Partnerships in Place-Keeping

place characteristics → social, economic, environmental and local context of... THE PLACE ← user needs

aspirations for the place → ← user behaviour

← user perceptions

THE PROCESS well-coordinated 'place-keeping'

governance — partnership

policy — finance

evaluation — design, management, maintenance

THE "PRODUCT" a valued, sustainable and high-quality place

"The term partnership describes an association of two or more partners which has been developed here as agreed shared responsibility for place-keeping."
(Dempsey and Burton, 2012)

Partnerships can be particularly effective in achieving place-keeping by bringing together public and private sectors, and engaging the local community.

Benefits of partnership approaches

- **Increase awareness of global environmental problems**
- **Promote site ownership - reduction in vandalism and anti-social behaviour**
- **Increase positive social interactions and sense of community**
- **Opportunity to offset public funding**
- **Improvements to the local physical environment**

Limitations of partnership approaches

- **Number of participants is often limited - agendas are driven by a minority of vocal individuals rather than collectively decided**
- **Participatory approaches can be time-consuming with great sensitivity needed to manage expectations**
- **Difficulties in ensuring project sustainability over time (when individuals leave) and associated stability between stakeholder relations**
- **Issues of liability and insurance – who pays, who is responsible?**

Devolution in the UK

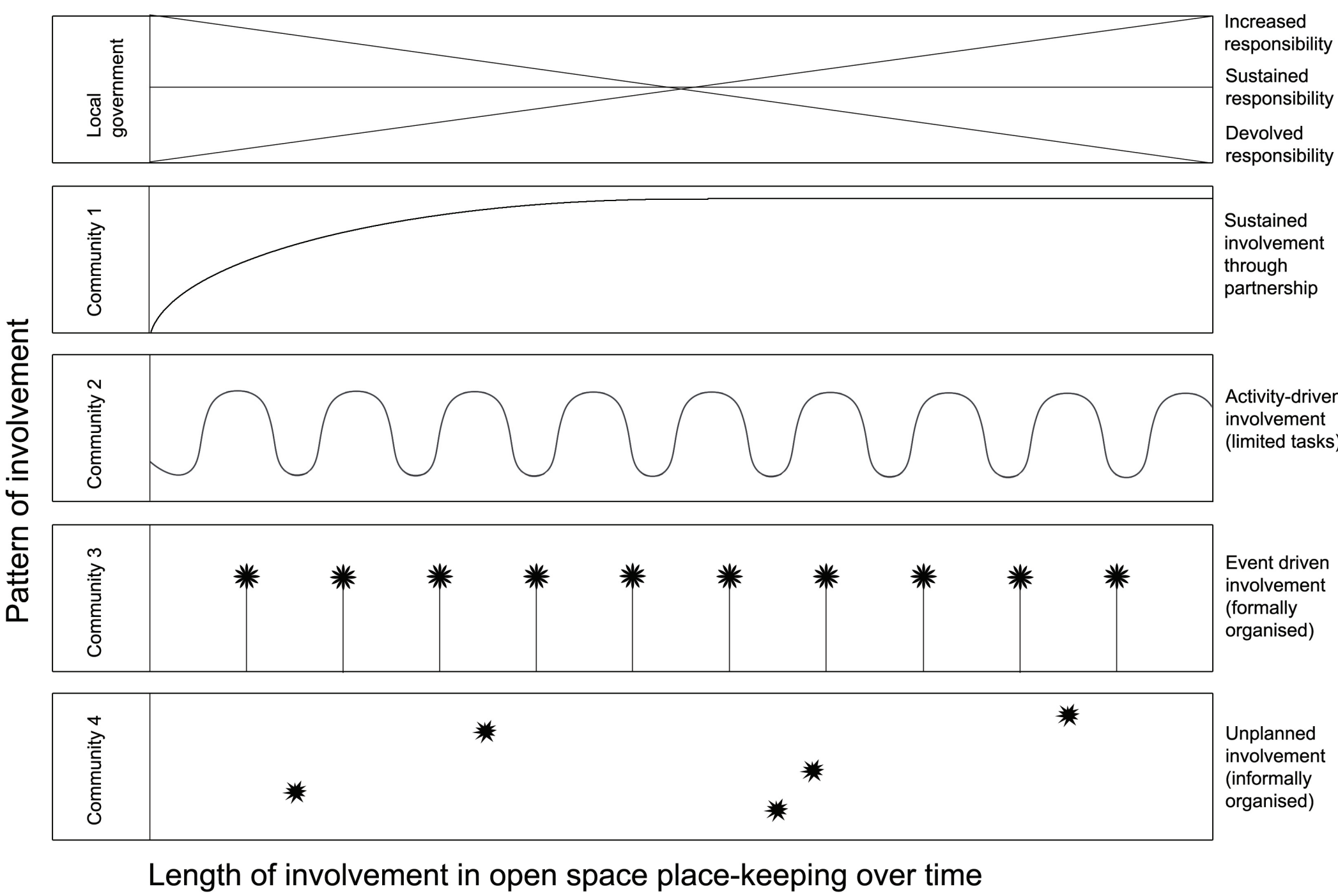Repeated pattern of devolution of resources and control from public service providers:

