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Extending the idea of social capital: applications for community leaders

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Abstract

The support and transformation of communities is a major task for authorities which they would prefer for the community to undertake itself. Voluntary community leaders arise who can be successful at running community projects, with few formal resources. This success is considered through the concept of social capital and its place within the 'new governance' where boundaries between and within public, private and voluntary sectors have become blurred. Three case studies are used to analyse actions of community leaders. These community leaders had large networks of connections which helped to facilitate the success; however, the majority had few connections with their neighbours, and reported less community cohesion than they would have liked. This validated the concept of social capital, but revealed problems with the concept regarding where the connections lay. This suggested separating 'bridging social capital' into 'community bridging capital' (informal connections with neighbours and friends) and 'governance bridging capital', comprising connections with individuals in formal governance structures such as local authorities, neighbourhood forums, community development trusts, local businesses, local councillors and MPs, and other agencies or community organisations. The separation is demonstrated as the community leaders considered were using governance bridging capital to increase community bridging capital. This refinement within the concept of social capital helps to understand what happens with community leaders on the ground and how they manage to be successful. This has implications for authorities promoting community development projects run by community leaders who have access to 'governance bridging capital' hence delivering success but not necessarily delivering increased community cohesion or participation in governance.

Key words: Social capital, community leaders, community projects, community engagement

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Introduction

Local authorities promote and sometimes fund community projects under the assumption that the transformation of communities works best when it comes from within. But how do community leaders successfully take advantage of such opportunities? That voluntary members of the community can organise and run successful projects with few resources and less time than paid staff is something that needs explaining. A common way of looking at this is through the notion of social capital, which Adler and Kwon (2002) define as the goodwill that others have for us which can be used as an asset. This concept has been used to inform topics such as community life, governance, economic development and educational achievement (see Adler and Kwon, 2002 for a review). However, since Putnam's highly influential work (2000), both scholars and governments have become concerned about an apparent *decline* in social capital.

As a result of this concern, much effort has been focused on encouraging the *re*-formation of social capital, from EU-funded projects in rural or urban development (Shortall, 2008, Shucksmith, 2000) to (arguably) the UK Prime Minister's Big Society. However it is important to properly understand how the concept of social capital helps to understand the success of community leaders, so that such encouragement achieves the desired aims. Bonding and bridging capital have already been distinguished to describe the finding that an increase in in-group solidarity can be at the expense of wider community cohesion (Beyerlein and Hipp, 2005). Social capital is also connected with notions of governance, which involves participation of ordinary citizens (as well as the private and third sectors) in governing alongside traditional government (Stoker, 1998; Tenbensel, 2005).

This paper looks at community leaders through the lens of social capital. Using data from case studies of community leaders (i.e. members of formal community groups) in Birmingham, UK, it is argued that the idea of 'bridging social capital' needs to be differentiated into two types – 'community bridging capital' and '*governance* bridging capital'. The latter form is more useful in explaining the success of these community leaders; it is the idea that the goodwill of *particular* others in *particular positions* is the asset which has led to the success of these individuals.

This paper begins with a brief discussion of the theoretical concepts of social capital and of governance. This is followed by an introduction to the community leaders and their projects, and the methodology used. The findings are then presented, followed by the conclusions, implications for policy, and the limitations of the study.

Social capital

The concept of social capital has been defined in many ways and has been much critiqued. The core insight is that the goodwill others have for us is a valuable resource, and Adler and Kwon (2002, p. 23) give the following helpful definition;

"social capital is the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence and solidarity it makes available to the actor".

