

A PERFORMING PUBLIC SECTOR: THE SECOND
TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE
International Conference
1-3 June 2006
At the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium)

Performance of Urban Partnerships: Myths and Realities

By Christos Apostolakis

*Researcher, Partnerships Access & Community Education
Lecturer in Marketing/Strategy, Bournemouth Business School
Bournemouth University
M301, Melbury House
1-3 Oxford Rd
Bournemouth
BH8 8ES
UK*

CApostolakis@bournemouth.ac.uk

(++44) 1202 961 248

Not to be quoted from – Draft version

For correspondence with Christos Apostolakis please contact him on the address above

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban partnerships have emerged (as well as advertised) as weighty vehicles for policy delivery in Britain in recent years. Despite the continuous ambiguity of what defines a partnership they have been perceived as schemes that can bring a new 'dynamism' in resolving policy issues. Based on this, it has been suggested that partnerships can create synergy between programme and policy areas in such a way as the potential achievements to be beyond the reach of any individual participants (Carter, 2000). It could be argued then that because of their unique constitutional elements and the kind of innovative character partnerships 'can do better' compared to single public or private organisations. This has been, according to their advocates, essential for their role as policy delivery agencies.

However, certain difficulties have been noted vis-à-vis the establishment and operation of urban partnerships as vehicles for delivering public services. For example, critics have argued about the fact that those partnerships played the role of mechanisms that have helped local authorities to keep a tight reign on the regeneration process (Hughes & Carmichael, 1998). At a purely organisational level the question of efficiency has drawn the attention of many contributors to the partnership debate because of the very difficulty in measuring it. But efficiency has generally been recognised as the ratio of benefits to cost; that means that increasing efficiency involves increasing relative benefits to cost. The problem has been that costs are far easier to measure than benefits (in particular regarding less tangible benefits like quality of life) (Glendinning, 2002).

Urban regeneration has come a long way since its first appearance as the outcome of rebuilding particular urban areas of Britain that suffered the consequences of World War II. In this light, the role of community involvement within the construction and delivery of programmes for urban regeneration has produced a large literature to date. To this extent, approaches to urban regeneration have become dominated by ideas of networking and partnerships (Hughes & Carmichael, 1998). The role of urban partnerships for achieving urban regeneration in Britain is being explored in this paper vis-à-vis their operational capacity that would transform them into efficient public service delivery agencies. In this light, identification of a potentially effective performance for urban partnerships is the principal aim for this paper. The paper examines partnership organisational attributes that can promote collaboration and networking. It draws on empirical research of particular urban partnerships as they have been formulated in Bournemouth, South West of England. Using a mixture of interviews, observations and documentary data the paper shows that developing conditions of trust and improving common purpose become crucial elements necessary to raise the degree of unification amongst participants. However, it is difficult to identify added value regarding the establishment of long-term commitment by the case partnerships towards their aims. Consequently, this has a

prominent impact on their performance, as achievements in service delivery heavily depend on a series of external political, social, environmental and economic factors that cannot in any case be undermined.

2. URBAN PARTNERSHIPS: PERFORMING DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN BRITAIN

2.1. Performance of Multi-organisational Agencies: The Myths of a Promising Land or Identifying the Policy Discourse

Performance has been hailed as an ‘important driver...in delivering services for local people’ by the current British government. According to them it has been the first time local councils and residents are able to capture the level of performance in service delivery in their council and compare it with performance by other local councils (ODPM, 2006). This probably reflects the focus on policies introduced by the Labour government mainly on social and economic issues and the technicalities on how performance can be measured in this context. In any case when the Labour party came into office they had already in mind to launch a rather ambitious programme for ‘*modernising local government*’. The main aim was to introduce a widespread programme of reforms that would support the argument ‘the case for change comes from the public – to make local government more relevant to their needs and capable of addressing their individual and collective problems’ (Filkin et al, 1999: 9). Urban palingenesis has been seen as an important part of this political agenda. There has been a general recognition that the thrust of palingenetic work has increasingly moved from a construction-based approach to more holistic approaches that take into account the complex interplay of social, economic and political forces within a community (Snape, 2003).

Area-based initiatives supplemented by holistically-approached programmes have been the two main directions the government has intended to give to its urban policies. The mushrooming of these programmes has produced, amongst others New Deal for Communities, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the LGA’s New Commitment to Regeneration and a range of Action Zone initiatives (to mention but a few) and later on policy programmes such as neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion (Snape, 2003).