- **Communities in Control** 'ownership and control' whereby 'people can own and run services for themselves either by serving on local boards and committees, or through social enterprises and cooperatives' (Communities and Local Government, 2008)
- **Big Society** 'a redistribution of power away from the central state to local communities…transforming government action from top-down micromanagement and one-size-fits-all solutions to a flexible approach' (Cameron, 2010)
- **Community Assemblies** lowest level of UK government, enabling the general public to have a greater say regarding priorities for public spending within their area. Community Assemblies decide budgetary allocation on services such as parks, libraries and street cleaning

Should communities take on this role? Are they capable?
- The design, development and long-term management of parks and green spaces have always had a historic, and integral, relationship with community involvement programmes (Jones, 2002)
- …however the partnership capacity of Local Authorities, community groups and other stakeholders to deliver green space development and management varies greatly
- …this has implications for political expectations of devolved governance regarding green space service provision

Involvement methods

Hypothetical model of patterns of community-led involvement in place-keeping

Length of involvement in open space place-keeping over time

Community involvement in place-keeping may not follow the model needed to sustain long term place-keeping. The Local Government pattern is what involvement in place-keeping should appear like, but the Community patterns are more likely.
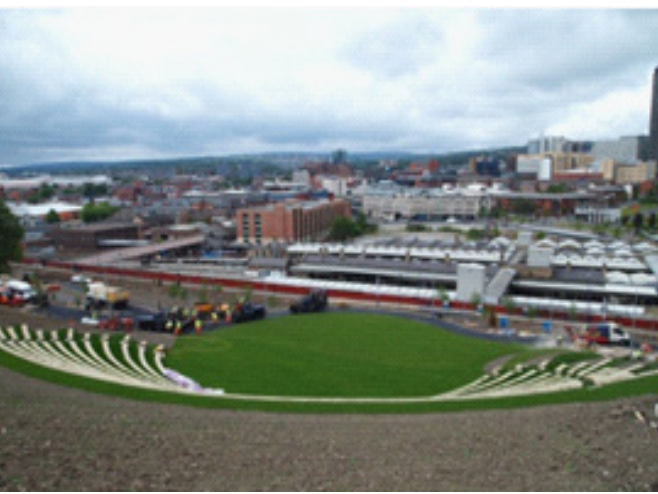

Community Capacity in Sheffield

The capacity of the community and local authority to deliver place-keeping in Sheffield was explored.
Four case studies were looked at. Interviews with local authority officers and community members were undertaken and interviewees asked to map out all those organizations involved in each park.

Firth Park

- Membership of 30
- Mainly retired members who enjoy attending the social monthly meetings but do not want to take on further responsibility

Sheaf Valley Park

- 15 active members (affiliated members belong to the Residents Against Station Closure (RASC))
- Sheaf Valley Park is a large, transitional 'city' space
- No obvious onsite community at present

Porter Valley

- Over 470 members
- Women are mainly interested in events and social activities rather than manual tasks. Membership is elderly; difficult to recruit younger people

