personal interest in gardening which was otherwise limited by the size of rear yards.

...well I've always been keen on gardening and it's become like a real passion and so I started to.../well having only a small garden myself, wanting to expand, and you know I had my eye on this plot for quite a while [smiling]...

Kate, leading figure, Kent Road, initial description of project

Opportunities were also envisioned for a space in which her young children could play.

I. ...you've said that it was unsightly, so to improve the look of the area, but were there any other reasons for getting into it?

R. Erm, I suppose yeah the vested interest of you know, my kids at that point they weren't sort of old enough to be playing out but I knew that they would be and it's actually you know, quite good for burning off energy and getting fresh air is them running up and down the hill there.

Kate, leading figure, Kent Road

In this instance, not only is the motivation based on what *could* be achieved, it is also focussed on an anticipated need at some point on the future,

showing a considerable amount of foresight incorporated in the thought processes which lead to action.

It is also worth noting that the perceived lack of play space was despite the presence of a large traditional public park 250m from their home. Although there was some dissatisfaction with the condition of this park, it was still used by the family for more structured use (such as visits to the playground), and was therefore not considered unsuitable for use. Rather it seems that the close proximity of the Kent Road site provided a particular type of space for play, in which children could be informally supervised without the need for a specific trip out. This fulfilment of a specific need correlates to the place dependence dimension of attachment, although in this instance is developed through perceived opportunity rather than experience, as more commonly described.

The focus of Kate's early discussion on feelings of potential opportunity for the space poses an interesting situation with respect to the common concepts of place attachment. In most cases, attachment is discussed in relation to positive emotional connections with existing spaces or features, or memories and reflections of the past. In this instance however, the existing space inspired dissatisfaction, reflected in the negative retrospective descriptions offered, and was not the subject of positive reminiscence either. Despite these negative connotations, a considerable attachment to the space appeared to have developed, rooted in the close proximity of the space to the home environment and a vision of how the space could meet personal needs, whether play space for children, the fulfilment of personal horticultural aspirations or the visual improvement of the neighbourhood environment.

This 'aspirational' form of attachment would appear to be crucial among all leading figures, with a vision for creating a 'community space' central to the establishment of all community garden projects. Although the Kent Road project was unique among the three main sites as the only space to not be under threat, this form of attachment could be seen to play a significant role

among the other sites, albeit in a slightly different form. At the other sites, it was clear that the prime motivating factor for the establishment of a garden among their founding leading figures was the threat of development, rather than a need for a garden. It appeared however that although initiation of the projects may not have been inspired by an aspiration-based attachment, as the potential for creating a community garden as a means of preventing development emerged it strengthened attachment to the place, focusing emotions not only on the threat but on the aims and outcomes of a community garden project. So while attachment based on future potential was not necessarily present when action in relation to the space was first triggered, it became an important factor as the idea of a community garden developed. Attachment based on future potential would also prove valuable as a means of encouraging support and involvement from others, as the image or ideal of a community garden became the focus for the establishment of groups and their subsequent efforts.

It is notable that the space's wider context (within an area of dense terraced housing and acting as a route to the nearby primary school) while not appearing to be primary motivating factors, it did appear to provide an important sense of justification to pursue these personal aspirations as it meant that the potential personal benefits would also be shared by other local residents and community members and provided "a whole lot of reasons why it needed doing up" in addition to the personal "vested interests".

While the conception of the idea of a community garden was described in very personal terms, descriptions of the project itself were exclusively referenced in collective terms ("we"), and the involvement of local residents was highlighted as a priority from this initial conception.

I. *You said there that it would make a really good community garden. What do you see that as? What do you mean by community garden?*

R. *Well, when I say community garden, I mean I wasn't thinking of anything you know, particularly structured in terms of you know, vegetable growing or rotas and this, I suppose I just meant it as you*

> *know, from being an eyesore and a hazard to being an amenity that the kids can play on and people can feel involved in. And the idea always was that we'd get local people involved in actually you know, sort of doing the spade work and becoming involved in the design and the planting and so that's kind of the community aspect, yeah.*
>
> Kate, leading figure, Kent Road

There is an implication within this comment that the creation of a community garden would benefit residents and users of the neighbourhood more widely, and this was reflected in many discussions held during workdays. While this outcome may have been secondary to the more explicitly cited personal motivations, the role of the space as a 'community space' was also clearly considered important.

The motivations of leading figures within the Carfield Farm group differed considerably from those identified at Kent Road. Although the main initiating figure for the project was no longer a local resident, comments from other group members explicitly suggest that the prime motivating force for this individual was the threat of development on this area of the wider allotment site.

This threat was also a primary motivating factor for Frances and Joy, both of whom held allotments on the site (in close proximity to the Carfield Farm space) and also lived close to the proposed development. Joy (and her husband, Owen) became involved in the project at its conception, when the focus of activity was campaigning to save the site. Through their shared involvement in the project it could be considered that both acted as leading figures, but in observation it appeared (at least during the research period) that Joy played a more active role in the organisation of the project and encouragement of wider involvement, while Owen displayed characteristics more in common with that of core group members. The fact that Owen held the position of Chair of the group committee for several years illustrates that the formal structures that can be established within a group do not always reflect the actual hierarchy of involvement that takes place.

It became clear when talking with Joy and Owen that their motivations for becoming involved in the campaign, and later the project itself, were a response to the threat on a number of different levels.

> *I.* *So what was your concern at the time....what motivated you to do all that?*
>
> *Joy.* *A mixture of things like, a, I valued that bit of land and I saw that as the beginnings of a whole green belt that went right up to Norton. Er, and...*
>
> *Owen.* */We were aware of the wildlife on there for a couple of years. We knew about the foxes...They've been here for years and years.*
>
> *Joy.* */You know, sort of it being it was like...the foxes and the bats that fed on there. You know, just the owls and everything that were down there. Er, and er, just didn't want to see it being developed into a housing../also sort of, from the point of view of the whole community sort of, twenty extra houses and sort of, the number of people and kids and everything that that would bring in, into and area where the schools were really sort of top heavy. Erm, couldn't see it as being sort of anything that would be overall beneficial to the community.*
>
> Joy (leading figure) and Owen (leading figure), Carfield Farm

This response illustrates a combination of factors that the couple felt were threatened by the proposals; the wider area of green space of which the space is part, the ecological value of the space itself and the residential environment in which they lived.

While many group members and campaign supporters shared the first and last concerns, the intrinsic value of the space (in this case for wildlife) was less commonly raised. In most cases this was due to the lack of awareness surrounding the site as a result of its secluded location. In this instance however, the site itself was known to the couple as it was located on the same avenue of the allotments as their own plot. This awareness enabled a degree of direct attachment to the site that appeared to be fostered largely by the perceived value it provided for wildlife, and the personal values that the couple shared in this respect. It is notable that their relationship with the site was not based on use or visual appreciation however, in contrast to the relationships observed at other projects. Instead the attachment appeared

more reliant on the personal values and principles held, particularly regarding the preservation of natural space and wildlife.

This specific attachment was then supported by a wider attachment to the surrounding landscape of allotments and woodland, perceived as an important buffer of green space that halted the spread of the urban landscape. This perception of an 'edge' to built development appears to have heightened the significance of the particular threat to the Carfield Farm space, which despite its small scale, was seen as symbolic of wider threats to this valued stretch of green space. This wider attachment was expressed among many other group members and supporters of the project, while direct relationships with the space (at least prior to involvement) were notably lacking. This highlights a distinctive relationship between attachment and involvement that was not evident in the more visible community garden settings. It appeared that attachments to the surrounding green valley and the allotment site were able to invoke action towards a space connected to it, without any specific experience of, or direct attachment to, the space itself.

In the case of Frances, the threat appeared to have been more direct, combining the prospect of increased traffic past her home with a rumoured threat that her own allotment plot could be lost through the need for increased parking to service the development.

> *R. I mean it started with sort of rumblings in the neighbourhood that they were going to take this piece of land over to build on, which immediately raised my hackles, because, I had also heard – and it was only rumour again – but the fact that they wanted to put twenty houses on the site, and that there wouldn't be enough parking there. And because my allotment has road access – it's the second allotment on the lane at the top of the road here –*
>
> *I. Yep, I had a walk up there this morning..*
>
> *R. Rumour had it that men had been seen with clipboards and suits, that they were going to take the first three allotments to provide parking for this development. I didn't want the development, I didn't think it was appropriate, and I certainly didn't want them to whip my allotment, so that was my first bit of involvement really.*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm, initial description of project

Because her allotment was located on the opposite side of the Carfield Farm site to Joy and Owen's, her relationship with the space prior to involvement in the project was notably different, experienced only as a dense wooded edge that was passed on the way into the allotment site at its lower entrance [see photo 5.17]. This was reflected by very little reference to the space itself during discussions about motivations. It appeared therefore that motivation to become involved was not inspired by any form of attachment to the site itself, but rather the wider implications of the proposed development on her own personal allotment, towards which attachment was far more obvious.

This motivation prompted Frances to support the initial campaign by collecting petitions and occasionally volunteering on site, but explained that her role at this time was "as a sort of onlooker rather than part of the main organising group". The presence of existing leading figures appeared to provide a situation in which Frances was able to participate in a less active way, despite strong feelings towards the project, as the organisation was taken care of. Frances admitted that this was a situation with which she was quite happy, due to the nature of her job.

> *I mean I did think I only wanted to get involved because I wanted to get my hands messy, because I was trying to steer away from what I do for paid work, because you know, it all gets the some otherwise. And I did tell myself because you know, it all gets the some otherwise. And I did tell myself that I really only wanted to be involved in sort of work mornings and all that side of things, but gradually you start doing things…*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm, initial description of project

Subsequent discussion revealed that this gradual increase in involvement was in fact prompted more specifically by the loss of the main organiser of the group, and a direct enquiry from Joy as to whether she would be willing to join the group. At this point Frances began to undertake administrative tasks as part of the core group, and appeared to have gradually adopted responsibility for many of the organisational aspects of the project largely by virtue of the experience she had in this area (and in spite of the initial reluctance described). In this instance therefore, a form of latent support for the project appears to have been present while the group were being

organised by someone else, which only realised its full potential for inspiring involvement when a situation arose that required it.

The reluctance expressed in the above quote, although not sufficient to prevent the adoption of such responsibilities (due largely to the strong support felt towards the project), did result in frustration in later years, resulting in a conscious effort to spread the duties she had 'acquired' more evenly among the group.

For Joy and Owen the key motivating factors appeared to have remained the same throughout the project, based on an existing relationship with the site. Frances meanwhile, described a change in her motivations which coincided with her increase in involvement.