Social capital provides benefits to individuals and groups, through the structure of the relations or ties between individuals, and the trust, obligations and norms held within those relations or ties. In

expanding this idea, a range of different positions is found within the literature. The benefits and the sources of social capital are sometimes conflated with each other, and with social capital itself. A particular difficulty has been separating what social capital is from what it does, perhaps because it is defined functionally (Edwards and Foley, 1997). Coleman (1988) points to the closure of social structures, since these allow the development of norms about reciprocity and obligations. For him, groups or voluntary organisations are therefore important; he gives the example of a group forming around the issue of poor housing, which remained as a source of social capital for other purposes once the issue had been dealt with. Paxton (1999), however, argues that norms and reciprocity form the *content* of the ties within the structure. Reciprocity and obligations, and the trust that such obligations will be fulfilled, are important to the concept of social capital; both as manifestations of it and as its benefits (Coleman, 1988, Portes, 1998, Paxton, 1999, Leana and Van Buren, 1999, Putnam, 2000). Social capital also describes the provision of benefits in that this good will allow the actor or group to leverage the resources of others. Ability, skills and useful information are three such resources (Adler and Kwon, 2002). There are other tangible benefits to social capital; scholars have argued that those communities or individuals that can be said to have a higher stock of social capital also have reduced crime levels (Beyerlein and Hipp, 2005), lower school drop-out rates (Coleman, 1988), improved employment opportunities (Granovetter, 1973), as well as information, influence and solidarity (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

There is also a range of positions within the literature regarding whether social capital describes a public or a private good. Adler and Kwon (2002), along with other scholars, understand social capital as more a private good; where the focus is the relations that an actor maintains with other actors. Social capital is 'external' to the focus actor. Portes (1998), Burt (1992) and Bourdieu (1985) understand social capital in this way. Other social scientists see social capital as something which is internal to a collectivity of actors. Coleman (1988, p. 98) is of this view, and gives the following definition:

"social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure".

In other words, "social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (Coleman, 1988, p. 98). This distinction between external and internal views is, to a large extent, a matter of perspective and unit of analysis (Adler and Kwon, 2002); the relations between one member of the community and another are external to those actors but internal to the community. This research, which looks specifically at community leaders (who are individuals, but individuals acting for the benefit of their communities), adopts the position that the benefits provided by social capital occur at different levels of social structure; through both the relations an actor maintains with other actors, *and* through the relations within a collectivity. Such levels of social capital may interact with each other, for instance the resources and benefits described by social capital at the individual level may provide benefits to the wider group in certain circumstances.

Other scholars take up this idea of social capital having multiple levels by talking of 'bridging' and 'bonding' capital. Putnam (2000) describes bonding capital as being inward looking; ties or relations between individuals in homogenous groups, such as ethnic groups. He describes bridging capital as more outward looking; ties or relations between individuals from very different groups. These two terms describe some of the interactions observed in the following studies more usefully than a single homogenous concept. Paxton (1999), despite not using the terms, points out that social capital within a single group need not be positively related to social capital at the level of the wider community. She gives the example of militia groups which might have strong connections within their group but might have no connections whatever with others outside their group, which may reduce the overall level of trust in the community as a whole. Beyerlein and Hipp (2005) show that communities with higher levels of bonding capital (groups with strong internal ties) have higher levels of crime than do communities with higher levels of bridging capital (more ties between groups), supporting the idea that the connections that *groups* cultivate need

not always benefit wider communities as a whole. It is important, therefore, if the formation of social capital is to be encouraged, to be aware of what sort of connection is being referred to.

Bridging social capital is itself a broad category which may mask important differences; there are inconsistencies within the literature. In the example above, Beyerlein and Hipp (2005) describe bridging capital as representing linkages between members of different groups in communities. Iwase *et al.* (2010) describe bridging capital as social connections which span across social class, race and ethnicity groups. Paxton (1999) argues that if social capital describes benefits deriving from individuals' joint membership in formal organisations, then bridging social capital can describe linkages between different formal organisations. Putnam (2000) views social capital sometimes as does Paxton, and sometimes as representing something informal – a friendship between neighbours; therefore bridging capital could be either links between different formal organisations, or members thereof, or simply links between people in different neighbourhoods. Such a diversity of understandings of the term requires further clarification – it is arguable that there is some difference between the benefits derived from informal connections between individuals or groups, and those derived from connections that bridge members of formal organisations, especially if those organisations have a role in the working or organisation of the community at large.