Development of partnerships has been considered as a *sine qua non* for delivering such policies. Partnership arrangements have gone a long way since the early 1970s in British public management as not only a way for delivering policies but also a vehicle for transforming the concept of who is going to deliver and why. In this light, it has been envisaged that partnership work can provide an alternative way for performing delivery of public services. It is still debatable though how far it can go and how effective such a performance can be as there are always independent factors that can impact upon individual partnerships. There are quite a few issues to

Type	Area Covered	Remit	Funding Base	Example
<i>Umbrella or strategic</i>	Usually citywide	To set the strategic agenda of the city and to coordinate the work of other local partnerships	Varies (governmental for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund)	New Commitment to Regeneration; Citywide; Local Strategic Partnerships
<i>EU Programme</i>	Varies	Varies, depending on the initiative	EU with match funding	Poverty 3; Urban
<i>Central Government Multi Purpose</i>	Varies	To 'holistically' regenerate their designated area	Central government, sometimes with match funding	Single Regeneration Budget (SRB); New Deal for Communities (NDC)
<i>Central Government Single Purpose</i>	Varies but in areas of high deprivation, as identified by central government	To develop new and improved ways of working on particular issues	Central government, sometimes with match funding	Sure Start; Education and Health Action Zones
<i>Development Trust</i>	Neighbourhood or community	Largely concerned with social issues (single or multiple)	Multiple sources	Various
<i>Locally Instigated Single Purpose</i>	Varies	To address a particular issue or provide a specific service	Multiple sources	Various

Table 1: Types of urban partnerships
Source: Adapted from Southern, R., (2002: 20)

be considered as it can be seen below:

- defining indicators and targets to measure progress towards agreed objectives;
- assigning responsibility for action;
- gathering and analysing data on processes, inputs, outputs and outcomes;
- reviewing performance, and diagnosing the reasons for good or bad performance;
- holding those responsible to account;
- planning for improvement;
- reporting to stakeholders (ODPM, 2005: 87)

In brief then the aim for an urban partnership to apply performance management is to improve its policy outcomes for the most interested parties, the local residents. This can be done by ensuring that the partnership does have the organisational capacity to operate in a way that produces these outcomes. A definition on urban partnership performance and their operational context is presented in the next section.

2.2. Urban partnerships and the Collaborative Strategy framework

The Development of Urban Partnerships

Urban Partnerships (UP) have been considered as the type of partnership designed to tackle the so-called '*wicked issues*' (e.g. social exclusion, community safety, unemployment) in urban regeneration in Britain (Southern, 2002). However, the ambiguity on defining partnerships accurately expands into the area of urban partnerships as well. According to one approach urban partnerships could be considered as a type of multi-organisational collaborative arrangements operating at the urban level. In the same line, Westall and Foley (2001) suggest that urban partnerships:

...are examples of attempts to create true 'partnerships' between different organisations and people, which maximise the effects of combining their skills, resources and expertise in order to tackle complex multi-faceted ...issues [at the urban level]

(Westall & Foley, 2001: 7).

What could also be noted is that normally these partnerships include participants from the public, business, community and voluntary sectors that act together by having clearly defined goals and objectives (Southern, 2002). Taking into account difficulties in establishing such partnerships as well as the multi-complex character of urban regeneration in the British context some of the challenges facing UP are as follows:

- The need to achieve sustainability or a long stream of benefits in regeneration set against a series of inconsistent urban, particularly social, regeneration initiatives.

- The need to derive social and economic renewal from the easier task of physical regeneration.
- The need to harness mainstream policy to urban regeneration requirements (Carley et al, 2000).

The policy initiatives that required the construction of UP in order to promote urban regeneration since the early 1990s have been numerous. At this time a transformation in relation to how urban regeneration could be viewed started taking place. By 1991 the almost exclusively focus on an economic issues' approach to regeneration, although significantly popular during the 1980s, was perceived to be failing. There was increasing evidence that government policies failed to prevent further decline within British cities (Nevin and Shiner, 1995). The removal of Margaret Thatcher from office and the appointment of Michael Heseltine to the Department of Environment signalled a change towards this direction (Davies, 2001).