> *... I was still aware that we need to use that site, you know, I think if it lapses, there will be another case of the council coming in and saying it's a prime spot of land. But that's secondary now I think, it's because of the sort of project it is, the sort of things people around here can get involved in that I'm more interested in now.*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

The group achieved tenancy shortly after Frances joined the group, but activities on the site had commenced prior to this, including initial clearing work and a number of community events. By becoming more involved in the organisation of this aspect of the project it appeared that Frances developed a new relationship with the project and with the site itself, based less on the threat that had initially motivated her, and more on the positive outcomes of the project that were beginning to emerge. While Joy and Owen seemed to continue to view community use of the site largely as a means to protecting it, Frances was motivated by this community activity as an end in itself. Indeed the process of encouraging involvement and use of the site produced far more narrative during the interview than feelings towards the space itself. While this may in part be due to methodological factors (notably the difficulties found more generally in eliciting feelings towards specific spaces), it suggests that the primary 'attachment' encouraging involvement was not

towards the space itself, but rather the communal activities within it that the project enabled.

While the nature of the relationship between person and place clearly differed between leading figures, all shared a strong association with (or 'vested interest' in) the aims of the project. This strength of feelings, whether based in protectionism or aspiration for improvement, was fundamental to the commitment displayed by these individuals.

Another characteristic that leading figures shared was an existing position within local social networks. Kate for example had strong connections with the nearby school through her children attending and therefore had existing connections with other parents. Brenda at Alexandra Road was, at the time of the project, the partner of another local community leader (who was instrumental in the establishment of both the local City Farm and Heeley Development Trust), and appears to have been well known among local residents. Both Frances and Joy (and Gail originally) were active allotment holders and part of what was described by several people as 'the allotment community'. Interestingly, Frances and Joy also both had older children and had in the past been involved in supporting nursery and primary school activities, providing a second source of social networks.

This position within existing networks appears to have had a number of important effects. Firstly, it provided the means by which to encourage support for the project among a group of people already known. A large proportion of early core group members were found to have been existing friends of the leading figure at the time and many recollected being asked to help out when the project was initiated. Although existing networks do not account for all the group members (some of whom were attracted by promotional material without existing social connections), without this connection it appears that the establishment of a group would have been far more difficult. This position within existing networks also provided a means of communicating information throughout the project, particularly within less

formally organised groups. At Kent Road, the advertisement of workdays and meetings was unpredictable, undertaken on an ad hoc basis, and in this context, word-of-mouth communication through existing networks proved to be an important was of disseminating information.

> *I.* *How do you tend to find out about the meetings then, how do they get…?*
>
> *R.* *Kate. I've had…/because Kate goes to school, takes all mine to school…I'll see her and she will grab and say, oh so and so…*
>
> Tina, group member. Kent Road

Secondly, it appeared to provide a degree of confidence to take the lead in a project that was intended to be for 'community' (rather than personal) benefit. By being part of an existing locally-based social network, it appears that a sense of accountability was provided that would not necessarily have been present in someone who remained isolated from neighbours and community groups. Thirdly, by already playing an active role in community life (in whatever context this was undertaken), the leading figure appeared to be recognisable to other local residents and community members. This recognition was furthered by their role within the group, particularly where spaces and the activities undertaken were publicly visible, creating a responsibility beyond the group as the first point of contact for comments or criticisms, effectively acting as a 'spokesperson' for the group.

> *R.* *…I mean there's a couple of curtain twitchers at the top of the road who don't miss an opportunity to tell me, as though it's solely my responsibility, that kids are going through the site and you know, what am I going to do to stop it, so there is a conflict here.*
>
> *I.* *Right. So you take quite a – or you're seen as a kind of person to aim that at?*
>
> *R.* *Yeah. Yeah.*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

This wider association of individuals with the project further substantiates their position as leading figures of the group. In some cases this was taken further to suggest a form of 'ownership' of the project. A letter from a local Tenants and Residents Association to Kent Road Ground Force, sharing

their appreciation for their efforts was sent to Kate and thanked "you and your group". Similar comments were encountered in informal conversations with local residents about the project. While this was never implied with any form of resentment or dissatisfaction, the perception of the project as being so strongly association to one person does raise important implications for both the accountability and longevity of the project.

With regards to accountability, such strong association could be seen to conflict with the notion of a 'community project', particularly where a status of 'ownership' by a leading figure enabled decisions to be made without wider consideration. In practice however, such autocracy was strongly resisted by volunteering leading figures, who tended to hold strong values regarding the involvement of others in the decision making process, and made concerted efforts to enable discussion and debate (including meetings, public consultations and informal discussion during activities). While some decisions and priorities would invariably still fall to leading figures to determine, no significant evidence of dissatisfaction or resentment towards this position of influence were encountered. Indeed most individuals, when discussing a leading figure, expressed admiration and gratefulness that someone was willing to take on the considerable responsibilities of such a role, which enabled to project to succeed. The fact that community garden projects are concerned with the improvement (and sometimes preservation) of green space, appeared to meet widespread approval from local residents. Where elements of conflict did arise (such as proposals for seating close to property), these were usually resolved through discussion at meetings (sometimes specifically convened). It could be argued that the fact that leading figures for these projects lived in such close proximity to the sites (and openly publicised their contact details through newsletters or notice boards), they actually constituted a far more accessible accountable body than public green space improvements undertaken under a democratic but remote local authority. It was certainly evident that even among people who held a particularly strong association between leading figures and their

project, the spaces were still perceived as 'community' spaces, recognising the wider efforts that contributed to their creation.

As well as the implications for accountability, the perception of a project being 'owned' by a leading figure also has implications for the long-term prospects of a community garden. While strong leadership appears to be essential for the creation and development of a project, if a reliance on this leadership is developed (as appeared to be the case at several of the projects studied), then the continuation of community activity on the site could be severely undermined by any change in the ability or willingness of the leading figure to continue. Among the projects studied, withdrawal from a position as leading figure occurred for two main reasons. The first, and most common, was as a result of moving house. Leading figures at both Alexandra Road and Carfield Farm left their groups as a result of moving home. The degree of severance from the group would vary between cases. At Carfield Farm, despite a move of several hundred miles one couple who had played a leading role in the project continued to keep in touch with the group. To maintain connections with the project (as opposed to simply individual friends) is a powerful illustration of the strength of attachment that can be developed with a project and its members. Their absence was compensated by the presence of other leading figures within the group. At Alexandra Road meanwhile, the absence of the sole leading figure of the group appeared to have marked the end of activity on the site. Although the original core group had already declined, the remaining leading figure had continued to make efforts to encourage new involvement. Following her departure from the road however, the site remained dormant, maintained at a basic level by one remaining member until his subsequent departure from the area shortly after. The failure of the garden to attract renewed involvement, despite a number of requests among local residents, further highlights the importance of an local figure willing to take the responsibility for encouraging and organising involvement.

Supporting leading figures

In Heeley, the presence of a Development Trust with specific expertise in the creation and management of green space and a clear objective to improve the environment in the area, provided a distinctive context for the projects studied. The Trust performed a function as a facilitator for local projects, supporting and encouraging local action to improve the environment, and all the community garden projects encountered in the area had some connection to the Trust.

In most cases the member of staff involved in projects was Peter, the manager of the Trust's Environment Team and a trained landscape architect.

At Kent Road further support was provided by a second office-based member of the team, who assisted the group during the organisation of their second mosaic project and opening event. In addition, the park management team would at times be involved to support the project in a physical capacity, sometimes at organised workdays and at other times independently of group activity (to achieve a particular task or undertake necessary maintenance work).

At Kent Road, Carfield Farm and Albert Road at least one member of staff worked closely with the group throughout its progress. At Alexandra Road the Trust were involved in efforts to revive community involvement during the research period, although there had been no involvement in the original project (which predated the establishment of the Trust). Each of these relationships was slightly different, and the amount and type of support provided varied according to the context, but in all instances members of Heeley Development Trust acted, and were perceived as, leading figures.

The presence of Trust employees as leading figures among the projects is an unusual situation in the context of wider community gardening projects. Although other projects may receive support and guidance from external

organisations (such as Groundwork or BTCV), it seems rare for a support organisation to be either locally-based or involved on such a regular basis. In some cases this resulted in the staff being considered by the rest of the group as a group member rather than an external body, blurring the distinction between paid and volunteer roles.

> *... I presume Peter is paid by Heeley Development Trust, and this is one of his kind of pieces of work getting involved in this, or it may be just 'cos he lives in the area, I'm not quite sure, its probably a bit of a mixture.*
>
> Wendy, group member. Carfield Farm

This distinction appeared most blurred at Carfield Farm. In this context, not only was the group strongly lead and well organised by volunteer leading figures, but a number of group members had particularly relevant skills (including a number of allotment holders with horticultural skill, keen environmentalists, and members with considerable experience in the voluntary and community sectors). At Kent Road, the position of Peter as a supporting figure rather than a group member was more explicit, and a greater feeling of dependence was expressed. In this instance, Peter had been instrumental in the establishment of the group, and had retained a position of authority among less formal group that emerged whose members lacked some of the skills and experiences found among Carfield Farm members.

In other cases, HDT staff were the sole leading figures for a projects, in cases where wider involvement failed to materialise. At Alexandra Road the initiation of HDT involvement took a similar form to Kent Road, with local residents approaching the organisation for support (in this case via the youth team), but despite a public meeting and a workday on the site, a volunteer leading figure did not emerge. This lack of leadership from within the immediate neighbourhood resulted in a lack of pressure towards the Trust to continue supporting activity. At a time when available resources were limited (due to both existing project activity elsewhere and a increasing need for staff to invest time in efforts to secure the organisations future), this lack of

pressure appears to have contributed to the failure to establish a more sustained programme of activity.

The absence of a volunteer leading figure was also a problem at Denmark Road, one of the other projects in the area. In this instance funds had been acquired by a local youth group, supported by a Trust youth worker, to undertake work on a space. Although the youth group dissipated shortly after, the availability of funding encouraged the Trust to continue the project. Local interest in the opportunities for involvement that were provided (advertised workdays) was extremely limited and the project was carried out under the direction of the Trust with limited local involvement. The resulting 'community garden' received some positive responses from local residents (within the survey), but enthusiasm was far less obvious than for some of the other projects studied. Comments from several local residents expressed a strongly pessimistic view that the space would be vandalised by local youths and therefore "wasn't worth doing" in the first place. These expectations were unfortunately realised and the site suffered considerable damage following its completion, including damage to the play equipment that had been installed and the theft of much of the planting.