Researchers have noted a decline in what they variously describe as social capital in recent years (Putnam, 2000). Putnam blames this on the pressures of time and money in two-career families, urban sprawl, television and generational change. Bauman (2000) describes recent changes in society as a result of the change from solid to liquid modernity, where the business of living is privatised and people are exhorted to praise (or blame) themselves personally for their life predicaments. However it has come about, the argument that 'social capital' has declined in communities is as well supported in the UK as in the US (Dorling *et al.*, 2008), and may give rise to a need for interventions to rectify this perceived problem. Given that this decline is lamented at Government level (Dorling *et al.*, 2008), perhaps there is a role for such interventions to come from that level. However, despite the decline in social capital, voluntary community leaders *do* report that they manage to organise and run facilitate successful projects. This begs the question of how they do so.

Governance

Governance refers to a new method by which society is governed (Rhodes, 1996) and is important to the discussion of social capital since it implies that individuals and communities are expected to participate in the process of governance. Governance is a new style of governing in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred, and is in contrast to the traditional British 'Westminster Model', which is characterised by parliamentary sovereignty, strong cabinet government and accountability through elections (Stoker, 1998). This change in governing has come about as a result of a challenge in the latter half of the twentieth century to the capacity and desirability of politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats to act 'for' citizens; people no longer trust experts to define their interests for them (Derkzen and Bock, 2007; Healey and Gilroy, 1990). The activities, backgrounds and interests of individuals in the public sector are seen as far removed from the lives and perspectives of citizens, and between elections citizens have very little opportunity to influence decisions that are made in their name (Smith, 2003). Indeed, citizenship according to the Westminster Model becomes a rather passive affair, with little critical engagement on the part of citizens (Offe and Preuss, 1991), and with the potential systemic exclusion of marginal groups (Smith, 2003). In such a case, the legitimacy of the traditional government system is called into question. In contrast, under a system of governance it is expected that all stakeholders – ordinary citizens, third-sector organisations and the private sector, will participate in decision making.

Such community participation is thought to improve governance in many ways; it is assumed that communities are capable of discerning and deciding what services are appropriate and how they should be delivered, and thus their participation is encouraged to ensure local decision making reflects local needs (Tenbensel, 2005). Reed (2008) suggests that participation also improves

decisions about complex problems. For example, environmental problems are complex and dynamic, and have multiple effects at multiple levels; and, as such, they are better dealt with by participatory processes. These lead to higher-quality decisions as they are based on more complete information, which anticipates and ameliorates unexpected negative outcomes before they occur (Foxon, 2009). Some problems also provoke conflicts in values. Smith (2003) argues that participatory processes take better account of the plurality of values by working towards 'mutual understanding', which requires participants to accept the variety of points of view on a particular issue and to be open to the possibility of changing their minds upon reflection of the perspectives of others. Hence participation in governance often leads to a greater acceptance of the outcomes of the decision-making process. McLaren Loring's (2007) study of wind energy planning in England, Wales and Denmark showed that projects which had high levels of participatory planning were more likely to be publicly accepted and successful. Wolsink (2007), in seeking to understand NIMBYism, argues that decision-making in which options for public participation are limited will tend to lead to opposition. This set of ideas from the governance literature leads us to think that projects led by the community (and community leaders) will better answer the community's diverse needs and values.

This raises the importance of inclusion. Smith (2003) points out that if a system of governance *not* based on elected representatives is to be considered legitimate, all citizens must have the opportunity and the capacity to engage with the governance process. Many EU-funded rural- and urban-located development programmes have therefore sought to build the capacity of communities to act (Shortall, 2008, Shucksmith, 2000) so that they may participate. In Shortall and Shucksmith's work, this is done by improving skills, encouraging new organisations, and stimulating new forms of links between groups and public agencies. In other words, such programmes can be said to be attempting to increase those connections and their benefits within communities described by the concept of social capital (Shucksmith, 2000), as this will help them participate in the governance of their localities.