Further steps were taken when the Labour government came at office. In this new era partnerships were perceived as an essential tool for developing and implementing policies (Powel and Glendinning, 2002; Snape and Taylor, 2003). To this extent, frameworks of collaboration have been suggested that could foster and encourage partnerships between the broad ranges of actors involved in raising the standards of life quality. This collaboration could emphasise upon: a genuine working of urban multi-organisational partnerships; the coordination and integration of initiatives; a long-term commitment; and the development of urban regeneration strategies. However, doubts were expressed about the scale of effectiveness and accountability of the regeneration programmes implemented. For example, Campbell's argument is concerned about how much figures on particular aspects e.g. unemployment in certain localities have been improved (Carter, 2000). Notwithstanding, the Labour government has initiated and supported a rather high number of policy initiatives in order to boost urban regeneration. Within this plethora of in many cases overlapping initiatives someone could mention the Employment Zones, Health and Education Action Zones, the Best Value programme, the New Deal for Communities (Foley and Martin, 2000; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Powel and Glendinning, 2002). An overview of these initiatives and their links to specific type of urban partnerships can be seen in Table 1.

Collaborative Strategy: A Modus Operandi for Urban Partnerships

Based on the policy considerations above it becomes apparent that creating and developing partnerships has been perceived as paramount. This is mainly due to the wide range of policy issues partnerships are bound to deal with and offer solutions to. Thus, the identification of a *strategic modus operandi* for urban partnerships

constitutes a formidable challenge because of its very nature as a task linked with complex structures of numerous organisations and individuals. The framework that has been developed in this paper is called *Collaborative Strategy* and has its origins on a previous work on partnerships by the paper contributor. According to some authors participants in various collaborative groups see strategy as a good thing and something to be involved in although they cannot find enough time to spend on it (Huxham, 1991). In addition to this, Mintzberg (1998a; 2000) portrays strategy as a plan, a direction or a course of action into the future. Moreover, he identifies it as a pattern that can offer consistency in organisational behaviour overtime in such a way that it can provide continuity and not change as a primary aspect of strategy.

The innovative character of collaborative strategy could be identified within the context of why an organisational strategy of collaborative nature is more preferable to the traditional competitive one. An assumption about this is that strategists take normally the view in which a collaborative organisation perspective is fundamentally at odds with competition, conventionally the primary factor of interaction between organisations especially within the business sector (Wit and Meyer, 1998). Despite the fact that relations between organisations can be characterised by a dynamic mix of collaboration and competition, collaboration creates a web of durable and sustainable relationships (ibid.). This creates the basis for a continuum of organisational efforts that produce and command value for the organisations involved (Cropper, 1996). In this respect, continuity becomes the main characteristic of sustainability thus according to Mintzberg the essential 'ingredient' for a strategic framework. Consequently, a strategy that is enacted in a collaborative way can be more beneficial for organisations willing to trust an approach characterised by continuity and long-term perspective compared to one that are dominated by a competition rhetoric.

The properties of Collaborative Strategy can be seen in Table 2. The framework identifies the strategic dimensions of five proposed aspects of collaborative work taking into account the values of the advantage that can be developed because of collaboration. In essence, the framework expresses some of the strategic steps a collaborative organisation could follow towards designing, planning and implementing particular actions. Moreover, by indicating also potentially false steps the framework attempts to establish balance between a successful and a non-successful course of collaborative action.

Aspects	Added Value of Collaborative Strategy	Indicators	Contra-indicators
<i>Selection of Members</i>	The importance of collaborating expressed in patterns of involvement, trust, commitment and probity (Collaborating action as an expression of purpose)	Strategy for recruiting well motivated in terms of trust and probity	Collaborative groups representing different sectors face extraordinary difficulties in overcoming differences
<i>Vision of Collaborative Organisation</i>	Integration of a collaborative organisation into the whole under a shared vision (Collaborative action as an institutional framework)	Strategic vision that reflects the expectations of all members – Shared feeling that collaborating will solve common problems	Involving members from different sectors is often critical to a collaborative organisation's success and frequently problematic
<i>Operation of Collaborative Organisation</i>	The ability of a collaborative organisation to act responsibly towards and within a collaborative relationship (Collaborating action as a model of conduct)	Strategy is realised as a plan that has an objective viewpoint of the reality and aims to provide context for decisive acts of implementation	Examples of abuse of power, unfair allocation of resources, and appearance of conflicts cannot permit smooth operation
<i>Plan Delivery of Collaborative Organisation</i>	The ability of a collaborative organisation to acquire and organise resources to deliver activity against purpose or task (Collaborative action as capacity)	Implementation of the strategic plan according to allocation of roles and responsibilities – Adaptation to need demands	Insufficient implementation of the strategic plan because of existence of disharmony and conflict between the members of collaborative organisation
<i>Review and Change of Collaborative Action</i>	(No appearance of added value because of its mechanistic repetitive character)	Strategy in looking at reviewing policies and processes by feeding back into policy making and producing appropriate changes	Lack of coordination in what aspects of the collaborative organisation's operation should be reviewed can be in particular cases problematic