The difference in local response towards the theft of plants on Kent Road (a leaflet campaign organised by group members) and the theft of plants from Denmark Road (no action and a attitude of inevitability among some residents spoken with) supports the argument that local involvement can encourage pro-active behaviour to support the management of a space. While it is tempting to attribute the difference in response to the relative degrees of involvement achieved, it is important to recognise that although there did appear to be a relationship between the two, this was not necessarily causal. It may be that the factors found to influence those involved in the Kent Road site (such as environmental principles and existing community links) also influenced the pro-active response to the theft, and that these factors were simply not present to the same extent in the Denmark Road area. The much lower response rate to the distributed questionnaire

around Denmark Road suggested a more general apathy towards green space and would appear to support such a suggestion.

The Denmark Road and Alexandra Road experiences highlight the difficulties and problems that can be encountered if undertaking 'community garden' projects without a local volunteer leading figure. Although forms of consultation were undertaken at both sites and efforts to encourage active involvement attracted a handful of volunteers to initial work events, the absence of a strong leading figure among local residents meant there was limited focus for the support of the HDT other than the site itself. Efforts to encourage involvement were limited to general publicity (such as leaflets and posters) in the absence of any direct access to social networks that appeared to have been so valuable in encouraging involvement at other projects.

Whether perceived as 'just another member' or as a distinctive support figure, leading figures from HDT would undertake a considerable amount of organisational tasks and had a high degree of influence over the development of the projects. Although the role differed between groups, a number of common responsibilities could be identified.

When involved in the early stages of a project, HDT staff acted as a source of information and advice to support the establishment of a group. The focus of community garden projects on the physical alteration of a public space demands a breadth of knowledge or understanding across a number of different subjects, including landscape design and management, public consultation, funding applications and financial management; skills that were not always present among group members. Early tasks tended to include the initial investigation of site ownership and any necessary correspondence with the local authority (the land owner in all cases studied). The design of the spaces would usually be initiated as a consultative process, whether through surveys of wider opinion, or a collective approach among group members, but the detailing of any design work would normally fall to Peter, due to his

experience and status as a trained landscape architect, at which point a considerable degree of decision-making could still be required.

A high degree of involvement in the arrangement of, and preparation for, meetings was also common and while a voluntary leading figure (where present) tended to have an important role in raising awareness and increasing attendance, documentary evidence and observation suggests that paid leading figures tended to undertake the majority of preparation work (including publicity material and agendas) and tended to lead such meetings in all but the most organised of groups.

Assistance with funding bids was evidenced among all groups, ranging from requested advice on specific issues (such as costings) to the identification and completion of entire funding bids on a groups behalf. Subsequent to any successful bids, the Trust also had a strong role in the management of funds. For groups without a bank account, the Trust would hold the money on their behalf. In the case of Kent Road, although a Treasurer for the group had been nominated, his role consisted largely of attendance at meetings with the funders, while the management of funds (and most spending) was undertaken by Trust staff, guided by the decisions of the group where appropriate. In the case of Denmark Road, the funding was both managed and spent with no direct involvement of local residents beyond consultation exercises. Even in groups with an active treasurer and independent bank account, a considerable involvement in the procurement of goods and services was observed, usually directed by the decisions of the group at meetings.

The form of support from HDT that was most noted among group members, was the practical support provided in the creation and management of the garden itself. Among all but one of the groups, the physical development of the garden creation was managed by Peter, manager of the Environment Team at the Trust. Group members would look to him for direction on the tasks that needed doing, the order in which they needed to be done, and the

methods and techniques necessary to achieve them. The exception to this observation was Carfield Farm, where the horticultural expertise among the group (many of them keen allotment holders) enabled them to manage the project with less direction.

Although the date of work activities would often be decided among group members, the nature of the activities to be undertaken would usually be decided by Peter. In addition, HDT would also provide the majority of necessary tools for the workdays, commonly including gloves, litter pickers and bags for clearance days, and spades and forks for weeding or planting. The main exception to this pattern was Carfield Farm, where the high levels of horticultural and ecological experience among some of the allotment-holding members enabled them to direct the project with less support.

Among all forms of support provided by HDT to groups, two approaches could be identified. The first approach was to support group members in order to enable them to achieve a required task, usually through the transference of knowledge or skills. The second approach was to support the goals of the project by undertaking tasks on their behalf.

At Kent Road for example, when undertaking the initial consultation with local residents, two members of the group spent a number of days in the HDT offices learning how to use questionnaire analysis software and creating a presentation of the results. Other examples of this approach to support included assistance with the completion of application forms, practical advice regarding design issues and guidance on the use of tools and general landscape management tasks. In these cases, it could be argued that skills were developed among group members that increased their ability to undertake a similar tasks again with less support. It is worth noting however that the value of the skill transference varied among contexts. Guidance on the use of tools on site for example, proved a good example of a learning process that resulted in more confident participation at work mornings. Meanwhile, in the case of the survey analysis guidance these skills were not

used again by these individuals (at least within the context of the project), and did not emerge as a particularly valued aspect of their involvement during discussion. This may have been due to the more specialised nature of the task (that was not required by the project so frequently), and also to the fact that to use these skills still relied on access to computers and resources from HDT as opposed to something that could be undertaken independently by the group.

In many instances, the role of leading figures from HDT would become more direct, and the provision of support was focussed on the achievement of tasks, rather than the development of skills. In these cases staff from the Trust would take on a responsibility that the group would otherwise need to have undertaken to achieve an established goal. Examples of this approach include the creation of publicity material for a group, the completion of funding applications on behalf of a group and the arrangement for external labour to undertake physical tasks on site.

In a number of cases, the task-based approach appeared necessary in order to realise a task and progress the project. For example, at Carfield Farm, it was decided that a number of the built structures that the group had proposed were beyond the capabilities of the group to undertake, due for example to specialist skills or heavy lifting. In these cases it was often suggested that external labour be brought in, and the responsibility for arranging this would almost always fall on Peter. In a number of cases, the labour was arranged and works undertaken, with little further contact with the group. On a number of work mornings at Carfield Farm, expressions of surprise were evident as group members reached the site to find a new section of path laid or a new bench installed. In some cases the response was exclusively positive, inspired by the progress that was clearly visible. In others, there was a degree of dissatisfaction evident, where the work had not been done in the way, or to the quality, that had been anticipated. During the creation of a herb-bed area at Carfield Farm for example, a small sub-group had been established to develop the idea, and as well as deciding on plants

to fill the beds, some discussion had taken place regarding the construction of the beds themselves. Early descriptions of the beds depicted sturdy railway sleepers providing a solid edge suitable for sitting on and appreciating the plants within. The development of the design for the area was then left largely to Peter, who due to the difficulties entailed in getting railway sleepers on to the site in the quantities required found it necessary to modify the design. The sub-group met to discuss planting shortly after construction of the beds had commenced on site (by a local environmental training organisation), and two of the group had visited the site to view progress. The response, in the absence of Peter to explain the alterations, was one of disappointment and frustration that the beds did not meet the expectations that the group appeared to share. One member even returned home to find original sketches of the beds to highlight the disparities. Despite a strong initial reaction, by the time of the next meeting, when those present had declared they would raise the matter, the strength of feeling appeared to have subsided, and when briefly raised the group appeared to be quickly satisfied when it was explained that there was a practical reason for the alteration. In the longer term, no further comments on the form of the beds was encountered, and once planted up there seemed to be little effect on the overall satisfaction of the group with the outcome.

The strength of feeling initially voiced regarding the appearance of an unexpected feature in the garden suggests a strong sense of attachment to the space. This attachment would appear to be based not only on existing features of the site or achievements already made, but also on personal visualisations of the finished project, or aspects of it. In this respect, the alteration of plans or designs without prior discussion with group members, can provoke negative responses and potentially reduce feelings of positive attachment. Although in this instance the negative response was short lived, it seems likely that a series of such incidents (whereby the facilitating organisation takes decisions without the involvement of the group) could inspire feelings of exclusion from the decision making process and seriously

undermine those aspects of attachment that are related to the feeling of being involved.

6.2.2 Core group members

At most projects a group of individuals could be identified as a 'core group'. These individuals played an organisational role in their project, characterised by attendance at meetings as well as on-site work events. These were people who were willing to take on tasks outside the organised activities, and who played an active role in decision-making within the group, typically being responsible for the development of project ideas, fundraising efforts and the organisation of activities and events. In some cases their roles were formalised, with positions such as treasurer or secretary (where not held by a leading figure), but core members could also be identified in a less formal capacity if they regularly attended meetings or played a particular role within the group.

In some instances the core group was well defined, and individuals belonging to this level could be easily identified, while at others the distinction was less clear. At Carfield Farm, a formal committee had been established, with members recruited (or re-affirmed) at an annual general meeting. Members of this committee would attend the regular meetings and take part in work mornings on site. This formality of process and regularity of activity ensured that the core group remained clearly defined. Another reason for its clarity however was the lack of wider physical involvement, which meant that the 'committee' that met to discuss the project were synonymous with those who turned up to help on group mornings.

At Kent Road, the definition was less clear. Although a "committee" or "core group" was referred to, no formal appointment of a committee was established and attendance at meetings was less consistent. This fluidity of involvement made it much harder to define the group in clear terms, and relied as much on personal definitions of being a core member as much as observations of behaviour. Differences in the descriptions of the core group illustrate this situation, with estimates of the group's size varying from *"a*

constant maybe four or five people" to *"I would say about ten…maybe fifteen with the kids"*.

Differences in the perception of the core group were also evident among less or non-involved individuals. In some cases core members were associated with the project by local residents who had observed the activities of the group, through recognition at workdays or public events.

> *I. Who would you see as the core members of the group? I mean you've mentioned a few names already.*
>
> *R. Who I would… well certainly Kate er… and Sophie. Erm… Peter's obviously been erm you know sort of central because he's been kind of around. And then there's faces that you see that you don't necessarily know.*
>
> Amanda, former volunteer, Kent Road

In other cases, there was a lack of awareness that an organised group even existed, despite personal involvement with the activities of the project. When explaining the organisation of the Kent Road group to Naomi at the end of her interview, she revealed that although she'd volunteered at several events she had not been aware there was a committee organising the project.

The lack of awareness that a organising group exists clearly has implications for the likelihood of people to get involved at this level and suggests a need for groups to promote themselves more clearly if they aspire to encouraging wider involvement.

Decision making

The main defining character of core group members was a degree of recurring engagement with the decision-making processes of the group. This would usually take the form of organised meetings, at which issues such as the design of the space, features to be included, the arrangement of future work activities and financial matters of the group would be discussed.

> *The committee is…/ we have really good conversations about direction, about activities, what monies to spend and how to spend them, and come to agreements. We don't necessarily personally agree with everything we do, as an individual I don't personally agree that we do certain things, erm…but on the other hand you can see other people's point of view.*
>
> George, group member, Carfield Farm

These meetings took place either in group member's homes (often on a rotational basis) or in hired community rooms (usually subject to cost and availability of funds). It is important to note that while some of the main decisions were discussed and decided at 'formal' meetings, these were not the only forum for discussing the development of the project, and wider discussion was often evidenced at work activities for example. This openness to comment from individuals outside the group was stressed by a number of group members across the cases, with wider input implied as important to retaining the 'community' focus' of the project when being directed by only a small group.