However, in his study of LEADER (an EU programme aiming to find solutions to rural problems), Shucksmith argued that only individuals who already had access to social capital could take advantage of such opportunities. Supporting this, Curtin and Varley (1991) point to the domination of the process of development in rural areas by local notables. Shortall (2008) shows further complications with the example of Northern Ireland Protestant communities, who have a high level of civic engagement around their churches, but no *wish* to engage with wider development structures. They have many connections within their groups and derive many benefits from them, but this does not help them to participate in local governance outside of the church, as they do not *choose* to direct their efforts that way. Therefore, in order to participate in governance, one needs connections and the resources those connections provide (perhaps a *particular form* of social capital?) and the desire to use those resources outside their immediate groups; and, certainly, only some individuals do. To return to our original question, the projects of only some community leaders would therefore be successful.

The literature discussed above demonstrates a problem with social capital regarding with whom the ties or connections are. Perhaps splitting the concept of bridging social capital to describe different sorts of connections is useful in shedding light on the different sorts of connections of individuals, and how and to what end these connections are used.

Methodology

This paper accepts the claim that a reality exists 'out there', that humanity's knowledge about the world corresponds to that reality, but that this knowledge can never be known for certain; it will always be fallible. This is the standpoint of Critical Realism as developed by Bhaskar (Bhaskar, 1978; Bhaskar, 1979) 1979). Following this line of argument, all knowledge is essentially socially constructed; however some knowledge corresponds more closely with an external reality than other knowledge. For the social world, a qualitative research approach to generating knowledge is appropriate. Here the researcher is interested in what is unique about an object of study rather

than seeking to generate general laws, and in the contextual meaning of the object of study, rather than what would hold in every context. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection within this tradition, as only a human is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of the different realities that will be encountered, and the different interactions that will be had with respondents and objects (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Qualitative research seeks a complex understanding of reality, which corresponds to the complexity of the reality of the social world itself.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) envisage the use of case studies to report findings as part of this approach. Case studies allow the development of a nuanced view of reality, can approach the contradictions of real life (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and are therefore useful in generating knowledge that does correspond to the complexity of reality in the social world. In order to understand why community leaders are successful, information is drawn from three case studies to unpack the complex question of social capital and how community leaders actually operate on the ground. These three case studies have been chosen because the community groups they concern have demonstrated success in carrying out a project that contributed to their aims. These community groups came into being as a result of local people getting together to act on issues that they felt were important in their local areas and to their communities, which they did not feel were adequately addressed by local or central government. In this sense they are issue focused, in the way described by the example given by Coleman (1988). This is why *project* success is here defined as success – it was to achieve issue-specific aims through smaller projects that these groups came together. These community groups can be argued to provide examples of empowered participatory governance, as detailed by (Fung and Wright, 2003). The members of these groups are considered to have become leaders within their wider community as a result of joining and acting within these groups.

In six semi-structured interviews with members of these groups, questions were asked about the success of their projects, how the members contributed to the success of their groups, what connections they had within their neighbourhoods, and how these had helped their projects. These questions sought to uncover where the ties between individuals lay, and what resources could be leveraged through them. The semi-structured style of the interviews allowed the interviewees to demonstrate their own way of looking at the world, in ways that were unanticipated by the researcher, and allowed an exploration of what mattered to them. To this end, this paper uses verbatim quotations so that the interviewees' own words can show how they see the world. Data was also gained from attendance at meetings, email exchanges and internet-based research.

The case studies

The first case study focused on Sustainable Moseley (SusMo), a group which seeks to help the neighbourhood of Moseley in south Birmingham to reduce its carbon emissions. This group came into being after a public meeting in 2007 on saving energy and saving money which was hosted by the local neighbourhood forum. SusMo is actually a working group of that neighbourhood forum, although it is working towards establishing itself as an independent organisation. Some members were originally (and continue to be) members of the neighbourhood forum, others joined as a result of attending that public meeting, or seeing posters advertising the group. Given that the aim of SusMo is to help local people reduce their carbon emissions, it points to the Green Streets project as an example of success as it contributed significantly to the achievement of this aim. They won £140,000 worth of goods and services in 2010 from British Gas which ran the Green Streets programme nationally. This allowed SusMo to provide 17 residents with energy efficiency measures and some microgeneration technologies where feasible, and to have solar photovoltaic panels installed on a church, a mosque, a school and a building in the local allotments. Planning permission was originally refused for the church's solar panel, before an appeal and eventual approval by the Diocese allowed the installation to go ahead in the summer of 2011. As well as the physical measures, SusMo members talk of the awareness raising that has gone on as a result of these measures.