Table 2: The framework of Collaborative Strategy

Obviously the aspect *plan delivery* of the collaborative organisation mostly interests this paper, as it examines the utilisation of performance, and its advantages and pitfalls. The explanation for utilising such a framework for the case of urban partnerships relies on previous work by the author that perceives multi-organisational partnerships (hence urban partnerships) as collaborative entities. In this context, collaboration can be considered as an important mechanism for strategy development in urban partnerships, as it can be used to build confidence in long-term planning, to streamline decision-making and to maintain strategies beyond organisational or budgetary horizons (Apostolakis, 2004).

	Aspect of Collaborative Strategy: Plan Delivery
<i>Performance Criteria Partnership Plan Delivery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harnessing of Mainstream Policy for Urban Regeneration • Environmental Sustainability in Urban Regeneration • Economic Sustainability in Urban Regeneration • Social Sustainability in Urban Regeneration
<i>Achievable Outcome</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness in implementing particular policies: For the public sector • Effectiveness in making their activity profitable and socially responsible: For the business sector • Effectiveness in contributing to the quality of life of their members: For the community sector • Effectiveness in terms of voluntary, non-profitable contribution to their members: For the voluntary sector

Table 3: Performance criteria and achievable outcomes of urban partnership plan delivery

Table 3 identifies the performance criteria, which have been taken into account when examining the case of urban partnerships in Bournemouth. In essence, these criteria constitute the questions the empirical research tried to respond to. Issues of methodology such as the qualitative character of research and how this has affected data collection and analysis are presented in the following section. Despite data collection about all aspects of collaborative strategy the empirical evidence that has been used for this paper is primarily linked with the performance of the urban partnerships in Bournemouth, as it is presented in section 4.

3. METHODOLOGY ISSUES

The research methodology that was used for this paper has been based on a previous research by the paper's contributor on public private partnerships. In this light, the paper relied heavily on data that was collected regarding the examination of collaborative strategy in 2003/2004. Multiple-case study was the research strategy that was chosen and Bournemouth, England the geographical context for conducting research. The reason for this was the need in having a 'representative' sample of cases in the same locality that would either predict similar results (literal replication) or produce contrasting results but for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) (Yin, 1994). Decision on a number of case studies designed to represent every single partnership arrangement in England would not just be feasible. However, the evidence of more than a single case study is often considered to be more compelling and the research more accurate (Herriott and Firestone; cited by Yin, 1994). The level of operation determined the type of partnership. As a consequence, the Bournemouth Partnership has been a partnership with a broader strategic focus, which operates as an 'umbrella' partnership - under a well represented collaborative organisational structure - for smaller partnership schemes in their area of action. By contrast, the rest of the partnerships in Bournemouth have had a focus on regeneration – physical, economic and social.

There was also a pragmatic reason for selecting these particular cases. As far as the researcher is concerned there has not been any research conducted on partnerships at this level regarding Bournemouth. This has been reflected on the personal interest people from the Bournemouth Partnership have expressed for this study. This was apparent in the easy access on data about the case partnerships that lead firstly to the conduct of a pilot research programme between May 2001 and March 2002. According to this pilot programme seven interviews were conducted and ten partnership meetings attended. Based on this programme and through '*snowballing*' successful preliminary contacts were established. Regarding the main part of the empirical research and at the purely numerical level 39 semi-structured interviews were conducted along with 22 non-participant observations of partnership meetings. Collection of secondary data was also encountered as a research method.

4. THE CASE: URBAN PARTNERSHIPS IN BOURNEMOUTH – PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

4.1. Performance of Urban Partnerships in Bournemouth: An Overview or Reflecting on the Realities of Delivering the Partnership Plan

Before embarking in the description of urban partnership performance in Bournemouth it is important to state in here that the paper does not cover some principal information on the background of these partnerships. This is because such information belongs primarily to the remit of the other aspects of collaborative strategy i.e. selection of partners, partnership vision and partnership organisational

structure. Hence, potential reference to such information would extend the length of the paper beyond its scope¹.