> *I suppose being the core group – or I see myself as that now – some of the fundamental decisions are made at the meetings, which tend to be attended by the same people. But then, you know, if we make fundamental decisions, there can still be other decisions made on the day, you know, the ground force days or whatever.*
>
> Julia, group member, Kent Road

In this instance, a perceived need for wider accountability appears to have stimulated the further explanation, but the comment highlights the central decision-making role that distinguishes core members.

Becoming a member

In each case the core group associated with a project was established in the early stages of the project, before the planning and development of the community garden had commenced. This was usually the result of a public meeting, held to establish local support, at which volunteers willing to play an active role in the proposed project were identified.

So they held a meeting and went along, and several of us said, well, they asked 'do you want to be in the committee' and we said 'yes' and so formed a brief committee, a small committee, there were about six or seven of us…

Patrick, group member, Kent Road

In the same way that leading figures were often part of existing local social networks or communities of interests, core group members would often be part of these same networks, made aware of the project (and encouraged to become involved) through personal associations.

R. it must have been about early 2001-ish, Kate, who we've known for some time, planted the idea of wanting to turn it into a garden. And it sounded a really er good thing to do, a fantastic… a) a fantastic use of space and doing something and b) a really good way of getting people together to do something rather than just talk about it, actually do it.

I. Yeah.

R. So we got involved from an early stage. We had an initial meeting at Carfield er… just to talk about the idea with the community. And asked for volunteers who wanted to be kind of part and form a loose committee.

Dominic, founding group member, Kent Road

These networks appeared to play an important role in the establishment of a group, enabling the dissemination of information among friends and neighbours and strengthening the effectiveness of efforts to encourage involvement. In contrast, at Alexandra Road although there appeared to be a number of factors that contributed to the failure to re-establish a group it was notable that there was very limited recognition between individuals who attended the public meeting, and no evidence of existing social connections. Without these connections, the reliance on facilitating staff from HDT was far greater, as there were limited means of communication between interested parties, and the progression to an active group that was described elsewhere did not occur.

Another factor absent in the Alexandra Road scenario was a strong shared cause. Although all those present at the meeting were in favour of undertaking a 'sprucing up' of the community garden, the incentive to do so was of limited strength due to the relatively acceptable condition of the

garden and the absence of any threat to the space. In contrast, at Carfield Farm the strength of feeling towards the proposed development of the space encouraged the establishment of a group which combined members of existing social networks with individuals who felt strongly about the cause due to their affiliation to the wider allotment site.

At both projects that were actively undertaking work during the research period, a number of new or more recent core members could be identified who had joined an already established group. While later additions to the group would tend to attend meetings and activities at a similar regularity as original members, there was some evidence of a distinction remaining, with reference to "founding members"

> *How I got involved, erm, I'm trying to recall now, will have been er....I think the project had already got up and running, I think Kate and Patrick and some of the founder members, and I wasn't one of the founder members, but I, I noticed the posters that the first lot had put in...*
>
> Julia, group member, Kent Road

> *I was right at the beginning. One of the founder members should I say.*
>
> Joy, group member (and leading figure), Carfield Farm

This persisting distinction between founding members and newer members tended to imply a stronger connection to the project among the former, and a degree of hierarchy which although not explicitly referenced, could be observed during meetings and workdays where more recent members would be hesitant in suggesting new ideas or questioning the views of long-standing members. Such tentativeness would often wear off over time, and was also influenced by levels of knowledge and experience in the topic being discussed, but highlights a perceived hierarchy that many leading figures and members were openly keen to avoid. Given many of the newer members had existing social connections to existing group members, it also suggests that such feelings may be even stronger among those without such social links who may otherwise wish to become involved but perceive an well-established group into which they do not feel comfortable to intrude. It is important to note that such feelings were not expressed among any of the less involved

individuals spoken with, but they were referred among some group members as a concern.

> *Possibly because people think there's an existing, you know, and existing group and it would be hard for them to come at this stage. Or like anything really, when you think that…you know, something's been going on for a certain amount of time you kind of, you don't see yourself as becoming part of that group at a later stage, and all the kind of, the barriers.*
>
> Julia, group member (joined shortly after group established), Kent Road

Differences among members

Within a group there were differences in the frequency and type of involvement core members would have, and a number of more active individuals would sometimes be identified. These more active members could sometimes be described as leading figures but in other instances the contribution was more specific to one task (such as funding), and while crucial to the development of the project, did not necessarily incorporate the leadership or rallying qualities found among leading figures.

While not necessarily constituting leading figures, these individuals would often be seen by other group members as having a particularly valuable role within the group's efforts.

> *R. I mean, I suppose I see two sort of fundamental – no there's about three really – Kate and Patrick, and, oh I can't remember his name, but the guy that did a lot of fund, of writing off letters, erm…[name], is it not [name]? Marcus.*
>
> *I. Marcus.*
>
> *R. Marcus, yeah. I see them sort of as the ones that have had the…you know, most active. 'cos I know Patrick's done lots of stuff, and you know,, 'cos he doesn't actually get involved in the physical stuff, but he's done a lot of paperwork. And like I say Kate's got, is really passionate, and used her links with the school and everything, and Marcus obviously used his skills.*
>
> Julia, group member, Kent Road

It is notable that those identified as particularly influential in a project would usually correspond to the founding members described above, and although

their position is defined in this case by roles and responsibilities, there was often a strong relationship between these and the length of time an individual had been part of a project. This was partly due to the establishment of roles at the beginning of the project, which required the 'stepping down' of an original member before a newer member could take it on.

Other members, although defining themselves as core members and attending at least a couple of meetings, tended to have a much less definable role, and would often show signs of being more passive in group discussions and the acceptance of responsibilities. In a later part of her interview, Julia reflected on her own role, contrasting with the more specific and 'active' roles described above.

> *R. I mean some of the members are quite good at – I mean Kate particularly – is good at sort of giving some thought between the meetings. I don't, I tend to think 'oh, everybody's arriving in ten minutes' you know, I'm very vague about what we're going to discuss, and if I can recall what's been discussed before hand, you know. I sort of try and keep the thread of it. I suppose I'm not as active as I could be really, pro-active, really in terms of planning, I tend to be quite passive, and if we're having a discussion, I'll join in that way.*
>
> *I. Why do you think that is?*
>
> *R. Time I suppose. Yeah, time. And I suppose there must be a bit about commitment really. But I don't think its anything to do with how I see my role, 'cos I think we're all kind of equal within the group really. I suppose you give or you take what you want from it really.*
>
> Julia, group member, Kent Road

Importantly, the less active role that Julia describes did not make her feel less 'equal' within the group, and it appeared that this more passive involvement in the organisation of the group was a situation she was happy with, rather than excluded from. In this instance the personal limits to involvement were attributed to a lack of time, while in other cases a lack of confidence could encourage a more passive role.

> *So from then I just started, if and when they needed any help, going up. And then I was asked if I would go on the committee as well, and so I was going to the meetings. Erm….I'm not very academic so I, I feel as if I'm the hands on person that goes and just nods when….[laughing]…when decisions are made I just say yes or no, either way 'cos [end of laughing] sometimes I don't*

> *understand the…….erm, I don't know how to explain it…..er, I you say 'there's a shovel, can you dig a hole, can you dig that plant?', yes I can. If it's going into the logistics of things, the costings of things, I'm totally lost. I'm the first to admit that, but…I, I'm willing to listen.*
>
> Tina, group member, Kent Road

In this instance, Tina showed limited confidence at the contribution she was able to make to the group, but willingly attended a number of meetings to show support. In observation she played a more active role in the discussions that this description would suggest, but this account illustrates the less comfortable and confident feelings that some group members could have in an 'committee' situation and a preference for directed practical work on site.

In most cases, core members would play a physical role in the development of the garden at work events, and as well as playing a role in decision-making processes formed a core of regular attendee at workdays. Physical involvement was not always necessary to being part of a group however, and a role in the organisational aspects could be maintained without attendance at workdays as the following case illustrates.

> *I do a bit of skirmishing, and that's mainly my sort of work commitment, 'cos I'm not too good at digging or humping barrows around so I don't do any physical work of that nature, but I go in with Thom at meetings with the BCTV, you know, the conservation trust…*
>
> Patrick, group member, Kent Road

Although a purely organisational role was rare, it is notable that in this example Patrick was one of the few consistent attendees at Kent Road meetings, continuing to attend when turnout among other members had fallen, suggesting a high degree of commitment despite limitations to his ability to engage in many of the groups activities. This commitment appeared to have been fuelled by a particular combination of motivations; a general keenness to get involved in voluntary activities following retirement and a personal interest in improving the site as a regular user (passing though to reach the bus stop). As many local residents appeared to share the feelings of support towards site improvements but failed to get involved, it appears

that in this instance the existing propensity towards voluntary activity was the crucial factor leading to sustained involvement with the group without the motivations associated with practical involvement.

Relationships with a project

One of the common traits among core members was a strong personal association with the project. Those who had contributed to a project's activities on a regular basis would usually consider themselves part of the project and in conversations would define themselves within it by referring to activities and decisions as undertaken collectively.

> *We have two events a year, raspberry day and the apple day…*
>
> George, group member, Carfield Farm

Such references illustrate a strong shared-identity among group members in relation to the projects and a feeling of belonging that was less common among lower levels of involvement.

The importance of a role in the decision-making process in fostering such a relationship with a project was highlighted by one group member who had previous experience with volunteering for a large environmental organisation.

> *R. And also you get to be involved in all the process as well. So you sort of know what they're planning and you can… you can agree or disagree or add your own ideas into it. Whereas before I couldn't really have any ideas it was, 'we'll be doing this today'.*
>
> *I. Right, so you feel been more involved now?*
>
> *R. Yeah, because it's our group's project as opposed to we're helping with somebody or we are helping with the council, we're helping scouts, you know, it's our project, so us as a group we can decide what we want to do with it, within boundaries, because obviously…*
>
> Daniel, group member, Carfield Farm

In this instance involvement in the planning and development of ideas as well as physical work was explicitly connected to a feeling of greater personal

connection to the project in contrast with more directed and less participative volunteering.