Kings Heath Transition Initiative (KHTI) is the focus of the second case study. This group models itself on the Transition Town Movement (Hopkins, 2010, Hopkins, 2008)) and since roughly 2009 has been working to improve the economic and social resilience of the neighbourhood of Kings Heath (also in south Birmingham) while decreasing its reliance on fossil fuels. KHTI began as a group of local people working with a local horticulturalist to improve their gardens throughout the food growing season. The group members got to know each other as a result of this and, at the suggestion of one particular member, agreed to become a Transition Group, and recruited local people who they knew might be able to help. The Transition Movement aims to raise awareness of climate change and peak oil as a first step to transition, and hence KHTI points to the success it has contributed to the Movement in raising awareness of sustainability issues. KHTI has run a variety of small activities to help in this such as well attended 'conversation cafes', film showings and food growing projects, and has set up a neighbourhood forum to address local issues using the thinking of the Transition Movement.

24 Carrots is the focus of the final case study. The chair of this group was sent on a leadership course by her employer. This course gave her a challenging assignment; to come up with a project that would enhance her life, and then put together a team of people she didn't know to run that project. This community member wanted to create a community where she lived, in the Jewellery Quarter, north of Birmingham city centre. To that end she went to a local residents meeting, suggested setting up a farmers' market, and took names of people who said they would be interested in helping. She then called a meeting in a local pub in 2009 to which interested residents came, and those early volunteers are still running the farmers' market today. 24 Carrots now runs its market once a month in an open space in the centre of the neighbourhood, and has had great success. It has a footfall of about 400-700, has provided opportunities to local businesses, farmers and artisan producers, and has provided a focus and facility for the local community.

Findings – community leaders in action

First, information demonstrating the connections that the community leaders have is presented, along with examples of the benefits they derived from those connections. We then discuss connections that the community leaders felt were lacking.

Connections and benefits derived

All the community group members interviewed had many connections within their community, particularly with key local decision makers, a factor which they used to contribute to the success of their projects. One particularly well-connected member of SusMo is on the board of directors for Moseley Community Development Trust, is a trustee of the Moseley Society (a local charity which has been looking at conservation issues and planning applications since 1979), a member of Moseley Neighbourhood Forum, a member of the local Labour Party, and chair of the local branch of a political think tank. Also:

"I've got good links to the MP, and our councillors we have a relationship with, they're generally very helpful".

She gives a clear example of the resources she could leverage (in terms of relevant information, experience, skills and influence and reputation) as a result of her connections, which contributed to the success of SusMo's project:

"Vicky¹ of the Moseley Society is a very important person to have on side, she's, her view and the Moseley Society's view on planning application and changes to the physical environment is very well respected so in terms of getting anything done like

¹ All names have been changed to protect respondents' anonymity.

microgeneration, which is visible, having Vicky's support and having the Moseley Society's support is incredibly important. And St Mary's would have probably fared much worse [in the appeal] even though it was still very difficult, it would have fared much worse if we hadn't had the Moseley Society agreeing".

This SusMo member also mentions help received from retired planning consultants who live in the area, and how important it is to the group to have an association with the many academics also living locally. Another SusMo member is also well connected, being on the board of a local housing association, also a member of Moseley Society and the local Labour party, and a member of the local interfaith group. It is said of these members:

"Amy and Diane are sort of the best connected people, so a lot of ... SusMo's connections are sort of through them".

Again, these connections with individuals in key places help with the success of their projects. SusMo could more easily invite their partners to be involved in their Green Streets project because of their connections with them.