Plan delivery has proved to be an important but rather perplexing task of partnership work in Bournemouth. Admittedly, the issue for consideration was the effective delivery of services by the case partnerships with emphasis on the role of the Bournemouth Partnership (BP) as the powerful partnership force in this process. The agenda of partnership performance has contradicted the idea of short-term delivery by a contracting-out process that was favoured until almost the middle 1990s around the country. Partnership work has been deemed as offering the ability for a long-term relationship and joint decision-making therefore effectively better provision of services (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Additionally, the decision by the Labour government to establish delivery of particular initiatives (i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Local Public Service Agreements) via partnership work as well as the community strategies (supported by local authorities) has created the context for the local partnerships in becoming deliverers of public services (DETR, 2001).

However, this has not been considerably occurring in Bournemouth as yet, because no partnership has had the capacity of becoming an exclusive provider of public services. Even the provision of administrative and financial support by the Bournemouth Council for Voluntary Service, a leading voluntary group, to its network of community and voluntary groups cannot be deemed as having the character of a well-divided, partnership-type of service provision. Instead, the Bournemouth Borough Council (BBC) has continued to be the exclusive provider of services in the town. Nevertheless, taking governmental guidance into account, the council has attempted to promote provision of services through partnership arrangements. This became apparent in the conference of the Bournemouth Partnership 2003 in which the five partnership forums proposed the targets for the revised community plan, which have to be implemented by the Bournemouth Partnership (Bournemouth Partnership, 2003). This has manifested a new era for partnership work in Bournemouth fulfilling the desire of a number of partners including this senior manager of the borough council who asserted:

However, my view is that if the case either by government activity or regional activity the agenda would change and the partnerships would be set out of the council. We could find then that the partnership genuinely becomes separate from all of the agencies. It becomes a quango. Independent chairman, independent bureaucracy, da, da, da, da. And the council then is a big but only one player

(Senior manager of the Bournemouth Borough Council)

¹ Use of present tenses in this section of the paper indicates continuation of partnership work in Bournemouth

Before this historical move the council had already obtained a series of achievements via partnership work. Some of them include the allocation of £1,457,000 to the deprived area of Boscombe through the SRB fund or the launch of the Bournemouth Libraries' computer system via PFI funding (Bournemouth Borough Council, 2002). Furthermore, the BBC has organised a series of events in order to develop and promote other partners' capacity for delivering public services. For example, on 29 November 2003 Bournemouth Borough Council hosted an Area Forums Workshop attended by over forty representatives from Bournemouth Council, the Bournemouth Partnership, community groups and other partner organisations. The event linked directly to the pilot scheme for Area Forums that has been underway in eight well-established natural communities in the Borough: Boscombe, Bournemouth Town Centre, Charminster, Kinson, North Bournemouth, Southbourne, Westbourne and Winton. The aim of the scheme has been to provide a strong link between local people with partners and leaders in their communities. Other themes discussed in this workshop were financial support and neighbourhood improvement budgets, as it was recognised that Area Forums work best in neighbourhoods supported by joined up partnership working and service delivery (Bournemouth Borough Council, 29 November 2003).

In terms of linking public service provision to the betterment of urban regeneration the council, the Bournemouth Partnership and the government have agreed a Public Service Agreement (PSA). Some of the targets the Bournemouth Partnership has to achieve in return for receiving £910,000 for 2004/2005 (£300,000 for each target achieved until 2007) are:

- To reduce incidents of dwelling burglary in the Bournemouth Division;
- To reduce the level of repeat victimisation in domestic violence;
- To increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable people;
- To reduce the number of pupils leaving school without qualifications;
- To improve the skill and training level amongst local businesses.

(Bournemouth Journal, April/May 2004)

The agreement has reflected the policy shift implemented by the Government Office for the South West to create and maintain sustainability in communities in the region 'that are economically prosperous, have decent homes at a price people can afford, safeguard the countryside, enjoy a well-designed, accessible and pleasant living and working environment' (Bournemouth Partnership Steering Group, 9th Sept 2003). However, exclusivity in participation other partnership members has raised questions as to what extent the Bournemouth Partnership as a whole has been involved in the agreement.

The delivery plan of the Bournemouth Partnership and its forums has given a focus

on the improvement of quality of life in the town. In order to achieve this economic, social and environmental sustainability have been deemed as prerequisites (Bournemouth Partnership, 2003). Emphasis has been put firstly on economic sustainability in Bournemouth after taking into account that it is 'the economy that...can improve its prosperity and regeneration by supporting appropriate economic development initiatives (Bournemouth Partnership, 2002: 6). This aim has also been confirmed by the observations of the meetings of both the Bournemouth Partnership and its forums during which partners accentuated the role of the business sector in boosting the local economy. In view of this, the business sector could create a model of effectiveness that not only could make them (the business sector) profitable but also *socially responsible* for the town.