One apparent result of feeling part of a group was reference to a sense of ownership towards the project, illustrated by the phrase 'our project' in the quote above. The concept of 'ownership' has been closely associated with community involvement in green space provision for some time, and although the term is rarely explained or explored it tends to be used to imply a sense of communal responsibility towards the prevention of misuse (such as littering or vandalism) and successful management of a space. Where ownership was referred to by group members it was hard to establish whether use of the term was spontaneous, or influenced by an exposure to this popular rhetoric surrounding community gardens, but a clear personal association with the space was usually expressed within wider narratives.

One group member reflected at some length on her relationship with the garden when prompted during a photo-elicitation interview. When prompted to discuss the types of relationship she had with any of the spaces illustrated in the photographs, she immediately highlighted Kent Road Community Garden.

> *R. Definitely Kent Road, although I am a user of the space, I also feel quite connected to it, because I've been involved since the beginning really, helping to regenerate it [...]*
>
> *I. So does that...is there a...do you have a feeling of responsibility towards either of these [Kent Road and her allotment].*
>
> *R. Mmmm. There's more of a feeling of ownership almost. I mean definitely where the allotments concerned, I feel like it's OUR space, and I'm quite territorial about it [...] I mean Kent Road is lovely because it's very much a shared space and I don't in any way feel territorial about it but I do feel quite protective towards it. I mean when I saw some children throwing stones in it the other day, I thought they were actually trying to smash one of the mosaic posts, but I think they were trying to break the stone open, which was a flint. But you know I do challenge people if I think they're doing something vandelous on Kent Road. But I think I would anyway, if it was at the farm, or at either of the parks, I think if I saw someone...if I wasn't scared of them - in which case I'd keep very quiet and walk quickly on [laughing] - but I think if I found, if I thought someone was../or leaving a dog poo at any of these places I think I'd challenge them, you know, because I consider them all to be public*

spaces which we all have a responsibility to make sure you know, they don't drop litter, we don't leave it worse than we find it.

Sophie, group member, Kent Road

Later comments explain the feeling of ownership in more detail.

I used the word ownership earlier, but I don't mean I feel I own it, but it's just kind of this feeling that it../that I've helped it to get to where it is, in a small way. And that I, as part of the community, have helped to get it to where it is. SO it's very much a, you know, the communities come together to do it.

Sophie, group member, Kent Road

In this instance a feeling of ownership is explicitly related to playing a part in the processes that contributed to the creation of the garden. The feeling created is also associated with protective tendencies towards the site, which initially appear to support commonly held assumptions about involvement and ownership. However, the continuation of the narrative is particularly informative as Sophie goes on to extend her pro-active tendencies to all green spaces, undermining the validity of the relationship between ownership and behaviour. Instead, these comments suggest a general attachment to green space and a willingness to castigate those found abusing green space regardless of any personal sense of ownership. It may in fact be that these existing values in fact contributed to her initial decision to get involved in the project in the first place, rather than resulting from it.

Ownership tended to be described on a collective level and as illustrated in the above quotes, group members who expressed such a feeling were often careful to avoid sounding as though they felt they personally owned the space. This tendency would appear to be due to the strong 'community' focus of the projects, which conflicted with any sense of individual ownership of control. By taking care to stress the collective nature of their relationship with 'their' project, it may be that some group members also risk limiting the degree to which this relationship can encourages proactive behaviour. If ownership is perceived collectively, then any feelings of responsibility of commitment that may result from this ownership are also likely to be viewed as collective. While personal responsibilities provide direct incentive for

action, a collective responsibility can result in an expectation on others to initiate action or a feeling that personal action is less imperative as there are others who will make the effort.

During her interview, Sophie described herself as "more of an ex-member" and in fact had withdrawn the level of involvement she had with the project. She explained that she saw the group as more important than the individual and was confident that as people such as herself dropped out, others would join. The observations of activity on site following this interview cast doubts on such an assumption however and although the project did attract physical involvement from new individuals at times, the core group attending meetings declined in both size and frequency.

A group member at Carfield Farm, when it was revealed that she had social connections with some of the Kent Road, was asked whether she had considered taking part in that project, which elicited further insights into feelings of ownership.

R. *I think the reason I didn't../I don't think I even considered it actually. Erm, you know, the selfish bit of me that thinks time's precious and, probably wasn't considering it, whereas THIS bit feels more like my responsibility, or more connected to me because of my allotment site [...] So there's more sense of sort of ownership and responsibility and connection I think.*

I. *So do you mean that it's more because of the allotments than necessarily the proximity, or is the distance an issue?*

R. *Erm, I'm trying to think, would I have been../I don't know if I'd have been involved if I was still living where I did which was like a twenty minute walk away. I think the whole cluster of things, the immediacy, the fact that I knew that bit of land before it started, from my scavenging, I used to scavenge round there - lovely lilac tree there! [laughing] So I knew that bit of land, and then also there was a sense of being interested and impressed by the progress that had been made. But also there's a bit about the solidarity against developers that probably activated me, more than anything, but now I guess increasingly I've changed seeing what community involvement can do where I work. It was all these cluster of things that sort of initialled me to rather than just paying my pound, trying and be a bit more active. Yeah, so a mixture of things really.*

Harriet, group member, Carfield Farm, photo-elicitation interview

In this instance the feeling of ownership was described as a precursor to involvement rather than an outcome, originating instead from the proximity and use of the wider allotment site. While this feeling of ownership was described as a contributing factor towards the decision to become more involved and join the group, it was swiftly supplemented by a number of other motivating factors that were implied to be more influential, again diminishing the apparent role of feelings of ownership on actual behaviour.

Alongside feelings of belonging and ownership, core group members would also often express strong values of commitment towards the project and its activities.

> *Erm… I think if you kind of commit to doing something like this….my feeling is you should try to go along and be involved where you can and not just ONLY go along when there's something big to be done, something prestigious, and then never turn up when there's litter picking to be done.*
>
> Dominic, group members, Kent Road

> *I would usually prioritise a meeting wherever I could, or a session. I put them in my diary and I make sure, I try not to arrange anything that night.*
>
> Julia, group member, Kent Road

While such sentiments of commitment were not always combined with regular attendance, the feeling of duty implied illustrates a strong sense of responsibility towards the project and other group members.

In most cases, when expressing a feeling of commitment members would associate it directly to a sense of responsibility towards the group rather than the space itself.

> *I. So do you find yourself losing motivation sometimes due to the fact that things haven't been done?*
>
> *R. I think I could easily do that, erm….yeah I could easily do that. But I suppose 'cos I feel I've got a conscience towards it really. I mean its always…you always feel that when you see other members, or neighbours, whatever, sort of giving their time you kind of think 'oh it lets them down as well', so there's that sense of kind of the bigger – not letting the group down as well. I've felt very conscious if I haven't attended days for whatever reason, I've kind of felt guilty about it, and that I should be there, and that I've got to have justifiable excuse. So I've*

> *got a responsibility towards the group really, so I wouldn't pull out at this stage anyway 'cos I feel too much of a commitment to it.*
>
> Julia, group member, Kent Road

In this case, the feelings of responsibility and guilt were attributed directly to the collective nature of the project and while a sense of responsibility for the physical element of the project were implied, the strongest impetus for maintaining involvement was the feeling of duty towards other members.

6.2.3 Peripheral group members

Further to the core group members, involved in the organisation and decision-making processes of a project, a number of more peripheral members could be identified. There were individuals who would attend site-based activities (regularly or sporadically) and were considered part of the group by other members, but rarely attended meetings or became involved in other organisational activities.

At Carfield Farm, where the group was well defined, one clear example of this level could be identified.

> *So, yeah, and my partner's involved in that sort of side of things as well, he's not involved in the sort of full organising group, but he's sort of does the work mornings, so it's a sort of shared interest.*
>
> Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

James would regularly attend work mornings with his partner, but further involvement in the project was limited to attendance at the Annual General Meeting (at which active participation was not observed) and occasional additional support when required (such as volunteering time to run a stall at the local festival). During informal discussions with James at workdays it became clear that he had no interest in the administrative or organisational element of the project but enjoyed the physical aspect of getting involved on site and was keen to support his wife in her efforts to make the project a success. The personal relationship with the site was comparable to that of his wife, due to the shared proximity of the site and comparable threat, although the strength of attachment to their personal allotment site that was evident when talking with Frances was less apparent for James. While differences in the degree of attachment felt may have influenced the varying levels of involvement, it was clear that a lack of interest in the type of activities associated with organisational of the project was the main reason for limiting involvement to this peripheral level.

At Kent Road, the wider involvement that had been achieved created a larger number of peripheral members. Several individuals, and sometimes whole families, would attend site activities on a reasonably regular basis without any involvement in meetings. In some cases, meetings had been attended in the very early stages of the project but involvement since had been restricted to on-site volunteering. This had created a connection to the project and a feeling of belonging to the group, without any continued attendance at meetings. In other instances, involvement in the project developed over time, and as social connections were forged or strengthened, a perception of being part of the group could be seen to be fostered, again with limited organisational input. These cases contrasted with physical volunteers (see 6.2.4), for whom the association with the group was limited.

Although few peripheral members were interviewed formally, informal conversations during work activities suggested that while attachment to the respective garden had developed in response to the positive experience of taking part (both through physical achievement and social interaction), evidence of resulting feelings of commitment was sometimes less strong. Peripheral members would often describe feeling 'part of something', but when discussing the project group they would commonly describe themselves as separate to it rather than within it, referring to 'the group', 'they' or even in some cases simply to the name of the leading figure. This positioning did not appear to be associated with feelings of dissatisfaction or exclusion, but rather a willingness to support the efforts of the group physically by happily following the direction of leading figures and core group members. By defining themselves as outside the core group, the responsibilities of the group to develop and maintain the project could also appear less obvious and although some peripheral members showed considerable dedication to the project through regular volunteering efforts, most displayed a more sporadic attendance. A notable exception from this trend was among peripheral members who were partners of core group members, attending workdays but not meetings. The partner of a leading figure at Carfield Farm for example, did not attend meetings but was a

regular attendee at work mornings and displayed a strong sense of responsibility to the site when he described his almost daily visits to the site when walking the dog "to check for any vandalism". Further discussion suggested that one of the main incentives leading to such behaviour was a concern for the efforts that had gone into the site, both personally and by the group more widely, and stimulated by previous incidents of damage. Such behaviour suggests a particularly strong sense of attachment. The personal relationship with a leading figure enabled a continued awareness and association with the project despite detachment from the core group which in other circumstances may have been harder to achieve.

Although not present at meetings, a peripheral position within a group did not preclude involvement in decision-making, a great deal of which would take place informally during work mornings rather than through the more formal process of meetings. Discussions on the site would be common during work mornings, and although peripheral members would usually be happy to take direction and carry out tasks as determined by the core group or leading figures they would often engage in conversation about the development of the project and future plans and proposals. The influence achieved through such conversations would depend largely on who took part in the discussion. Where a leading figure was part of the conversation, the likelihood of comments being acknowledged when making a decision would be greater than where conversation relied on another group member to pass the views on. There were several examples at Kent Road where peripheral members had taken part in discussions on site, but the views expressed were not raised at a subsequent meeting and did not appear to be passed onto leading figures. Thus the opportunities for influencing decision-making, although present were far more unreliable than could be achieved by core group members.