One member of KHTI had previously worked for the city council in Children's Services, and had contributed to setting up partnership bodies that dealt with special educational needs. He used the skills he learned from this to benefit his group by writing a constitution for KHTI, a necessary first step to applying for funding that the group eventually won. In setting up the local neighbourhood forum, this KHTI member gained the support of the local constituency office.

"In terms of how to approach more prominent people like politicians, I think I've got an idea of how to do that, and how to talk to language, and how to find the documentation ... You know you might be put off by the idea of a core strategy ... [but] they have to do it, in the sense they have to plan the city in some way".

One member of 24 Carrots had connections with the police, local business such as jewellers and manufacturers and the local pubs. This latter relationship is crucial to the success of 24 Carrots. The group must have a temporary event licence from the council to run the event, to allow local brewers to come and sell their alcohol. As a community group they may only apply for 5 licenses a year; the local pub signs off the other seven. The group member also receives advice from local councillors, which is critical since none of the members of this group had ever had experience of running a farmers' market. 24 Carrots has been also invited to join the local community development trust. This member is becoming increasingly well connected, able to derive more and more benefits for 24 Carrots and its farmers' market as she does:

"I'm very good at engaging and enrolling people ... my bit is about networking, connecting, pointing people in the direction of how they could help. So I've been invited to a lot of things by the businesses here, ... I've got councillors inviting me on to committees ...".

These community group members clearly have a heightened ability to engage with local governance structures. The KHTI member, as previously mentioned, has worked for the local authority. The 24 Carrots member is a general manager, and had completed many management and leadership training courses. SusMo members are experienced in working in formal community organisations and, as one says;

"Because of sort of education and stuff, I've got enough self-confidence to introduce myself to people who I feel I'd like to talk to".

The skills, confidence, and large body of connections of these community leaders are available to other members of their community groups, and aid with the success of their projects.

Lack of connections and benefits lost

However, despite being able to access social capital through their links with other formal organisations, local businesses and public decision makers for the benefit and success of their projects, the community group members can be said to be lacking social capital in other ways. For example, SusMo hoped that everyone who benefited from its project would join up to iMeasure, a website where people can upload their meter readings in order to monitor their energy usage in comparison to similar households, designed as a behavioural change tool. Two years after the start of the project, and despite repeated reminders, the beneficiaries have mostly not signed up.

“You can’t get them to spend the time to do iMeasure themselves, or anything, it’s too much work”.

Using the terminology of the social capital literature, it can be said that this community member does not have access to enough social capital to *oblige* these beneficiaries to sign up to iMeasure. Connections within the community can be said to be lacking in other ways – Moseley has quite a clear divide between a richer white south and a less well-off, predominantly Muslim, north. For some community group members, the situation is personally isolating. Not only do they not know other members of the community well enough to have strong ties built on norms, expectations and reciprocity, they don’t have any ties at all with other residents:

“I know my immediate neighbours in my actual flat, but yeah, not really outside of that, which is one of the funny things about Moseley where you’ve got a very strong community structure but you still haven’t necessarily got neighbourliness in a sense ... it’s quite odd that you’d get one without the other, but that’s been my experience ... for the most part I don’t know neighbours that well”.

This is also the case for the KHTI member, who recognised that most people within the group didn’t know their neighbours that well, and as a group they needed to start looking at ways of improving that. So too for the 24 Carrots group member:

“I moved back to Birmingham after 14 years and moved to the Jewellery Quarter, and I lived here for 18 months and I didn’t know any one of my neighbours.

For some of these community group members, the lack of ties within their local community was in fact the very reason for setting up the projects that they did. Transition Town movements are based on the assumption that, to move from an oil-dependent society to one which is more resilient and of a lower ecological impact, people must act collectively; and, to do so, people need to know each other (Hopkins, 2008). SusMo worked with the Mosque and the Church because it wanted its project to benefit *everyone*, and to take an opportunity to build links between the two communities. 24 Carrots was set up expressly so that it could build a sense of community in an area where this was felt to be lacking, and hence aimed to improve the level of social capital overall;

“It’s somewhere to meet, because the Jewellery Quarter, it’s very business, there’s 400 businesses here, but there’s also 3000 residents but we’re quite transient, you know we work during the day, and at weekends people tend to go away, so the market is a focus to say, well I’ll meet you at 24 Carrots”.

Discussion

This paper asks why community leaders are successful; specifically community leaders who are volunteers and have few formal resources. Social capital is a key concept when discussing this aspect of communities, as it shows that community leaders *do* have access to resources gained through their connections with other individuals and groups; the goodwill others have for them is an asset that they can use and from which they can derive benefits. However, the evidence discussed above demonstrates a problem with the concept of social capital, particularly the

concept of bridging social capital as it is too broad to describe the differences between connections with different sorts of people. The community leaders interviewed here have many connections with individuals within governance structures (such as local authorities, neighbourhood forums, other community groups, local councillors and MPs, local businesses etc.) but fewer informal connections with neighbours. To deal with this requires a reconceptualisation of bridging capital by making a distinction between *governance* bridging capital and *community* bridging capital. Governance bridging capital describes the idea that the goodwill of *particular* others in *particular positions* (i.e within governance structures) is an asset that is useful to individuals acting as community leaders. This distinction enhances the understanding of the *particular type* of success of these community leaders – success in running their projects.

SusMo members' governance bridging capital helped the group to influence planning decisions in the area. KHTI members' governance bridging capital helped the group (for example) to set up a Neighbourhood Forum which will have a voice in the way in which the neighbourhood is planned and run. 24 Carrots members' governance bridging capital helped the group to run a farmers' market to act as a focal point for the residential community and give that community a voice in a business-dominated district. Yet these community leaders do not necessarily have bridging capital in the direction of neighbours and other ordinary local people. It is true that some of the community leaders are hoping that their projects will *increase* the number of connections in their communities, or increase the 'stock of social capital' in social capital parlance. 24 Carrots is an obvious example of this, but members of SusMo were also attempting to increase such connections by bringing together the mosque and the church in one project, and improve the cohesiveness of the community. KHTI is also striving to increase connections within the community by giving people multiple forums to meet each other and share activities together. These groups do not have this 'community' bridging capital, rather, they are *using* their 'governance' bridging capital, to *bring about* this 'community' bridging capital, or community cohesion or sense of community as they might call it.

This distinction is supported within the literature. Shucksmith(2000) has shown that only those groups or individuals who have social capital have the capacity to engage in governance processes. He argues that in projects aiming to increase the stock of social capital, time and effort needs to be given to develop that capacity to engage in a wider group of people.

This research is obviously limited as a result of the very small sample size. However, social capital and governance are important concepts in helping to understand social integration, and not fully understanding them can lead to confusion as to how best to design policies that improve society. Further research is clearly needed to test the ideas proposed here.

Conclusions

This research has important implications for practice and policy. First, the UK Government is hoping begin building the Big Society (one of the aims of which is to improve social capital) through funding community projects (for example Essex County Council, 2011; Leicestershire County Council, 2012). Although support for community projects is laudable, such a strategy may risk excluding other sections of the community, and do nothing to improve its social capital as a whole. Such exclusion may harm the legitimacy of the programme, as a small minority attempt to shape their local areas according to their own values. Although there is evidence here that these community group members try to be inclusive as they can, such monopolisation by the few can indeed happen (Fiorina, 1999, Shucksmith, 2000). Secondly, seeking to improve social capital by focusing on facilitating community projects alone may well not bring the sorts of benefits one may hope to see from an increase in the stock of community bridging capital, such as a reduced crime rate, lower school drop-out rates, and of course, increased participation in governance overall. A third implication is related to another area of policy – that of energy. With the upcoming Green Deal (GOV.UK, 2013) due now under way, some potential Green Deal Providers are exploring the possibilities of using community groups and organisations to reach the wider community, and so increase the numbers taking up energy efficiency measures. However, seeing community leaders

as a 'way in' to a community may be problematic, since the community leaders may have no more (community) bridging capital to other members of their community than any other local person. Such a reliance on community groups as the answer may therefore jeopardise the endeavour, and put undue pressure on voluntary community groups.

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