With this in mind, it has been suggested that there are four targets the business sector (alongside the other sectors) should try to achieve in 2004/2005:

1. Increase the gross domestic product at a rate above the regional level – the gross domestic product rose per capita by 11.2% between 1999 and 2001 – economic activity in Bournemouth has included the consolidation of the Portman Building Society and other important changes within the Finance and Banking sector;
2. Achieve unemployment levels within Bournemouth below the regional average between April 2000 and April 2005 – unemployed people who claimed benefits were in 200/2003 7% less than 2001/2002 and 12% less than in 2000/2001;
3. Increase retail customer flow in Bournemouth by 1% per year;
4. Achieve growth in visitor and conference spending at 5% above regional average between April 2000 and April 2005.

(Bournemouth Partnership Forum for Strengthening Our Economy, 04th Sept 2003)

4.2. Performance Criteria and how they Were Achieved in Bournemouth Harnessing of Mainstream Policy for Urban Regeneration

It could be argued that partnerships in Bournemouth were not pioneers in adapting governmental policies that would consolidate partnership action in delivery of public services. In the light of this, government initiatives e.g. Public Service Agreements were initiated in Bournemouth long after they have taken place in other localities in Britain. Primary reason for this was lack of relevant tradition that could boost partnership action. In addition, as a place dominated politically by the main opposition party Bournemouth did not have much of opportunities in getting involved in relevant mechanisms and receiving governmental funding during the years 1997 until 2003. It was after 2003 that the political win of the Liberal Democrats in the local elections created such a potential.

Elements of Collaborative Strategy	Indicators	Research Findings
<i>Harnessing of Mainstream Policy for Urban Regeneration</i>	Implementation of the strategic plan taking into account governmental guidance on particular tasks e.g. conduct of Community Strategy	Implementation of the Community Plan with the borough council being the main provider of public services – Delivery of public services through specific neighbourhood projects
<i>Environmental Sustainability in Urban Regeneration</i>	Adaptation of the strategic plan to need demands in order to gain environmental sustainability in the context of urban regeneration	Not significant momentum in environmental sustainability – Nevertheless one of the partnership forums has been in charge for forwarding the partnership plan on environment
<i>Economic Sustainability in Urban Regeneration</i>	Adaptation of the strategic plan to need demands in order to gain economic sustainability in the context of urban regeneration	The focal point of the partnership plan delivery in which the public and the business sectors have put lots of effort – Significant role by the business sector because of the partnership plan towards an <i>economically prosperous town</i>
<i>Social Sustainability in Urban Regeneration</i>	Adaptation of the strategic plan to need demands in order to gain social sustainability in the context of urban regeneration	Increasing delivery of public services in social regeneration – Important role by the community and voluntary sectors – However, the borough council has remained the main provider of social services

Table 4: Research findings regarding partnership plan delivery in Bournemouth

Environmental Sustainability in Urban Regeneration

Environmental sustainability experienced development difficulties in Bournemouth. Sensitivity about the environment appeared to be still in its infancy and of a pioneering nature, based on the wish of particular individuals and groups (e.g. the Bournemouth Civic Society) to promote it (Observation of the Bournemouth Environment Forum on 8th October 2002). The drive to environmental sustainability was 'in helping to preserve the qualities that make the environment in Bournemouth special' (Bournemouth Environment Forum, 8th October 2002).

Economic and Social Sustainability in Urban Regeneration

As it can be seen in Table 4 economic and social sustainability were the major priorities for urban regeneration in Bournemouth. The reasoning for this was that in Bournemouth regeneration primarily meant 'improving the prosperity and regeneration of the city by supporting appropriate economic development initiatives' (Bournemouth Partnership, 2002:6).

Achieving Partnership Effectiveness

The achievement of effectiveness as the essential vehicle for promoting successful plan delivery and therefore better service provision for local people occurred as a focal point for the case partnerships' function. Effectiveness in partnership function implies the identification of collaborative advantage as the mechanism for a high value and ambitious form of collaboration (Huxham, 1996a). It reflects also a role of sustainable and constitutive value for collaborative advantage because it focuses on keeping collaboration alive over the longer term (Huxham, 1996b). This happened to be what partnerships in Bournemouth wished and went for despite organisational obstacles. By attaining the collaborative advantage the case partnerships obtained to function and deliver public services to the best possible degree. Indications on their performance are presented through the baseline information in Table 5.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the aforementioned, urban partnerships in Britain have provided organisational frameworks, which could enrich their performance. In this respect, organisational frameworks such as Collaborative Strategy, as it has been presented in this paper, can prove to be useful in explaining and, under certain circumstances, 'guide' for a smooth and effective provision of public services. Vis-à-vis the implementation of the framework in Bournemouth, UK it could be argued that the public and the business sectors developed a strong sense for collaboration that could count, along with the major driving force for favouring *marketisation*, as critical success factors for improving plan delivery.