While it may be expected that peripheral members (through attendance at workdays) offer the greatest potential for encouraging new core members, it proved particularly rare among the cases studied that this should occur. It

was almost always the case that attendance at meetings, where it was to occur at all, would take place at the beginning of an individual's involvement with a project. It should be noted however, that this finding may be related more to the particular contexts of the projects studied (such as the generally low peripheral member rate at Carfield Farm) than the motivations or characteristics of the individuals observed. Indeed in some cases it appeared that the potential for attracting new organisational support from among peripheral members could have been present but was not realised due to a lack of opportunities to get more involved. At Kent Road, more frequent meetings may have encouraged some of the peripheral members that emerged during the course of the research to get more involved.

The distinction between core and peripheral members was sometimes hard to establish, and particularly so within a group such as Kent Road, where the occurrence of meetings was sporadic. In this context perceptions of who was part of the group could differ between individuals, and personal perceptions of status would not always align with those of other members. In practice, given the low turnouts at meetings towards the end of my time in the field, it could be argued that most members were peripheral, with the organisationally active core reduced to two (plus staff from HDT) at some points. Other group members would still be referred to as such however, sometimes to be confirmed by attendance at site activities but in other cases based on past levels of involvement rather than any current activity. Any decrease in an individual's involvement was rarely conveyed openly with an explanation, and therefore identifying those who no longer defined themselves as part of the group (as opposed to simply having missed a number of events) was difficult.

For example, Sophie was regularly referred to as a group member by other group members, but when interviewed she referred to herself as a "more of an ex-member" and explained that she had been less able to be involved recently due to the commitments of looking after a young child. In actual fact, Sophie had only missed the most recent work morning, but because there

had been no activity arranged on site for four months previous to this, she perceived herself as having missed activities.

This disparity between personal feelings of status within the project and perceived status among other members has important implications for the capacity of a group to undertake necessary work. If individuals are thought by leading figures or other group members to still be part of a group, but actually feel detached from the project (whether through lack of activity or lack of attendance), the group itself may be a lot smaller than perceived, and the amount of physical support expected may fail to materialise. There were periods of time when this appeared to be the case at Kent Road, when attendance at meetings had reduced to as few as two local residents and work events were similarly quiet. Interestingly however, Kent Road also illustrated the lasting attachment to a project that can be sustained despite a fall in personal involvement. In a number of instances core group members displayed lengthy periods of inactivity (up to 11 months), followed by a return to group activity. The reasons for withdrawal from the group were varied (including childbirth, a lack of communication and other commitments), but all shared a continued interest in the project and displayed a degree of attachment which had been developed during their earlier period of involvement and encouraged their later return. It was notable that many instances of renewed involvement coincided with significant stages of the project, such as the mosaic project or the opening event, rather than being during more mundane activities, probably in relation to the higher levels of publicity these events afforded. This willingness to return to the group after a period of time illustrates the lasting bonds that a community garden project can create. It may be that the longevity of such bonds are encouraged by the neighbourhood focus of the project, providing a context in which social relationships with group members can be maintained outside the context of the project itself during day-to-day routines. It may also be that the informal and local site-based context of much activity enables a casual and comfortable return to the group that may prove harder in a more distant or formal volunteering context.

6.2.4 Volunteers

In some cases, work was undertaken on the projects by individuals who had no involvement or connection with the organisational group. These may have been volunteers from an organisation, invited to the site to undertake a specific task. Also included would be those people who attended work events in response to advertisements, but did not engage with existing group members sufficiently to develop any lasting relationship with the group.

> *Now and again you get an odd… and you think, oh I've not seen those before. And… but then possibly they won't come again. You might see them once…*
>
> Tina, group member, Kent Road

At Kent Road, this form of involvement was observed on several occasions and was described by a number of group members as particularly prevalent during the early stages of work on the site (supported by photographic evidence). There was also evidence of such involvement among descriptions of the initial creation of Alexandra Road community garden. While it appeared that projects were able to attract far greater numbers of 'casual volunteers' at their outset (possibly due to the excitement and interest caused by the early observations of change), because each of the case sites had been initiated several years before the research started it was not possible to explore this initial decline in involvement levels in greater detail.

Carfield Farm displayed much lower levels of 'casual volunteering', limited largely to the occasional attendance of family members or friends of the core members.

I. *Do they [subscribers] get involved in the work days?*

R. *I seem to remember different faces at work days. There have been people that have just dropped in, and that's really nice, you know, people that have just got a couple of hours to spare, and…/But the last couple I think its just been the core group, it hasn't really…no I can't remember anybody. I think three, two or three ago, there was someone from the allotments; someone called Sally, who's got an allotment that backs onto the site. She came along and did some work, and she did talk about wanting to be more involved so, I tried to nurture her a bit, but*

I think she's since got a full time job. That's what happens isn't it, you know.

Frances, leading figure, Carfield Farm

Unfortunately, volunteers who attended workdays only once proved difficult to engage in the research. A degree of caution was exercised when approaching new volunteers as there was a concern that requesting further voluntary activity from them (an interview for example) when making their first impressions of a project, could potentially compromise their likelihood of returning. In the context of community groups struggling to attract new members this was not a risk felt appropriate to take. Unfortunately, contact details were rarely recorded by the groups either, which would have provided a means of contact at a later date should repeat attendance not have occurred.

Evidence of past volunteering acquired through the postal questionnaire suggests that attachment developed through this level of involvement can vary considerably. Eight respondents identified themselves as past volunteers at a project (the majority at Kent Road), but only half identified the site they had volunteered at as a space they particularly value. None of those who did describe the site as particularly valued referred to their involvement (or indeed community involvement at all) among their explanatory reasons. While this does not provide sufficient information to ascertain that attachment was not fostered, it does suggest that involvement at the level of casual volunteer is not necessarily sufficient to establish a 'special' relationship with a site, and that other factors (such as proximity to the site) have a strong mediating influence at this level. In contrast, all of the twelve respondents who described a higher level of involvement (as a member of the group) described the space they were involved with as particularly valued.

As well as occasional individual volunteering, some groups engaged with organisations that would provide a small group of volunteers for a particular task.

I think we've had BTCV, well people that was something to do with BTCV, or work for them, they were like a university group one week that Thom brought along so, I think they might be helping out BTCV as well, I don't think they were from them but they've been on projects. So there was about five of them, they came one week. And I mean they've never been before, they've never been to any meetings or events, they just came along, because you can.

Daniel, group member, Carfield Farm

The group referred to was a local environmental training group, who subsequently used the site for training purposes on several occasions. Students would vary, and the involvement tended to take place in short bursts of activity (determined by the alignment of tasks required with the training curriculum being followed). Volunteers in this respect could live much further from the site, and as such the attachment displayed among some casual volunteers above appears less likely due to the absence of other relationships with the site (such as regular use). This form of organised volunteering has more in common with the environmental 'stewardship' model of volunteering more frequently explored within related literature (eg. Ryan, 1997; Ryan *et al*, 2001), rather than the close physical relationships enabled by community garden projects located within an individuals immediate neighbourhood.

A further form of volunteering was identified in several projects where art workshops had been arranged and local people invited to take part. These events were less directly related to the site (usually held in a nearby community building), but produced features which would usually later be installed and contribute the physical appearance of the site.

Erm, and then last summer we did a mosaic project and it was really good that, because that was with a local artist who sort of helped to co-ordinate it all and sort of direct us in terms of skills and materials and design, BUT you know, all the ideas came from local people and a lot of people turned up to take part and it was actually…/okay some of the people were the ones that had been involved in the garden but there was quite a lot of people who came just because it was mosaic, erm, you know, and so it sort of broadened the community involvement.

Kate, Group member, Kent Road

Those who attended the events and were not associated with the group could be defined as having a physical involvement with the project analogous to those described above, but the potential for attachment appeared to be much greater due to the combination of an clearly identifiable end-product (unlike many casual volunteers) and usually an existing relationship with the site (unlike organised volunteers).

One such participant, who had taken part in the creation of mosaic features on the Kent Road site, illustrated the positive associations that were possible through such involvement in an enthusiastic description of photographs she had taken of the site as part of a photo-elicitation interview,

> *R. Kent Road Garden [referring to photograph of site]. A delight. I love it. I really, really do, I mean erm… yeah well it used to…/I remember it being absolutely derelict and just full of cat shit and stuff, you know. Erm… I took loads [laughs] [shows three further images of the site]*
>
> *I. Yeah… no that's great.*
>
> *R. That's 'cos WE did it! [Referring specifically to photograph of mosaic bollard]*
>
> *I. Ahah! Okay.*
>
> *R. My pride and joy! Oh I absolutely loved it! It was… it was just really nice doing it, you know, it was a lovely…*
>
> *I. This was just before I think I started this so I never experienced the bollards being made.*
>
> *R. They were great, I mean we went along… Seni, myself and a friend of ours, Leonie did it, along with…/and there was some other input but we like to think it was you know.*
>
> *I. [laughs]*
>
> *R. So I'm so… I'm so delighted and pleased about it actually.*
>
> Naomi, volunteer at art sessions, Kent Road

The sense of ownership implied in this quote is particularly explicit; more so than among many of the more involved individuals that were interviewed. It is also focussed specifically on the bollards created during the phase in which she was involved. Descriptions of the space more generally and other features within it were also strongly positive, but it was notable that the reasons given for wider attachment appeared unrelated to the experience of personal involvement, instead focussing on the use of the space by young

people, and the symbolic value of an "all kind of wildish" space in promoting feelings of "independence and freedom", again among young people (it is worth noting that Naomi works with young people). Interestingly, Naomi had also volunteered on the site early in the project, and again one year after the mosaic sessions, but when prompted during the interview, despite evocative descriptions of the site and its values, no such narrative was forthcoming on the experience.

I. *So how../ you say you helped with the making the mosaic bollards, have you had any other involvement in the process of Kent Road changing…*

R. *Erm… we've done a few garden days. Erm… yes, I mean I'm still on the Meersbrook Park Users Trust membership thingy. We've gone along to the, erm… the June festival thingy […] erm… but this year, you know, what I mean, my mum died last June so I've kind of missed… I was away for quite a while. And I think when I met you we'd only been back shortly. And so that's../so I haven't had much involvement with them.*

Naomi, volunteer, Kent Road

None of the activities undertaken during these "garden days" (known to be weeding at the more recent) inspired the kind of emotions expressed in relation to the art works created. In contrast, the mosaic bollards elicited strong associations with the process of their creation, and prompted a very specific form of attachment.