Millhouses Park

- Membership of 250+
- Members are from professional backgrounds i.e. academics, managers, web designers
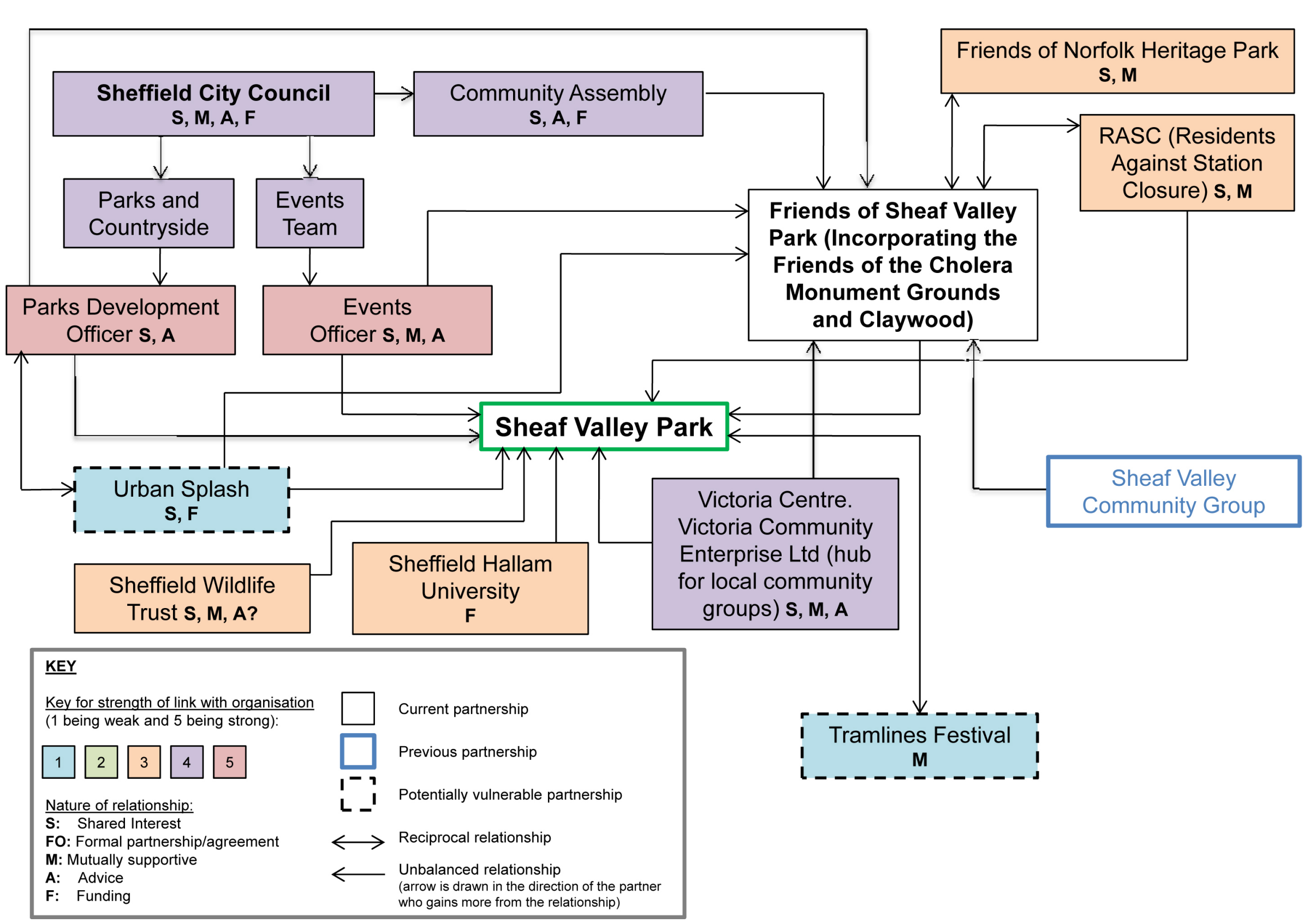
Partnership Capacity