	Boscombe West [Deprived area of Bournemouth]	Bournemouth	England & Wales
<i>Population (%)</i>	97.5	98.4	87
White	0.3	0.1	2.2
Black & African	0.5	0.2	-*
Chinese	0.1	0.3	2
Hindu	0.1	0.1	0.5
Pakistani & Bangladeshi	1.5	0.9	8.3
Other groups			
*Included in Other groups			
<i>Economic Activity (%):</i>			
Employed	52.7	58.3	60.6
Registered unemployed	6	3	3.4
<i>Housing Conditions (%):</i>			
Local authority	3.2	6.7	13.2
Private rented	49.6	20	11.9
Owner occupied	41.9	69.5	68.9
<i>Education (%):</i>			
Had no qualifications	26.6	25.1	29.1
Qualified to degree level or higher	18.3	17.6	19.8
<i>Health (%):</i>			
Good	60	66.7	68.6
Fairly good	26.4	23.7	22.2
Not good	13.6	9.6	9.2

Table 5: Local baseline position of Boscombe West and Bournemouth in comparison to the national level of England & Wales

Source: National Statistics (2004)

Bournemouth partnerships' ability to obtain the best possible performance exhibited both strengths and weaknesses. In terms of strengths:

1. The case partnerships contributed according to their power and financial capacity to the well-being of local people by promoting economic – to a major extent – and social regeneration;
2. The case partnerships showed also increasing adaptation in the 'rules of the game' e.g. in complying with governmental requirements for obtaining funding as in the case of Neighbourhood Management in Springbourne and Boscombe West.

Then, weaknesses:

- Collaboration for obtaining quality public services was not an easy task especially when partnerships have not established a way for operating that could take into account all 'voices' within the partnerships;
- The leading role the public and business sectors played in the organisational operation of the partnerships in Bournemouth had a significant impact on their performance, as the community and voluntary sectors did not appear to be equally capable for service provision without the support by the borough council. This was the case despite existence of evidence about the opposite in the future e.g. the creation of the *Bournemouth Compact* between the statutory bodies and the 'third' sector in the town (Bournemouth Partnership Steering Group, 9th Sept 2003).

'Should they stay or should they go?' If it is for urban partnerships to develop and maintain their strong sense of collaboration as well as their financial synergies in a way that would favour innovation and, therefore, flexibility in future changes then it could be argued that urban partnerships should stay! Within this context of course performance remains a foundation stone for partnership good practice!

6. REFERENCES

Apostolakis, C (2004) 'Citywide and Local Strategic Partnerships in Urban Regeneration: Can Collaboration Take Things Forward', *Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 103-112

Apostolakis, C. (2005) 'Urban Partnerships in England; Collaborating Whilst Colliding or the Art of Symbiotic Relationships', in T. Gossling et al, eds, *Coalitions and Collisions* (Nijmegen: Wolf Publishers)

Balloch, S. & Taylor, M., (2001), 'Introduction', in S. Balloch & M. Taylor, eds, *Partnership working: Policy and practice*, (Bristol: The Policy Press)

Bournemouth Borough Council (2002) Five Years of Achievements

Bournemouth Borough Council, 29th November 2003 Minutes

Bournemouth Environment Forum, 8th October 2002 Minutes

Bournemouth Journal (April/May 2004) Reaching tough targets means u to £3.5 million for Bournemouth

Bournemouth Partnership (2001) The Bournemouth Partnership [on line] [cited 01 Dec 2003] Available from Internet <URL: <http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/Partner/>>

Bournemouth Partnership (2002) Community Plan: Building a Better Bournemouth

Bournemouth Partnership (2003) Conference 2003

Bournemouth Partnership Steering Group (9th September 2003) Minutes

Bournemouth Partnership Forum for Strengthening Our Economy (04th Sept 2003) Minutes

Carley, M., Chapman, M., Hastings, A., Kirk, K. & Young R., (2000), Urban regeneration through partnership: A study in nine urban regions in England, Wales and Scotland, (Bristol: The Policy Press for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Carter, A., (2000), 'Strategy and Partnership in Urban Regeneration', in P. Roberts & H. Sykes, eds, Urban Regeneration: A Handbook, (London: SAGE Publications)