R. *It was quite an amazing experience, I really enjoyed it. And erm… and I think being able to do things like bees and flowers in them were… yeah quite… I just… jubilatory really, you know. And the actual sort of sitting and doing them was lovely.*

I. *How do you feel when you see it now?*

R. *I… I feel great… I mean I was… I will make detours to go passed it. You know, and give it a little rub, you know! And the one at the bottom in fact, right down the bottom, so it's got a bald head now because it's been chipped away, which, you know… so I keep a close eye on that one (laughs). I feel very, you know… very kind of possessive and making sure that it's okay and stuff like that.*

I. *What would you do if you saw that it got damaged more?*

R. *I think I'd want to go and repair it, you know. Yes, yeah, I'd want to repair it.*

Naomi, volunteer at art project, Kent Road

In this statement, the sense of ownership conveyed earlier in the interview is both widened to include other bollards produced during the session (as well as her own), and projected forward as a potential motivation for activity. A strong feeling of responsibility is suggested, directly related to the process of involvement. Most importantly in the context of this research however, this feeling did not result in positive action. Indeed, the mosaic bollard referred to in the passage continued to get damaged, and yet no-one repaired it. There were a number of reasons that may have contributed to this desire failing to result in action, including the need for specialist materials and the fact that soon after the interview Naomi moved house to slightly further away from the site. Whatever the reasons, it is important to acknowledge that even strong and heavily focused feelings of ownership and responsibility do not necessarily result in positive action.

On some occasions the association between the items created and the community garden itself was severed, where art works had been produced in workshops with the intention of being installed on site, but in the course of time remained unused, either due to a lack of funds, a lack of organisation, or the fear of vandalism. At Denmark Road for example, a number of art projects were initiated by staff of HDT, including mosaic workshops with children at the local children's centre, and a graffiti workshop with a group teenagers. The delays that the project suffered, coupled with the loss of staff who had arranged the work, resulted in the materials produced failing to be installed on the site. Such an outcome is likely to have implications for the extent to which those participating felt involved in the community garden project rather than a stand alone creative activity, and prevents the benefits of association and strong attachment that their inclusion was seen to create at Kent Road.

All the preceding levels of involvement had constituted some form of physical involvement in the organisation or physical activity of a project. Further to these practical forms of involvement were a series of levels that constituted a more passive relationship with the activities of a project. While later

consideration of the factors affecting involvement concentrate on the active forms of involvement that are crucial to the achievement of tasks, it is important to note the further levels at which involvement could be conceived.

6.2.5 Participants

The level of participant is defined as a passive involvement in the decision-making processes of a group, usually as part of a consultative activity organised by the group.

Attendance at public meetings organised by the group was a common example of such participatory involvement.

> R. *… I think it was probably May 2000 that we had our first public meeting. Yeah.*
>
> I. *So did you arrange that?*
>
> R. *Yeah, me and Peter, we arranged that. We sort of did flyers and erm leafleted people coming out of school, and publicised it and used that as a way to sort of get the ball rolling and get local opinion, get people who were really interested to volunteer as a core group for taking it forward, yeah.*
>
> I. *How many people would you say turned up to that first meeting?*
>
> R. *I think there was probably about thirty or so.*
>
> Kate, leading figure, Kent Road

This initial public meeting at the Kent Road project attracted around thirty attendees, of which six or seven went on to become group members. The role of public meetings at this early stage of a project was clearly important in enabling the identification of individuals who were willing to assume a higher level of involvement with the project and form the initial core group. Similar meetings, and resulting groups, were reported as taking place in the early stages of both the Alexandra Road and Carfield Farm projects. The meeting at Alexandra Road to revive activity on the site was notable as an example that failed to lead to the establishment of a group. This appeared to be due to

the failure of roles to be established at this initial meeting and the limited capacity of the supporting organisation to arrange activities to follow it.

As well as providing a situation from which a group could be established, public meetings were also perceived as a means for the group to establish support (or otherwise) for the project and collect views and ideas on problems that needed tackling and elements of the community garden's design.

Examples of public meetings later in the development of the projects were less common, usually restricted to instances where groups were proposing considerable new work. In these instances the level of attendance was generally lower, and the recruitment of new members as a result was not observed.

An exception to this was the annual general meeting arranged by Carfield Farm as part of their more formal committee structure. This was advertised locally through posters and offered an opportunity for less involved individuals to raise issues and questions and put forward suggestions for the project. Attendance at such meetings beyond the group tended to be low (usually less than five people) but it was notable that the meetings tended to be the first level of involvement that new group members would have. The secluded nature of the site appeared to made casual attendance at workdays uncommon and the open invitation to attend a public meeting appeared to be an effective way of enabling interesting individuals to meet the group and be invited to attend the following work day.

In some instances an individual would become involved at the level of participant in response to a particular issue or concern. In one case, a local resident neighbouring Kent Road attended several group meetings with the express objective of discussing damage to a boundary wall. Specific concerns such as this did not appear to encourage any more sustained involvement with the group, focussed instead on a particular issue of personal concern. This does however illustrate the importance of a clearly

identifiable group in enabling individuals to raise concerns. In cases where such a group was not present frustration could be expressed at the inability to determine who was 'responsible' for the space, as observed when residents close to the long inactive Alexandra Road were given an opportunity to discuss the site.

A less pro-active form of participation would be involvement in other forms consultation exercise, such as questionnaires or surveys. In these cases, the views or opinions of local residents (the usual recipients of such a survey) could be communicated to the group, but without the direct interaction with group members that meetings enabled.

Another form of participation identified in the wider questionnaire survey was that of informal discussions about the project with group members. Some individuals expressed that the ability to discuss the project with group members in an informal context (while waiting for children outside school for example) provided a sense of involvement without any apparent physical involvement with the project.

Involvement restricted at the level of participant, while providing a means of offering thoughts or opinions about the project, did not guarantee an outcome or response. The transference of a comment to action on the part of the group would depend on whether it was passed on to other group members, how it related to other comments received, and whether the group were willing or able to act on it.

6.2.6 Supporters

At Carfield Farm, the wider membership that had been established through a system of annual subscriptions to support the project created a level of passive involvement in which people could feel part of the project by contributing support financially, but without necessarily making any physical contribution, being involved in decision making or even visiting the site.

> *R.* *… one of the reasons why we started this sort of a subscription thing was to keep people posted of what was going on because it was too easy to just sort of get involved in a group and then sort of lose interest and forget about it.*
>
> *I* *Yes.*
>
> *R* *And the next thing you knew the site could have been built on. So we decided to do the subscription thing pretty early where you pay a quid and we keep them informed with what's happening.*
>
> Jason, group member, Carfield Farm

Those who subscribe to the group receive a newsletter, usually four times a year, updating them on the physical progress of the site, successful funding bids and other pieces of news (such as wildlife sightings). The newsletter also provided a means of publicising workdays, public events and the annual general meeting. Although this communication failed to attract volunteers to the project directly, it did encourage occasional attendees at the annual general meeting who following this 'participant' level of involvement went on to become group members.

A photo-elicitation interview with a couple who were subscribers of the group revealed the feelings of involvement that could be created through an identity as 'members', with limited experience of active involvement in a project. The Carfield Farm site was one of the later photographs to be identified, suggesting a lack of visual identification with the space (common among those who were not group members), but strong feelings of personal involvement with the project were expressed.

Kath. *That was done [referring to photograph of Carfield Farm] to stop houses being built down there.*

I. *This is the…?*

Bill. *[sighs, not recognising the site initially]*

I. *…on the allotment?*

Bill. *Oh we're on the committee! [excited tone]*

Kath. *No we're not.*

Bill. *We're not on the committee. But we're a member of the organisation. […] they formed a little committee, which we….sponsor, and we're part of that organisation aren't we.*

Kath. *Mmm-huh.*

Kath and Bill, supporters (subscribers), Carfield Farm

The initial response from Bill suggested a much higher level of involvement than was subsequently revealed, and it seemed that his personal feeling of involvement in the project was higher than his wife's despite an apparently equal level of participation.

I. *Going back to the group there, the project, you say you…/someone came round and you joined…what you joined the group?*

Kath. *Yes.*

I. *And what does that involve?*

Bill. *Well it…if you want to go down there, whenever they're working, and clear things out.*

Kath. */'cos it's still happening*

Bill. *All the time, you can go down there and help to clean things out. There's certain activities that happen, like Apple Day where they go down there and crush all the apples, and…*

Kath. *And they've got raspberries growing, and you know, planting trees erm…I think they had one lot of trees*

Bill. */ripped out.*

Kath. *you know, ruined.*

I. *Right. Is this something that you've taken part in at all?*

Bill. *Yeah, occasionally we go down there when there's things happening.*

Kath. */Well, we just…/we haven't done any physical work have we [directed at Bill.].*

Bill. *No.*

Kath. *'cos we haven't got the time to do physical work. Really we just support them, and then when your fees are due we don't just pay the*

> *fee, I pay something extra, that helps towards it. We're not, we're not active members as such, because we haven't got the time.*
>
> Kath and Bill, supporters (subscribers), Carfield Farm

Again, Bill implies an active involvement, but is challenged by his partner who provides an account more in line with observations and group records. Later, it emerged that the last time they visited the site was over a year ago, at the group's second annual 'Apple Day' event. Being members of the group in a formalised way clearly provides a sense of personal connection with the site and a sense of pride in the project, even without the experience for physical involvement. The regular communication provided by a newsletter enables them to remain aware of activities, which is particularly valuable in the context of a secluded site.

The level of membership achieved by the group also appeared to provide group members with a means of validating their efforts and ensuring that their aims as a 'community' project were indeed shared more widely by local residents.

> *And all these things have been done. I mean../we've got tenancy of the site now and we've got a strong sort of local commitment, there's a lot of people who are interested in what we're doing.*
>
> Jason, group member, Carfield Farm

Another level of support, which could be considered lower due to the lack of financial contribution, was that of signing a petition. The act of doing so signifies support for the cause in question, and aligns the signatory with the aims and objectives of the group, but requires very little effort. Across the case studies, petitions were used exclusively at the conception of a project, where the origins of a project were in the process of campaigning to prevent the loss of a space. Such a method was used at both Carfield Farm and Alexandra Road, although it appears that only the Carfield Farm group developed the petition process into a system of more sustained involvement through the subscription system described above.

Other, less formal, methods of support could be identified, which tended to occur on an ad hoc basis. The use of private gardens or yards for the temporary storage of equipment could be considered one form of support, while in another case the provision of refreshments by a local resident, not participating in any physical activity on the site at the time, constituted a form of involvement recognised by more active group members.

> *So it seems to… you know it's more or less the same faces, and you seen some other people kind of come along, there's the chap that lives down the bottom, you know, kind of helps out with teas. And I like that sort of thing and I you the impression that, I think there's quite a kind of community feel around Argyle Road, Valley Road areas, it's really good.*
>
> Dominic, group member, Kent Road

While not directly contributing towards the physical efforts of a project, these forms of support could clearly contribute to the positive effects of a project, illustrated by the reference to a sense of "community spirit" evoked by such gestures in this quote.

6.2.7 Event attendees

Where groups organised events, people would visit the site and take part in activities that may have been arranged, but would not make a physical contribution to the development or management of the site, other than in the form of occasional financial donations. Despite this passive role in relation to the development of the project, the events themselves would often constitute an important element of a project's activities, and were perceived by some group members as an important way of enabling a sense of involvement among a wider audience.

> R. *So yeah we've sort of wanted to create occasions on the site as well, so people come in and they might not be interested in what we're doing all the time but they will come in for a certain of occasion, you know, so we've had apple days and tree planting day…/there's a National Tree Planting Week first week of December and in October… end of October, Common Ground sort of instigate this apple day where there's all sorts of things go off all over the country. I think it's the 23rd. So we always try and have a weekend. We've had two so far. And er…/which we're sort of at the moment we're working on sort of ideas as well as trying to get ourselves sorted we're working on ideas to create events. Sort of a regular sort of calendar type of things. We've got this raspberry day that we did last year…*
>
> I *Right.*
>
> R *And we're carrying on with that as well, and that was really popular - we had people coming in and picking the raspberries and stuff.*
>
> Jason, group member, Carfield Farm

Carfield Farm was the only one of the community gardens studies which organised events on a regular basis, and in the context of a site which attracted very few active participants beyond the core group, provided an effective way of increasing the connection between the project and local residents who may not have otherwise had cause or opportunity to visit the secluded site.

> I. *Yeah. You mentioned about people being able to come along to the work days any time.....do many of the subscribers or people local come along to the days?*
>
> R. *Erm… not so much the work days, but certainly things like the apple day last year, we had a lot of visitors and families. Because really you're not going to take toddlers or… or sort of 5-6 year old onto a work day. And*

apart from sort of children of people that are on the committee who come, but they'd probably be on their bikes or something, you know, erm, it's not… you can't sort of give tools to really young children. It's not really aimed at sort of children the work days. So that's why we have the events because it can involve the family.

I. Right.

R. And that's why we publicise them a bit more than the work day because anybody can come. Because also people that are disabled can't really use the site 'cos it's to…/and people that can't do sort of heavyish work like older people, elderly people that wouldn't really feel comfortable hacking down trees or whatever you do.

Daniel, group member, Carfield Farm

While uncommon at Kent Road, an 'official opening' event attracted at least 140 attendees, who shared in the celebration of the groups achievements. Such large attendance highlights the value placed on the space far beyond that of the core group, and also suggests a valuable role for events such as these in sustaining a wider sense of 'community involvement' with a project.

6.2.8 Non-involvement

While the focus of this study is on the ability of projects to sustain involvement, responses among individuals who had not been involved in a project provided a valuable insight into the effect of community gardens on local residents who did not consider themselves involved with a project.

While some have suggested that the management of community gardens by an active minority can create feelings of exclusion among those not involved (Schmelzkopf, 1996) the findings of this study suggested widespread positive perceptions of the project. For example, among the fifty-two survey respondents from the Kent Road area, thirty-five did not identify any involvement with the project. Of this group, nineteen people identified the garden as a space they "particularly valued". Most of the reasons given for valuing the space focused on the physical appearance of the space and the improvement that had been observed, but three of the responses specifically referred to community involvement as a reason for their feelings.

> *The walkway to school [Kent Road Community Garden] shows community pride and I love it!*
>
> survey respondent, Kent Road, no involvement

At Alexandra Road, the number of references to the site as valued was lower (fourteen of the forty-three respondents). This appeared to be a reflection of the less visible location of the site, with most positive responses deriving from residents on the street itself. Again however, three respondents (none of whom had had involvement in the project) referred to the community aspect of the space within their reasons.

> *friendly, green, free, community based*
>
> survey respondent, Alexandra Road, no involvement

The feelings of attachment that were suggested among these comments were also reflected within interviews with non-involved residents.

I. *Okay. So I mean can you tell me any more about this space [Alexandra Road]?*

R. *Erm… I can't. I believe it's owned by the farm and I believe that they're responsible for the upkeep and that it's open for the community to just go and sit in or children to play or whatever. Erm… that's my understanding of it. I've never actually been inside it…because I am always going somewhere or coming back from somewhere and usually in the car […] but I like that space very much.*

I. *Right, so even though you haven't used it or actually ever been in it, you still value it as a part of the neighbourhood?*

R. *Yes, and I'm NOT just saying this because you're doing this survey, because the times I've said, 'oh I must go in there'. And I will one day, when we've finished building and decorating and all the things we do at the weekends.*

Laura, non-involved local resident, Alexandra Road, photo-elicitation interview

In this instance awareness of the community project that created the space was limited, and positive feelings appear to have been associated primarily with the appearance and "character" of the space. This suggests an indirect relationship between community involvement and positive feelings, whereby the physical improvement that are undertaken to a site create a space that is more positively perceived.

In another interview feelings of attachment were far more explicitly linked to the process of community involvement. Strong positive feelings were expressed towards a nearby community garden despite a lack of use, prompted explicitly by the knowledge that the space had been created by a community group.

R. *What else is meaningful? [looking through photos] Well in spite of the fact that I didn't recognise this [Kent Road], this is one of the BEST things that I think's ever happened in Sheffield, because its just you know, 'cos it's been really ugly for years, and it's just some people thought 'lets make it nice' and they've made it nice, and I really like that about it.*

I. *You said that you didn't recognise it at first, but you do know the site.*

R. *Yes, yes. So I like that sort of thing where…you know, people just take a space and make it nice.*

I. *Do you know very much about how that came about?*

R. *No. 'cos I wasn't involved at all [...] I only know about it really 'cos people whose kids still go to Carfield have talked about it and I went to have a look. But I actually never go there, now my kids are older I never go there at all, so... It's really funny 'cos it's really near this house but I never do go there. But erm, so I suppose that's how I heard about it.*

I. *So it's not something that you regularly pass or anything.*

R. *No not at all.*

I. *But still something that you value.*

R. *Yeah definitely. YEAH yeah. You know, especially 'cos like you know, it's near to the school and I think that's good, and the kids have this nice space that people have done up and you know.*

Libby, non-involved resident, between Carfield Farm and Kent Road

Such examples express the powerful positive attachments that can arise through the awareness of a community involvement alone.

The wide reaching effects of more prominent gardens was revealed, when in one interview a resident from Alexandra Road described feelings of attachment to the Kent Road garden, promoted in this instance by its location in relation to the local school.

R. *And so I'd picked this one out which is... this is Kent Road isn't it?*

I. *Kent Road, yeah, that's right.*

R. *This is the way that we walk to school*

I. *Oh right, okay.*

R. *Sam's at Carfield and so yeah I've seen this develop and I think it's... I think it's just a really nice start to the day to see this. And it's so much nicer than it used to be. So... so I like that and the kids all run through it and it's quite... you know it's quite child friendly to take different paths and... yes.*

I. *So you actually walk up the hill itself to the school?*

R. *Yes, yes, yes, we usually walk to school but even if we don't we always park at the bottom and walk through.*

Mary, non-involved resident, Alexandra Road

This illustrates the wider connections to spaces that can be made within a neighbourhood based on routine and use, and the potential for value far beyond the surrounding residents. The routine of parking at the bottom of the site to enable the space to be used stresses the feeling of attachment developed. Later comments reveal the shared value of the space among

parents and the role of community involvement, in particular the art projects undertaken with school children, in the feelings of attachment expressed.

> *R. Because this could be just a bit of grass couldn't it or whatever, but actually it's... and it's... but it's something interesting and it's something that, my general feeling is people really like. And on the way to school people quite often talk about this in one way or another, and the kids run through it and, you know, generally I would say... I'd say this is something that... and it sort of reflects the seasons and you know all those sorts of things. As compared to one of those patches of grass that don't really do anything [...]*
>
> *I. What kind of things do people talk about?*
>
> *R. Well just the sort of developments because if you walk to school everyday you see it changing. And so, you know when the grass is cut down and when the... when the bark was put to make the paths better, erm... and you know who's been involved in the mosaics and different people saying, oh I did a bit of that. Erm... and I don't know, even from the railing being painted Sam saying, 'oh look they're yellow now'.*
>
> Mary, non-involved resident, Alexandra Road

The experience of changes occurring on the site as a result of the activities of the project inspired feelings of delight and enjoyment, without any form of involvement in the project.

The positive association of the community gardens with the processes of community involvement had wider implications for the way individuals perceived the area in which they lived. As well as encouraging feelings of attachment towards the gardens themselves, the knowledge that the space was being cared for by other local residents could inspire a more general feeling of place attachment towards the neighbourhood.

> *I think having... living in a neighbourhood that feels cared for has an effect. I think that's really, really important, just like... well your environment has such an effect on how you feel. Erm... and so you know, yes this makes you feel good [Kent Road] and this [neglected open space at top of Alexandra Road] makes you feel bad.*
>
> Mary, non-involved resident, Alexandra Road

The presence of a community garden within a neighbourhood could also be seen to promote feelings of duty towards the project and associated feelings of guilt when efforts to get involved were not made. In an area containing a

high number of community projects it was common for group members of one project to express feelings of responsibility towards other local projects. One interviewee was an active member of a local walled garden project in the local park and expressed such feelings towards the nearby Carfield Farm project.

> R. *I've just started being involved [in the walled garden]../sort of a year ago. And it's...and I like the walled garden. I like that space too [Carfield Farm], but I REALLY like the Walled Garden. So really its just kind of prioritisation I suppose. I do keep thinking that I must get involved in the Carfield Farm site.*
>
> I. *What makes you think you should?*
>
> R. *Well just because I think it's really...a great thing they've done and it's really important that it continues to you know, belongs to the local community and so you can only think../you know, it's no good saying 'oh well, other people can sort that out', you do have../really you have to be involved in things, in some things 'cos, well somebody has to do it haven't they.*
>
> Libby, non-involved resident, Carfield Farm

The correction of the phrase "you have to be involved in things" to "in some things" suggests a feeling that there is a limited amount of time that individuals can commit to community projects. Among those who were keen to support local efforts this required prioritisation, and in a context of numerous local projects may have had the effect of reducing the number of willing participants within each project.