Key findings

- **Community groups do not have current capacity to take on full responsibility for onsite management**
- **Building partnership capacity is key to sustaining green space quality in times of economic constraint**
- **Understanding factors that aid network development will facilitate capacity building**
- **Long-term community commitment relies on sustained public-community partnerships and recognition of the community contribution made**
- **Greater community responsibility for onsite management requires greater investment in the community skill base through appropriate training**
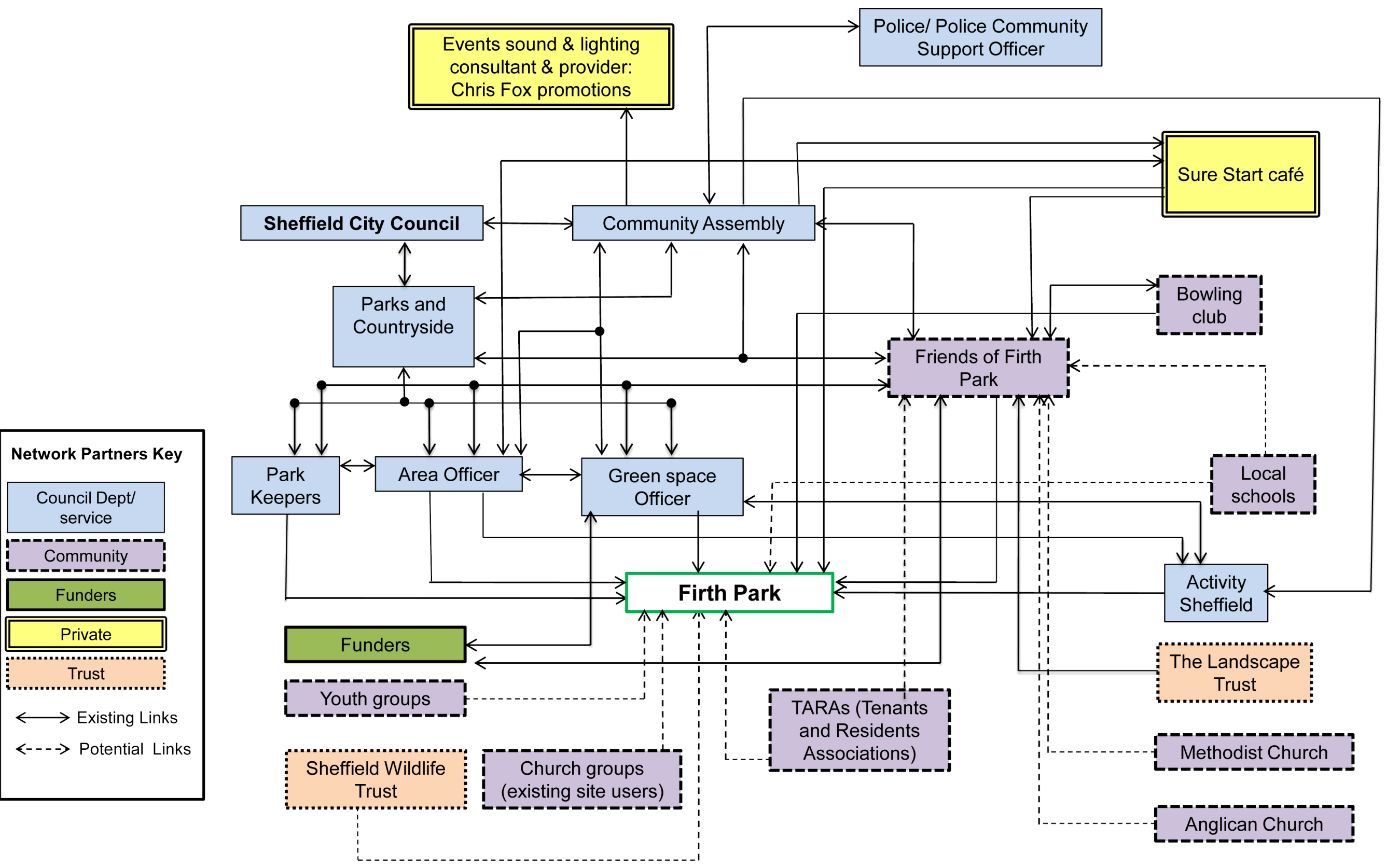

Partnership Capacity

Here are some examples of network diagrams showing the relationship between organisations involved in place keeping.

Resourcing place-keeping – Sheaf Valley Park network involvement diagram
Evaluation of partnerships since 2011

Resourcing place-keeping – Firth Park network involvement diagram

Six partnership capacity themes were identified:

1. Capital

- High capacity groups play an important part in securing funding but need local authority support in times of economic constraint
- Events are one way of sustaining and building capacity

2. Commitment

- Managing a group's expectations in the key consideration for local authority offices
- Groups are highly committed to individual sites
- Involvement requires a long term commitment
- Many members are of retirement age, which can limit the type of activities they support

3. Skill Base

- Partnership working enabled skill sharing
- Groups are effective in organising events, local engagement and fundraising but do not want onsite management responsibility
- Issues around insurance form a barrier to groups managing sites

4. Motivation

- Groups and officers are personally motivated as are professionals
- Most groups rely on a few committed members
- Involvement follows a cyclical pattern
- Smaller sites can encourage greater 'ownership' and sustained commitment

5. Communication

- Many communication methods help increase capacity; events, newsletters, websites etc.
- Groups with large networks have greater resource capacity
- Internal local authority communication can be poor

6. Political Influence

- Local authorities must demonstrate best practice, added value and delivery of council priorities
- Many groups have strong political influence

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