Charlesworth, J., Clarke, J. & Cochrane, A., (1996), 'Tangled Webs? Managing Local Mixed Economies of Care', Public Administration, vol. 74, Spring, 67-88

Cropper, S., (1996), 'Collaborative Working and the Issue of Sustainability', in C. Huxham, ed, Creating Collaborative Advantage, (London: SAGE publications Ltd)

Davies, J., (2001), Partnerships and Regimes: The politics of urban regeneration in the UK, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company)

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, (2001), Local Strategic Partnerships - Government Guidance, March, (London: DETR)

Filkin, G., with Lord Bassam, Corrigan, P., Stoker, G. & Tizard, J., (1999), Starting to

modernise – The change agenda for local government, (London: New Local Government Network for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Foley, P. & Martin, S. (2000) 'A new deal for the community? Public participation in regeneration and local service delivery', Policy & Politics, vol. 28, no. 4, 479-491

Glendinning, C., (2002), 'Partnerships between health and social services: developing a framework for evaluation', Policy & Politics, vol. 30, no. 1, 115-127

Hendry, J. (2000), 'Strategic Decision Making, Discourse, and Strategy as Social Practice', Journal of Management Studies, vol. 37, no. 7, November, 955-977

Hughes, J. & Carmichael, P. (1998), 'Building partnerships in urban regeneration: A case study from Belfast', Community Development Journal, vol. 33, no. 3, July, 205-225

Huxham, C. (1991), 'Facilitating Collaboration: Issues in Multi-organisational Group Decision Support in Voluntary, Informal Collaborative Settings', Operational Research Society, vol. 42, no. 12, 1037-1045

Huxham, C., (1996a), 'Collaboration and collaborative advantage', in C. Huxham, ed, Creating Collaborative Advantage, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd)

Huxham, C., (1996b), 'The search for collaborative advantage', in C. Huxham, ed, Creating Collaborative Advantage, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd)

Local Government Association, (2002), We can work it out: In-depth Research into Development and Policy Issues for Local Strategic Partnerships, A report by INLOGOV, (London: LGA)

McLoughlin, I. (1999) Creative Technological Change: The Shaping of Technology and Organisations (London: Routledge)

Mintzberg, H., (1983), Structure in Fives: Designing Effective Organisations, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.)

Mintzberg, H., (1998a), 'Five Ps for Strategy', in H. Mintzberg, J. B. Quinn and S. Ghoshal, eds, The Strategy Process, Revised European Edition, (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall Europe)

Mintzberg, H., (1998b), 'The Structuring of Organisations', in H. Mintzberg, J. B. Quinn and S. Ghoshal, eds, The Strategy Process, Revised European Edition, (Hemel

Hempstead: Prentice Hall Europe)

Mintzberg, H., (2000, 2nd edition), The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited)

Nevin, B. & Shiner, P., (1995), 'Community regeneration and empowerment: A new approach to partnership', Local Economy, vol. 9, no. 4, February, 308-322

Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) Evaluation of local strategic partnerships – An interim report (London: ODPM)

Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2006) Comprehensive Performance Assessment (London: ODPM) [on line] [cited 24 March 2006] Available from Internet <URL: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1133963>>

Powel, M. & Glendinning, C. (2002), 'Introduction', in C. Glendinning, M. Powel, and K. Rummery, eds, Partnerships, New Labour and the Governance of Welfare, (Bristol: The Policy Press)

Smale, G. (1998) Managing Change through Innovation (London: National Institute for Social Work)

Snape, S. & Taylor, P., (2003), 'Partnership between Health and Local Government: An Introduction', Local Government Studies, vol. 29, no. 3, Autumn, 73-98

Southern, R., (2002), 'Understanding Multi-Sectoral Regeneration Partnerships as a Form of Local Governance', Local Government Studies, vol. 28, no. 2, Summer, 16-32

Sullivan, H. & Skelcher, C. (2002), Working across boundaries; Collaboration in Public Services, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

Westall, A. & Foley, J., (2001), 'Local regeneration partnerships', in E. Joseph & P. Robinson, eds, Right up your street – Partnerships for local policy making and delivery, (London: IPPPR)

Wit, B. de & Meyer, R., eds, (1998, 2nd edition), Strategy: Process, Content, Context, An International Perspective, (London: International Thompson Business Press)

Whittington, R. & Pettigrew, A. (2003) 'Complementarities Thinking', in A. Pettigrew et al, Innovative forms of organising, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd)